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## HISTORY OF THE SHORTER WORK WEEK

Editorial Comment

## THE STRUGGLE FOR THE SHORTER WORK WEEK TODAY

Charles Wilson

## WOMEN AS STEELWORKERS

Therese D'Agostino

## SOME TRENDS AMONG WORKING WOMEN

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## REDISCOVERING THE DIALECTICS OF NATURE

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## MY PARENTS

Grace Arnold

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# History of the Shorter Workday

In its drive for surplus value the capitalist class has always sought to extend the length of the workday, to the utmost. Hence the economic class struggle has centered largely on the efforts of the workers to reduce the number of hours of toil demanded of them.

In earlier years—in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—a workday of 12-15 hours—from sunup to sundown—was the rule. Workers were compelled by dire necessity to struggle against such inhuman conditions of existence. The earliest recorded strike for shorter hours in this country took place as early as 1791 when journeymen carpenters in Philadelphia walked out, declaring: “That, in future, a Day’s Work, *amongst us*, shall be deemed to commence at six o’clock in the morning, and terminate at six in the evening of each day.” (Quoted in Labor Research Association, *The History of the Shorter Workday*, International Publishers, New York, 1942, p. 5.) Out of this and subsequent struggles grew the ten-hour day movement which became the hallmark of the period leading up to the Civil War. Indeed it was out of this movement that the U.S. labor movement was born.

The battles were waged on two fronts—within the shops and within the legislative halls. There were many bloody struggles and many defeats, but there were also victories, and despite the fierce resistance of the employers, little by little the length of the average workday was reduced to at least some degree for growing numbers of workers. Most successful were the skilled craftsmen and mechanics. Among these, by 1860 the ten-hour day had become the rule. On the other hand, among the masses of ordinary factory workers a workday of twelve hours or more was not at all uncommon.

It was with the Civil War that the fight for the shorter workday came fully into its own. Out of the defeat of the slavocracy came the upsurge of Northern capitalism, the growth in numbers and organized strength of the working class and the fight for the eight-hour day. On this, Karl Marx wrote:

In the United States of North America, every independent movement of the workers was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic. Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded. But out of the death of slavery a new life at once arose. The first fruit of the Civil War was the eight hours’ agitation, that ran with the seven-leagued boots of the locomotive from the Atlantic to the Pacific,

from New England to California. The General Congress of Labor at Baltimore (August 6, 1866) declared: "The first and great necessity of the present, to free the labor of this country from capitalistic slavery, is the passing of a law by which eight hours shall be the normal working day in all states of the American Union. We are resolved to put forth all our strength until this glorious result is attained." At the same time, the Congress of the International Working Men's Association at Geneva, on the proposition of the London General Council, resolved that "the limitation of the working-day is a preliminary condition without which all further attempts at improvement and emancipation must prove abortive . . . the Congress proposes eight hours as the legal limit of the working-day." (*Capital*, Vol. I, International Publishers edition, p. 329.)

At its fourth convention, in 1884, the AFL adopted a resolution stating: "Resolved . . . that eight hours shall constitute a legal day's labor from May 1, 1886 . . ." It called for a general strike on that date, a call which was repeated at the 1885 convention. The strike took place, involving, it is estimated, over half a million workers. Of these, about half were successful in winning the eight-hour day or some appreciable reduction in hours. In Chicago, the most militant center of struggle, the strike was followed a few days later by the notorious Haymarket affair, in which a bomb was thrown into a demonstration of workers and which led to the frameup of ten labor leaders, four of whom were hanged. This was a serious setback to the struggle.

In 1888 the AFL voted to rejuvenate the eight-hour movement. Gompers approached the International Workingmen's Congress, held in July 1889, for support to a strike planned for May 1, 1890. The Congress voted to organize an international demonstration on that date. From this beginning, May Day developed as a world holiday of labor, a day of demonstration and struggle in behalf of workers' interests, a day symbolizing the demand for shorter hours.

The fight for the eight-hour day continued and further advances were made. By 1930 a work week of 44 hours (5½ days) was common in many industries. And ultimately the eight-hour day was legally established with the passage by Congress of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which set 40 hours as the legal work week, with time-and-a-half pay for all hours beyond that limit. The forty-hour week has thus become common practice, though it is by no means universal. Workers employed in institutions or enterprises considered as not being engaged in interstate commerce are not covered by

the Fair Labor Standards Act, and particularly where they are unorganized they are often compelled to put in a regular work week substantially exceeding forty hours. Among these are farm workers, hospital, laundry and other service workers, and others. Here the fight for forty hours continues.

The big corporations also extend the workday through the imposition of overtime. Because of the lower overhead, they find it more profitable when production rises to compel the workers already employed to put in added hours, even at overtime pay, than to hire additional workers at straight time rates. In the auto industry, the struggle of the workers against compulsory overtime has been a major issue for a good many years.

Finally, the struggle for shorter hours is compelled by the advance of technology in capitalist production. For the capitalist, improved technology, which is invariably accompanied by increased speedup, serves as a means of obtaining increased output with fewer workers. At the same time the shortening of production time lowers the value of commodities, including the worker's labor power. Accordingly the wages received by the worker represent a declining share of the value produced in a day's work, while the share appropriated by the capitalist as surplus value increases.

To maintain their living standards and their jobs, indeed to protect their very health and lives, workers are compelled to fight constantly not only for higher wages but against speedup and for shorter hours of work with no reduction in pay.

This battle will go on as long as capitalism exists. Today its focus is the demand for a six-hour day—for a thirty-hour work week at forty hours' pay. This struggle is dealt with in these pages in the article by Charles Wilson. This is not a simple demand to win; the big corporations will resist with all the power at their command the shortening of working hours. In this they will count on the assistance of their class-collaborationist labor bureaucrats and of their servants in government.

To win requires the unity of labor, Black and white, in the shops and union halls, and in the legislative and electoral arenas. The shorter work week is a key issue in the 1976 elections. Yet it is noteworthy that among the hopefuls in the Presidential primaries such questions are never mentioned. It is only the Communist Party candidates, Gus Hall and Jarvis Tyner, who place the well-being of the workers at the heart of their platform and make the demand for a thirty-hour week with no reduction in pay a key issue. To fight for this demand, therefore, means fighting to secure the maximum vote for Hall and Tyner in the Presidential elections.

# The Struggle for the Shorter Work Week Today

One of the major problems facing the working people of our country today is mass unemployment. According to the official Labor Department statistics, 8.3 per cent of the work force was unemployed in July-September 1975, at the peak of the current crisis. For the same period, however, the Urban League places this figure at 14.7 per cent. They arrive at that number by adding to the Labor Department figures "discouraged workers" who "want a job now" but are not in the official labor force and also the 46 per cent of part time workers who want full time jobs. (Their statistics are not seasonally adjusted.)

Indicative of how the brunt of this crisis of unemployment is placed upon the backs of the Black and other minorities: unemployment at the peak was 14.1 per cent for Blacks and other minorities, as against 7.6 per cent for whites (Department of Labor). The Urban League placed these percentages at 24.7 and 13.5 respectively. (*Economic Notes*, March 1976.)

As reported in *Economic Notes*, March 1976, "By January, industrial production had recovered half the ground lost between its peak (Nov. 1973) and its trough (April 1975). Other symptoms of initial recovery include a similar revival in sales of new domestic automobiles, a significant increase in employment, and a limited decline in unemployment." What is especially significant is precisely how limited is the decline in unemployment.

This is illustrated by the *AFL-CIO News* report (April 10, 1976) that the "True unemployment in America remains in double figures—10.3 per cent with 9.7 million persons out of work." (The AFL-CIO estimate of unemployment is higher than the Labor Department figure of 7.5 per cent for March, because the former includes "the number of persons who are too discouraged to seek work and those who are forced to work part time because full-time jobs are not available.")

What these figures do not describe is the tragic suffering and despair of the 9,700,000 unemployed: the stress and worry about bills and sickness; the break-up of homes; the loss of confidence;

the disillusionment; the increase in crime. Added to being unemployed is the problem of inflation, the high cost of food, rent, medical care, taxes, utilities. Certainly this crisis situation contributes to the increase in mental illness, the increase in suicides. There are estimates that one out of ten Americans shows signs of developing mental illness.

And to compound the suffering, the reports are that some 1½ million of the unemployed will be exhausting their unemployment compensation benefits. This means getting on welfare with an even further reduction in income. Not to mention Ford's \$1.2 billion food stamp cutback proposal.

The Ford administration, representing the ruling class of this country, has no intention of dealing with the jobless problem. Ford's vetoes of any legislative attempts to provide jobs, no matter how few, demonstrate this. Nor can any serious relief be expected from a Congress (overwhelmingly Democratic, by the way) which refuses to override these vetoes.

Only a massive struggle by the people both on the electoral front, on the collective bargaining level, and on the streets, can make a change in this situation.

There are such struggles. The 10,000 auto workers brought to Washington (February 1975) by the UAW leadership is one. The April 1975 demonstration of some 70,000 workers in Washington, D.C., brought there by the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO, the National Coalition to Fight Inflation and Unemployment (NCFIU), and others, is another. Another is the national Jobs Conference in Washington sponsored by the AFL-CIO Building & Construction Trades Department. There were 3,000 delegates in attendance. They represented some 3 million building tradesmen. The latest example is the Washington demonstration of close to 5,000 brought there by the NCFIU (April 3).

This struggle has many prongs to it. Passage of an improved Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Bill (HR 50), is one. An immediate and massive public works program to build schools, homes, hospitals, mass transit, is one. Massive aid to the cities to reverse the growing layoffs of public workers is vital. Passage of the Harrington Youth Jobs Bill (YR 12795), dealing with the problem of youth unemployment, is a must.

### *An Antidote to Unemployment*

A key prong in this fight for jobs is the reduction of the work week with no reduction in pay. It is the purpose of this article,

within the preceding framework, to discuss this aspect of the battle.

The battle for the eight hour day has its historic beginnings here in the United States. It was on Saturday, May 1, 1886 that 80,000 workers paraded in Chicago, joined by thousands across the nation, for the eight hour day. This fight continued over the years, in the form of resolutions before union meetings, central labor bodies, and union conventions, mass petitions and annual May Day demonstrations.

This ongoing battle culminated in victory in 1938 with the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which established the 8-hour day, 40 hour work week.

Because of the vast increase in the productivity of the American working class, due to automation, rationalization of production and speedup, very much on the order of the day is the need for a shortening of the hours of work per day or per week, with no reduction in pay.

What this increased productivity has meant in terms of the loss of jobs can be illustrated by the following: "There are twenty-five per cent fewer production workers in the meatpacking industry than there were 20 years ago. There are at least 150,000 fewer jobs in the auto industry than there were even three years ago." (Keynote speech by Marion Calligaris at a banquet in his honor March 1976. He is a leader in BRAC and TUAD.) Another graphic example: Iron and steel output was approximately the same in the years 1955, 1964 and 1975. In 1955 this output was achieved with 806,000 workers; in 1964, with 699,000 workers; and in 1975, with 607,000 workers. Thus we see that in the last 20 years the iron and steel industries has eliminated the jobs of 199,000 production workers, with no cut in production. (*Metalworker Facts*, Labor Research Association, April 1976.)

Reducing the number of working hours per week would effectively reduce the number of unemployed in our country today. About this there can be no question.

Just two examples. The 806,000 iron and steel production workers employed in 1955 could have produced the same output in 1964 by working a 35 hour week, in 1975 by working a 30 hour week. (*Ibid.*)

The other: The U.S. workforce numbered 95,601,000 in February 1976 (seasonally adjusted). A reduction in the hours worked per week by 4 would represent a 10 per cent reduction. All things being equal, that would mean that a 10 per cent increase in the total workforce, to maintain the same level of production. This would mean adding to the work force some 9½ million workers. That would put



a real dent in the 9.7 million now unemployed.

There has been some movement in the direction of a shorter work week. For a number of years the rubber workers were on six hour shifts. But they were forced by the companies to give it up in 1971. A number of trades have succeeded. Members of the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 5, in New York, won a 25 hour work week in the 1960s. Some building trades crafts have been on a 7 hour day since 1929. Many workers in the printing industry work 7 hour days, as do many others in the needle trades. West Coast longshore workers have a 6 hour cut-off for straight time earnings.

This illustrates the growing demand for a shorter work week, or shorter work day, with no cut in pay. Here are other examples. A resolution calling for amending the Fair Labor Standards Act, to provide for "A 30-Hour Work-Week with 40-Hours Pay" was signed by 300 of the delegates attending the Illinois State AFL-CIO convention in 1975. The San Francisco national convention of the AFL-CIO passed a resolution for a thirty-five hour work week with no reduction in pay (October 1975). The Collective Bargaining Program passed by the UAW Special Collective Bargaining Convention (March 1976) lists as its first demand: "Reduction in the time worked each week.—Reduce the regular hours of work in the week to below 40 hours." Nothing is said, however, about no reduction in pay. This year the Communication Workers will bargain for a shorter work week with no reduction in pay. The National Committee for Trade Union Action and Democracy (TUAD) has long supported the demand for shorter hours. The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, at their last convention, in May 1975, referred to the incoming executive board a resolution calling for a "30 hour week with 40 hours pay." It was adopted by that body. The Auto Workers Action Caucus (AWAC) conducts an ongoing campaign for a reduced work week, no cut in pay. Resolutions embodying this demand, in different variations, have been passed by numbers of local unions, central labor bodies, trade union conventions, throughout the country.

In addition to this reduced work week demand being included in the list of other demands of the various demonstrations for jobs, there have also been demonstrations for this specific demand. The latest example of this was the one that took place at the UAW Convention in March of this year. Some 1,000 or more union members marched before the convention hall, in what was described by some of the delegates as one of the largest and most spirited demonstration ever to take place at a UAW convention. When the convention opened, the participants marched from the street right onto the

convention floor. The demonstrators included delegates to the convention as well as UAW senior citizen members. They demanded a reduced work week with no cut in pay, as well as a Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) for those on pension.

But while the movement for a further shortening of the work week is growing, it is still in its beginning stages. For example: Despite the pressure at the UAW Convention, pressing that this demand receive top priority, there was no such commitment from UAW President Leonard Woodcock. Fact is this demand is part of what could be called a "laundry list" of demands.

There has not yet developed a crusade for this demand. There is not yet the kind of movement comparable to that of 1886 described earlier in this article.

One problem is the need for a center of leadership. It took a number of the top leaders of labor, men like John L. Lewis, Mine Workers; Charles P. Howard, Typographical; Thomas McMahan, Textile; Thomas Brown, Mine, Mill & Smelter Workers; to head up the tremendous clamor for union membership on the part of growing millions of unorganized unskilled workers in basic industry. They gave leadership to this need for organization.

This is the kind of leadership that is needed today to head up a drive for shorter hours. Such leaders today, who could play this role, do not see this as a top priority. They don't see it as a practical demand. They don't believe that it can be won.

To some degree they reflect the propoganda of the captains of industry. The position of General Motors with respect to this demand is that they cannot afford it. And they would set out to prove it by demonstrating that even though their profits before taxes for 1975 were \$2.371 billion, this represents only 6.6¢ per sales dollar. One certainly has to admit that 6.6 cents is but a pittance. But the cost of reducing the work week will come from the \$2.371 billion dollars. And that's what 35 billion of those 6.6 cents add up to.

The money to pay for this demand is certainly there. The total corporate profits before taxes for the entire economy for 1975 were as follows: 1st quarter, \$97.1 billion; 2nd \$108.2 billion; and 3rd \$129.5. These are annual rates seasonally adjusted.

It's true that applying these profits to the cost of providing for shorter hours, reducing the tax base, would mean less taxes to the Federal and State governments. But then the \$18 billion in unemployment benefits paid out in fiscal 1976 by the nation is one figure that would be greatly reduced. So would other transfer payments like food stamps, and welfare. Those returned to work would

then become taxpayers.

A major slash in the \$114 billion military budget would go far toward paying for a reduced work week for public workers. Plugging the tax loop-holes that enable the Morgans, Rockefellers and Duponts to escape paying taxes would produce more millions.

Another rationale given for not seeing the shorter work week as a major demand is made by UAW International President Leonard Woodcock. His position is that shortening the work week to 32 hours would only increase the number of workers engaged in moonlighting. Thus this would not really alleviate the problem of unemployment. The main moonlighters however, are not production workers. Of the 3 million holding two jobs in 1975, more than two million were teachers, firemen and policemen. Moreover, since the winning of a reduced work week would alleviate and not solve the problem of unemployment, Mr. Woodcock doesn't explain where those extra jobs would come from.

#### *Needed: Labor Unity*

As to whether or not the short work week demand can be won, it is true that the winning of this demand, both at the bargaining table, as well as in the halls of Congress, in the form of an amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act, will take a battle of major proportions. We can anticipate that this movement will have to contend with the fiercest opposition that the world's best organized tycoons of industry can muster.

First and foremost it will take trade union unity, and labor solidarity on the highest level. This means in the first place, a continued fight within the trade union movement against racism, the tool of the owners of industry to create divisions within the labor movement. They divide Black against white, Black and white against the Spanish speaking workers, native against foreign born. Such key words as "ethnic purity," "forced busing," "neighborhood schools," used by ruling class mouthpieces like Ford, Wallace, Louise Day Hicks, are examples of how they do it. From this springs the racism in the Boston school situation. And the same racist thugs who terrorize Black children in the South Boston schools are able to keep Black members of the Amalgamated Meatcutters away from their union hall. This is just one example of how racism will immobilize workers in terms of being in a position to fight for any program.

The battle for shorter hours cannot be won where workers may still be divided by anti-Communism. This too is a tool of the corporate barons. The Communists are among the best fighters within

the trade union movement. It will take the unity of both Communist and non-Communist workers to win this battle.

The outlook is that unemployment will remain at present high levels next year if the Ford Administration's budget policies remain in effect, a study by the Congressional Budget Office has concluded.

The Ford program for dealing with unemployment and inflation is based on the theory that by cutting social programs and rejecting bills to create jobs the rate of inflation will be reduced and private industry will of its own accord eliminate unemployment. The budget office saw no appreciable effect of this policy in reducing inflation, either.

Unless this Ford plan is defeated, and it can be, the outlook for the 330,000 Black youth between the ages of 16 to 19 is one without hope. The more than 2½ million women now without work will not be brought into the work force. The future of the big city ghetto areas where unemployment runs as high as 50 per cent can only become desperate. There will be little to look forward to on the part of students graduating from high school and college.

This Ford plan will be defeated. The demand for a shorter work week with no cut in pay, as one of the contributors to its defeat, is bound to grow. The continued growth of the rank-and-file movements in basic industry will be the principal basis for an ever increasing demand for shorter hours, both at the bargaining table as well as legislatively.

More and more resolutions at local union meetings, central labor bodies, union state conventions, international union conventions, other union bodies; petitions with thousands of signatures; massive demonstrations will merge into a ground-swell. The rank-and-file plus leadership will bring this about. Communist trade unionists are playing and will continue to play a major role in this development. From all of this will come the center of leadership to head it up.

The movement against the criminal U.S. intervention in Vietnam numbered only in the hundreds in the beginning. Just before the war ended, millions of Americans were involved in one way or the other in opposition to this U.S. aggression.

So too will the movement for shorter hours come into fruition.

## Women as Steelworkers

*Women can be steelworkers.* This fact is still hotly contested by reactionaries of various stripes today, when there is a renewed large-scale battle to overcome the extensive discrimination against women in the country's plants, mills and smelters. Yet there is ample historical proof of the truth of this contention. This article is intended to briefly review one chapter of our history which can serve as such proof—the experience of women in the steel industry during World War II.

With the advent of WW II women began to fill jobs that traditionally were held only by men. A bulletin issued by the United States Women's Bureau (#193) in 1942, entitled "Women Stand Ready to Fill War Jobs," reported that nearly one and a half million women were registered with employment offices all over the country in the spring of 1942. However, a serious need for women was still in the future. For instance in 1941 only one per cent of aviation employees were women, while in 1943 women comprised about 65 per cent of the total. ("Women in Steel," *Life*, August 9, 1943.)

Popular magazines that were appearing on the newstands in 1942 and 1943 tell part of the story:

*Business Week*: "Detroit hunts help; hiring 80,000 women needed by auto industry will require big recruiting drive."

*Popular Mechanics*: "Girls in overalls."

*N.Y. Times Sunday Magazine*: "With women at work, the factory changes; Lasting gains for all concerned."

Also: "Women can man machines," "Women are good foresters," "Sex in the Factory," "Mrs. Casey Jones; greater need of women on railroads," and last but not least an article from *Science* magazine, entitled "Women can learn to do almost any kind of work."<sup>(1)</sup>

Women began to get jobs in heavy industry, more specifically in the steel mills, as well as take jobs in light industry. Months after Pearl Harbor, the steel industry began to feel the shortage of manpower, and considered women as a source of labor to replace men. During 1942 a few women began to appear in laboratories and plant offices of some of the mills. Most mills, however, only began to hire women on a larger scale in 1943, and by the end of 1943 women were working in most of the country's steel mills.

In the summer of 1943 *Life* magazine did a feature article on

women steelworkers in Gary, Indiana, where 4,800 women were employed in United States Steel plants. It reported:

Although the concept of the weaker sex sweating near blast furnaces, directing giant ladles of molten iron, or pouring red-hot ignots is accepted in England and Russia, it has always been foreign to American tradition. Only the rising need for labor and the diminishing supply of manpower has forced this revolutionary adjustment.

At Gary, *Life* reported, women were working as welders, crane operators, tool machinists, laborers, electrical helpers, grinders, oilers, coil tapers, foundry helpers, checkers, loaders, metallurgical helpers, painters, cleaning and maintenance workers, inspectors, draw-bench operators, engine operators, furnace operators, billet operation helpers, packers and shippers. Before Pearl Harbor the only women employed in Gary steel mills were the sorters in the tin mills.

In 1943, the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor visited steel mills in the principal steel-producing areas. Based on this survey it published in 1944 a study entitled, "Women's employment in the making of steel, 1943," which compiled data on jobs filled by women in 41 steel mills. The proportion of women in the total work force of the 41 mills was 10.6 per cent. In production women made up 8.1 per cent, in administrative offices and on salaried payrolls 35.2 per cent. The proportion of women in production work varied by plant from 3.2 per cent to 16.1 per cent. (Data were collected on a total of 29,498 women.)

The Labor Department survey studied the actual work performed by women in the mills, their hours, rates of pay and working conditions.

The work of women steelworkers included work in the handling of raw materials, coke plants, blast furnaces, steel furnaces, rolling mills and fabrication.

### *Job Assignments*

Only one plant had women working at the *ore docks*. The work is described as very heavy and dirty. Most of the women on the labor gangs on the ore docks were Black. Women were seen in *rail receiving yards*, as car dumpers and car weighers working on railroad platforms and trestles. Women were reported as helping with the repair of road beds, laying tracks and tamping the earth up around the rails.

Seven of the 41 plants had women workers in the *coke oven sections*. Women were employed here in the labor gangs in clean-up crews. A few women were working as "lutersmen." One plant was contemplating using women in the top of the coke ovens to close the door after charging. Women were also reported working as "apron-conveyor operators," an inspection job of watching pulverized coke as it moves by and sorting out pieces of iron or wood. These outside jobs are described as heavy labor jobs.

At the *blast furnaces*, most of the women were on clean-up crews, shovelling spilled ore into piles and carting it away in wheelbarrows. Some women were reported working as larrymen (operating small electrical cars that carry raw materials, ore, limestone and coke from stockhouse to skipcar) and panmen (mixing fire clay for sealing the casting hole that seals the blast furnace).

At the *sintering plant* (it salvages ore dust and blast furnace flue dust by mixing it with water and spreading it on moving conveyors that carry it under gas flames for baking into clinkery masses known as sinters, which are charged back to the furnaces) all work was classed as labor, and most of the women who worked here were Black. The Women's Bureau Report notes that the workers here were exposed to siderosis from exposure to such dust, which in turn could cause pulmonary difficulties, but workers were not seen wearing respirators or goggles.

At the *steel furnaces* women laborers unloaded and stacked brick for the use of the bricklayers, unloaded hot-top rings for ingot molds, handed bricks and balls of clay to mason relining ladles and repairing furnaces.

About 2 out of every 5 women plant workers were in the *rolling mills*. The majority of the women in the rolling mills, as elsewhere, were classed as laborers, with plant-housekeeping and "helpers" duties. One woman was observed marking hot blooms, billets and slabs with blows from a hammer that had a die sunk in its head, a job described as "very hot and strenuous."

Women in *maintenance shops* varied from unskilled clean-up workers to machine operators doing their own set-up and diversified work on lathes.

### *Working Conditions*

The schedule of the steel industry in 1943 was an 8-hour day and a 48-hour week. Workers had one day off in seven. One mill reported a 7-day week as a regular schedule for women. Overtime beyond 8 hours was rare for women, and even for men the over-

time demands were not great. Because the women had home responsibilities and child care problems (and because this in turn resulted in absenteeism and turnover) some mills specifically assigned women to day shift jobs.

There were no regular lunch periods in the steel industry. "To a visitor in the steel mills the lunch period appears to be continuous," workers eating their lunches in spells on the job. The advent of women in the mills produced the problem of definite lunch periods, especially in states that had statutory regulations covering women's lunch periods. The mills in these cases would have a definite policy of setting aside lunch periods. States with such regulations included New York, Indiana, Maryland, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

The Women's Bureau report noted, "A few mills . . . claimed that since the law requires definite lunch pauses for women a deduction of a ½ hour must be made from their work time, to give the men 8 hours pay and the women 7½ hours pay." The Women's Bureau agents didn't think this was justified since the men were getting paid for spell time.

Standards as to weight limits to be lifted by women were not usual. Limits of 35 and 50 pounds as the maximum loads for women was reported in a few cases. In one mill two women together were observed continuously lifting and turning flat pieces of metal that weighed 120 pounds. In some cases women were provided with light, short-handled shovels for clean-up and labor jobs.

After the steel mills decided to hire women certain facilities were provided. Additional toilet rooms, washing facilities, cloak, rest and lunch rooms were required. At first men were not given such facilities. It is pointed out that men's facilities in some cases provided only the barest essentials and were not even adequate in themselves. However, the report states that "when the new [women's] facilities are ready, they are in most plants far better than those provided for the men and will fill a need for the men even if women do not remain long in the industry."

Lunch rooms, tables and chairs and in some cases hot plates were provided and were considered innovations in the mills at that time. Only a few of the mills had adequate lunch rooms and most were "drab and dirty" places. When an agent of the Women's Bureau commented on the unsatisfactory lunch rooms, the reply was that "lunch periods are on company time and the plan is to avoid making the eating places comfortable or attractive loafing centers." The agents from the Women's Bureau observed, "There



seems to be no reason to assume that steelworkers do not need and appreciate good food and eating facilities as much as other workers."

Women in all of the steel mills visited were getting pay equal to that of the male workers, with some exceptions. In jobs that were traditionally women's jobs (such as tin plate sorters), the beginning rate was "below the established minimum for inexperienced men."

In one plant the hourly rate for women crane operators was 11 cents *less* than that for men because women were not supposed to oil or make repairs on the cranes they operated. It was revealed upon investigation, however, that the men weren't supposed to oil or repair cranes either since that was the job of the maintenance crews!

Since the women in the mills were regarded as temporary substitutes, upgrading of the women was limited and thus women were kept from better paying jobs. Also, all workers who replaced men in the armed services were hired on an emergency basis and were not allowed to acquire seniority rates over steelmen in the service.

Even though women's employment in steel during the war was considered by the companies as a temporary expedient, it is evident that women did bring reforms. Because of statutory regulations covering various job conditions regarding women, the companies were forced to make improvements. The half hour lunch pause was one. Even though in some cases women were paid for  $7\frac{1}{2}$  hours work instead of 8 hours this was not the case in all the mills, and eventually regular half hour lunch periods became a pattern. Today steelworkers still do not have a guaranteed lunch break; it is a common practice rather that the companies allow a 20 minute lunch break for which the workers are paid. Of course this varies from mill to mill. The point here is that the situation with women was such that a precedent for formal lunch breaks was established. As is pointed out in the report:

"The steel industry . . . has a traditional conservative attitude that good cafeterias and lunch rooms are for the light industries. Steelmen grab a bite out of their lunch pail and a swallow of hot coffee whenever there is a lull.

"Only a few of the mills have adequate or desirable lunch rooms. In most cases they are drab and dirty places run by concessionaires whose incentive is the profit motive, not food or service for the employees."

It is also pointed out that even rest rooms, which were rarely provided for men, were provided for the women. Certain unsafe conditions in the mills were also affected by women workers: for example, where women crane operators were employed in Pennsylvania, it was necessary to have the crane and the ladders or steps used in climbing to the cab approved by the State Industrial Commission. Some of the most advanced conditions were established at a plant built by the government for wartime production in Provo, Utah. In addition to the above mentioned improvements, women there were granted several days a month special sick leave related to menstrual problems. When this plant was turned over to United States Steel Corporation after the war, these advances remained and U.S. Steel was never able to remove them from the contract. *Only now with the development of the ERA are such improvements threatened with being wiped out.*

In many instances women working in war industries did not receive equal pay. An excuse often advanced was that men had to support families. A Labor Department article entitled "Equal Pay for Women in War Industries" (Bulletin 1960) reported that many women, too, even then, supported families. In 34 studies reporting on 155,000 women and including both the married and the single, practically 60 per cent contributed to the support of dependents.

Representatives of the union reported to the Women's Bureau that many steel companies employed women on hard laboring jobs (the starting jobs), because these jobs carried "inequitably low wage rates" and men would not work at those rates. The union claimed that if the industry increased the wage rates for the lower jobs men would apply for them and women could be assigned other jobs "for which they are better adapted." *Life* reported that the women who replaced men in the mills received the same rate of pay. On the basis of a 40-hr. week the minimum pay was 78¢ per hour or \$31.20 per week. On the basis of a 48-hr. week the 6th day is at time-and-a-half pay, making the weekly wage at \$40.56.

The Labor Department survey reported that the unions welcomed the women steelworkers to their organizations and that women joined unions as readily as the men. Two mills reported that 98 per cent of the women plant workers were union members. In a number of the mills women served as shop stewards and some were serving on grievance committees. On the whole women were not encouraged to actively participate in the unions since it was as-

sumed they would only be in the mill for the duration of the war. No women were reported on labor management committees.

The *Life* article observed, "The women steel workers at Gary are not freaks or novelties. They have been accepted by management, by union, by the rough, iron-muscled men they work with day after day. In time of peace they may return once more to home and family but they have proved that in time of crisis no job is too tough for American women."

### *After the War*

It was assumed by both union locals and management that after the war the women would return to their "peacetime activities." Women's seniority on the job was recognized only for the duration of the war. Magazine headlines reflected this turnabout which was in fact taking place in all industry:

*Atlantic*—"Getting rid of the women"

*Business Week*—"Women's exit precedent set in Detroit as regional board approves"

*New York Times Magazine*—"How come no jobs for women?"

*Canadian Forum*—"No women being hired"

*Monthly Labor Review*—"Post war decrease in railroad employment of women"

*New York Times Magazine*—"What's become of Rosie the riveter?"

And so it was. After the war, women were either pressured to leave, laid off or fired by the same companies that couldn't do without them only a few years earlier. One study quoted a steel company executive as saying, "since World War II we have tried to rid our plants of female labor." (*The Negro in the Steel Industry*, Richard L. Rowan, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970, page 276.) A few women managed to stay on the job and indeed are still in the mills where they were hired in the early 40s.

Only recently are women once again seeking employment in this country's steel mills, many of whom are unaware that women steelworkers are not new, unaware that women steelworkers made a truly great effort to take the place of men in the country's steel mills during war. Today the companies aren't so eager to hire women. Their policies ever since WW II have been nothing but discriminatory towards women in that they have simply refused to hire them. Now women are being hired, but sparingly. They are in general discouraged from filling out job applications, or if the company is pressured they will hire token women and then discourage them from staying.

And due to their low seniority women are first to be laid off. Before I was hired I made so many trips to the employment office that the gate guard and I were on a first name basis. Every time I passed the gate he told me to keep on trying and that sooner or later they would hire me. They did, but only after I threatened a discrimination suit. We had to wait months for a locker room and shower. The bathroom was so far from my work area I'd get lost on my way back. Then the company took the lock off our bathroom, saying that the men didn't have a lock on theirs so the women couldn't have a lock either. We protested. "You wanted equality" a company official told me, "so now you got equality." Our fellow workers didn't agree with the company line. One of the fellows who worked in my area secretly obtained a lock and showed me how to install it inside the women's bathroom. We have protested that women are in fact not yet enjoying the fruits of genuine equality and as a result women have special problems that must be taken into consideration wherever they may be working. A sister steelworker has three children, all very young. Her job necessitates her working the night shift every third week and she does so with extreme hardship since she is divorced and has no one to care for her children. Her fellow workers sympathize but feel she must work her share of nights. This means she has to pay for someone to mind the children.

Our Black sisters in the steel mills have to combat racist attitudes and practices as well among their fellow workers, which are fostered and encouraged by the companies. A Black woman steelworker at my plant was deliberately segregated from the other Black workers in her department. The foremen told her on her first day, "I'll see to it that you won't work with your Black brothers." Assigning Black women to the dirtier, rougher jobs was common racist practice during war and is no different today. The Black women at the steel plant where I work were hired in as laborers, while white women were given either cleaner jobs or opportunities to learn a trade.

The movement for Black liberation has been largely responsible for paving the way for women in steel. The Consent Decree, filed in federal court in Alabama on April 12, 1974, was the result of the fight waged by Black steelworkers against a pattern of discrimination in the seniority system that resulted in confining Black and minority workers to the dirtiest, most dangerous, lowest paying jobs in the steel industry. While the decree in many ways does not go far enough in bringing justice to those discriminated

against, it did open the way for more equitable hiring practices for minorities and women.

The Consent Decree has had a definite effect on the employment of women in the steel industry. The companies are under pressure to hire women, to place them in apprenticeship programs and to establish affirmative action programs. However, as mentioned earlier, the companies will only do what they have to do and the struggle for equitable hiring practices and equal treatment on the job goes on.

As women steelworkers we know one thing for certain. We are not going to win our battles alone. For the most part our fellow male steelworkers are on our side and willing to help. They realize that women are a positive force in the steel mills. Just as they brought improvements for everyone, male and female, when they came into the mills during the war, so will they fight for better working conditions today. The men we work with are finding out that women's problems on the job are men's problems too and vice versa. Most of all we are finding out that it is easier to fight and easier to win our battles with the company when we fight them together, Black and white, male and female, old and young. And fighting for a solution to each other's special problems makes us stronger and brings us still closer together.

But when all is said and done, as women steelworkers, our biggest obstacle in our fight for equality is racism. Just as the Black steelworkers' struggle for a more equitable seniority system opened the doors for women in the steel industry, so will racist attitudes and practices hold us back.

In spite of the hardships that women face in the mills, they have chosen to stay and fight. We are back in the steel mills and more of us are arriving every day.

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# Some Trends Among Working Women

One of the benefits of International Women's Year is that it has led to a great deal of research on current trends and conditions among working and non-working women. From this wealth of new material it is possible to cull some of the most significant facts, and to analyze their importance for the future direction of the struggle of women for full equality. It is the intent of this article to *begin* this process of analysis, although many more articles are needed to complete a full analysis of every important aspect of this question. It is hoped also that the article will help deal one more death blow to any lingering notions that the struggle for womens' equality is not vital to the whole working class movement and should not be one of the top priority items of the agenda of men and women alike in the working class and advanced political forces.

## *Women In The Labor Force*

U.S. women are among the most working class of women in any capitalist country. Both the numbers of women workers and their proportion to the total work force have been steadily rising over the past five decades. Today almost two out of every five workers, or nearly 40 per cent, of the work force are women, as compared with only one out of five in 1920. Almost half (46 per cent) of all women 16 years old and over are in the work force today. These facts alone indicate the significance of working women to the working-class movement. One can hardly ignore two-fifths of the work force in any attempt to advance the working-class movement in this country!

Because of the greater economic hardships faced by Black and other nationally oppressed families, due to national and racial oppression, the historic tendency has been for a somewhat higher proportion of Black than white women to work. The difference is striking when we compare the number of nationally oppressed and white women in the labor force who have children. More than 60 per cent of nationally oppressed women with children 6 to 17 years old are workers, as compared with a little over half of white women.

And slightly over half of all nationally oppressed women with children under 6 work, as compared with about a third (34 per cent) of white women. Higher unemployment rates and lower wage levels among nationally oppressed men workers, the greater proportion of such families headed by women, and other factors compel nationally oppressed women to work in greater numbers than white women. The one exception is among young women between the ages of 16 and 24. Young minority women are the greatest victims of unemployment in the current economic depression. The combination of racial, sex and age discrimination results in a significantly smaller number of them working than is true for young white women. (*Facts on Women Workers of Minority Races*, U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, July 1975.)

It should be pointed out, however, that the general trend over the past decade is for *more* women with young children to be in the work force, regardless of race, than was true previously. This is part of the general trend for more women of *all* races and nationalities to work, regardless of marital status or the presence or absence of children. Indications are that this trend will continue, and that the number of women who do *not* work for any major period of their lives will be greatly reduced. Unlike previous generations, the new pattern that is emerging is for *most* women to work for *most* of their lives, with only a few years taken out to bear and care for young children. It follows from this that more women than ever before in history will have an objective interest in, and will be compelled to join in the struggle for full equality for women. And more of them will do so directly as workers for most of their lives than ever before. The fight for affirmative action to end employer discrimination on the job, the struggle for full representation and participation in the trade unions, the battle for adequate child care facilities, and similar job-related questions—all of these struggles will find more and more women in their ranks in the coming years.

### *Where Women Work*

When we examine the kinds of work women do, three important trends emerge. The first is that the vast majority of women continue to work in only a handful of different occupations. That is, the long-standing discrimination against women workers which has confined their job opportunities within very narrow limits continues to operate. A second, and opposite, trend is that women are beginning to hold jobs in occupations that were traditionally open to men only,

and that in a few cases the numbers of women in these traditionally male occupations is becoming significant. Third, the proportion of women in a number of important basic industries has either grown or remained stable at a high level in recent years. We shall examine these three trends in some detail because they are extremely significant and go to the heart of the problem of discrimination against women under capitalism.

Why is it that women have traditionally been concentrated in jobs in low-paying industries? Many different factors come into play for any particular industry, many of them historical factors, but the basic answer to this question must be looked for within the overall framework of capitalism as a system. The inequality faced by women in the U.S. is rooted in this capitalist system, a system based on the exploitation of the many for the benefit of the few. It is through special forms of oppression and inequality that the capitalist class extracts added profits from the backs of millions of nationally oppressed and women workers and perpetuates divisions within the working class. One of the main forms this inequality takes is confining women to low-wage jobs.

Women workers have always earned substantially less than men workers. They have always been specially exploited, and this trend continues. Not only are the incomes of women workers substantially less than men, but the gap has *widened* over the years. Currently the median wage of women workers who work full time, year round, is only 57 per cent as much as men!! It was 63 per cent in 1956. (1975 *Handbook on Women Workers*, Department of Labor, pp. 130-131.) Nationally oppressed women still earn substantially less than white women workers, although there has been some improvement in recent years. They now earn 88 per cent as much as white women, compared with 64 per cent in 1963. (*Ibid.*, p. 135.)

The extent to which women workers are concentrated in a limited number of occupations is revealed by the fact that in 1969 half of all working women were employed in only 21 different occupations. (By way of contrast, half of men workers were found in 65 different occupations.) Even more startling is the fact that one quarter of all women workers worked in only five different occupations!! These were: secretary-stenographer, household worker, bookkeeper, elementary school teacher and waitress. (Adele Simons, Ann Friedman, Margaret Dunkle and Francine Blau, *Exploitation From 9 to 5*, Lexington Books, Lexington, Mass., 1975, p. 50.)

Overall, women are heavily concentrated in the service sector, and, within that, in the lower-paying jobs in each category. They



are nearly half of all workers in retail trade, over 80 per cent of all hospital workers, and over 60 per cent of all workers in elementary and secondary schools. (*Ibid.*, p. 48.)

Because of the combined effects of racism and sex discrimination, nationally oppressed women are even more concentrated in low-paying jobs than white women. Seventeen per cent, for example, are still private household workers, and only 38 per cent hold white-collar jobs (as compared with 60 per cent of all women workers.) While the differences in occupation and wage levels between white and Black women are narrowing, they continue to be substantial.

Women earn substantially less in each occupational category than men. These differences are primarily due to the fact that, within each occupational category, women work in lower-paying jobs.

While the main reason for the generally lower wages of women workers is that they are confined to low-wage job categories, there are a number of other reasons which are important and should also be mentioned. One of these is that women are sometimes paid less than men for identical or equivalent work. Often this inequality is covered up by giving the men and women different job titles, even though the work performed is the same. Another reason for the income differences between men and women is that women tend to be found more frequently in seasonal types of jobs, and therefore to work fewer weeks out of the year than male workers.

Finally, income differences result also from the greater responsibilities women now carry in the raising of children. The fact that many women lose a number of years of work while their children are young means that they lose the seniority, acquisition of skills and opportunities for advancement that they might otherwise have accumulated. Family responsibilities also tend to cause women to look for part-time work and more flexible hours than most of the higher-paying jobs permit, thus making them the victims of "office temporary" and other such low-wage operations.

The conclusion to be drawn from the above facts is that one of the main issues in the struggle for full equality for women continues to be the fight to eliminate all discrimination based on race and sex in job training, apprenticeships, hiring and promotion policies. Only this will allow women to advance to higher paying job categories and *begin* to equalize the income levels of men and women workers.

### *New Occupations of Women Workers*

Most of us have probably noticed, just by casual observation, more

women cab drivers, mail carriers, bus drivers, policewomen, gas station attendants, doctors, lawyers, judges and public office holders than we can remember seeing in the past; and the figures bear out the truth of these casual observations. There are also more women carpenters, electricians, plumbers, mechanics, painters, tool and die makers, machinists, steel and auto workers, typesetters and compositors, insurance agents, real estate sales agents, college teachers, bank officers, financial managers, and bartenders than ever before. Women have made some gains and broken into some of the traditionally "male" occupations. The most dramatic increase of women in such occupations occurred in the skilled trades. Eighty per cent more women were working in skilled trades jobs in 1970 than in 1960. No doubt the affirmative action programs required by federal contractors had something to do with women entering these heretofore forbidden occupations. (1975 *Handbook*, pp. 92-94.)

The fact that some breakthroughs have been made is having an effect on the aspirations of young women not yet in the labor force. The number of women enrolled in law schools in 1973, for example, was three-and-a-half times as many as in 1969—just four years earlier. Similarly, the proportion of women in medical schools jumped from 9 per cent to over 15 per cent in the same four-year period. (*Ibid.*, p. 93.)

We should have no illusions, however, that anything approaching equal opportunity for women in any of the above fields has been achieved. For, while the number of women electricians has increased, for example, they are still less than two per cent of all electricians! Women tool and die makers are slightly over two per cent of the total. Women are only about four per cent of all dentists and nine per cent of all doctors. The greatest advance was made among postal clerks, where women are now about one-third of the total number (as compared with 17 per cent in 1960).

In the past decade the number of women increased in a number of important industries. In the electrical industry, where large numbers of women have always been employed, their numbers rose from 37 per cent in 1964 to 42 per cent in 1974. Women engaged in the manufacture of scientific, engineering and other instruments rose from 34 per cent to 40 per cent of the total; and women in other miscellaneous areas of manufacturing rose from 40 per cent to 44 per cent. Automation has undoubtedly been one of the factors responsible for these increases. The proportion of women employed in the textile industry increased from 43 per cent to 47 per cent, and those in apparel from 79 per cent to 81 per cent. Significant

increases occurred also in the printing and publishing fields and in the leather industry. Women employed in the communications industry declined slightly, but remained high at 47 per cent of all such workers. (*Ibid.*, p. 120.) Women made gains also in both the steel and auto industries, but these gains have been largely nullified by the current depression. Last hired, these women have been the first to be laid off.

Though precise figures are hard to come by, we know that the percentage of Black and other nationally oppressed women workers who are employed in industrial production is now greater than among white women workers. Whereas 15 per cent of Black women workers were listed as blue collar workers in 1964, this rose to 20 per cent, or one in five, by 1974. (The corresponding figures for white women are 15 and 12 respectively.)

### *Women In The Trade Unions: Trends and Problems*

Belonging to a trade union is a direct economic benefit to all workers, women included. As in the past, union men and women continue to earn more than nonunion employees. Nonunion women in blue-collar jobs earned, on the average, \$647 less per year in 1970 than their union sisters. Among women white collar workers there was a similar difference—union women earning \$326 more than nonunion women.

Despite the obvious benefits of union membership, the proportion of working women who are trade union members still remains quite low. According to one source, the percentage has actually dropped from about 14 per cent in 1954 to 12½ per cent in 1968 to only 10.3 per cent in 1970. (*Exploitation*, p. 119.) Another source states that the proportion of working women who were union members has remained stable at about one out of eight between 1962 and 1972. (For men, the figure is three out of every ten.) Either figure indicates a relatively low level of trade union membership among working women.

Just as unions have often failed historically to organize and fight on the special problems and needs of Black and other nationally oppressed workers, so also have they traditionally failed to show an interest in organizing women workers, or a regard for the particular problems women workers face. They have not generally fought against discriminatory practices by employers regarding wage scales, job opportunities, pensions, maternity leave and other benefits. And they have often practiced discrimination within their own ranks as well. Union women are typically underrepresented in leadership,

even in unions where the majority of members are women.

Many of the reasons for this are rooted in the historical development of the trade union movement in this country. A very interesting account of this history is given by Erica Grubb, from which I will quote only a brief passage.

The earliest trade unions in America developed from workmen's social clubs; their language was male and their meeting place was the neighborhood saloon. The first American trade unions were established in the 1820s among the printers, shoemakers, and carpenters, occupations in which there were no women. At the same time, almost seventy thousand women were employed in New England cotton mills. That these women had serious grievances and the ability to organize was demonstrated in 1828 when the cotton-mill workers of Dover, New Hampshire marched out of work to protest a reduction of wages. They eventually won their strike, and labor activity among women grew during the next three decades. This growth, however, was parallel to, rather than a part of, the development of men's trade unions. Labor organizers took no interest in working women, so women formed a few segregated "sister" unions. Separate women's unions were started among the collar workers, tailoresses, seamstresses, umbrella, sewers, capmakers, textile workers, printers, laundresses, and furnishers.

The nineteenth-century women's unions were unable to sustain themselves very long, however. Working women then, as now, frequently carried a double burden—responsibility for a home and family as well as for a job. Furthermore, they lacked the funds for organizational efforts—dues, strike funds, and spreading the word to other women—because they were generally paid only a fraction of what men were paid for the same work and were employed almost entirely in unskilled jobs. Moreover, women, traditionally isolated from one another in the home, were inexperienced as organizers, unaccustomed to thinking of themselves as workers, and not used to working in groups.

Thus, a vicious cycle began, a cycle that still continues in modified form today: men excluded women workers from fully participating in their unions, and women were unable to organize strong unions of their own; women, lacking bargaining power, were forced to work at lower wages under inferior working conditions; employers used women workers to undercut the wages and organizational efforts of men, thus increasing the hostility between the two groups. (*Exploitation*, pp. 115-116.)

Ms. Grubb goes on to trace the development of trade union or-

ganizing efforts among women, pointing out that the first wide-scale organizing was done by the Knights of Labor, although even there opposition to admitting women existed for a time and had to be beaten back. The twentieth century successor to the Knights of Labor was, of course, the American Federation of Labor (AFL), dominated by the skilled craft unions. Many of these had openly exclusionary clauses regarding both Black and women workers. The exclusionary clauses with regard to women disappeared only when the male unions were threatened with competition from nonunion women. (*Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.)

Even where exclusionary clauses were absent, women were often excluded through excessively high dues, lack of opportunity to obtain needed skills, and other measures. Where they were admitted, they were often treated, as were Black workers, as unwelcome intruders. At the time, union benefits were often pegged to salaries, as a result of which women, concentrated in lower-paying jobs, got lower strike, sickness and death benefits than the men.

Further, "the small number of women union members was only partially due to overt discriminatory practices by unions. Large numbers of women worked in occupations traditionally thought of as hard to organize, such as housekeeping, clerical work, and agriculture. Furthermore, most women were working in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, and the labor movement generally under-represented low-skilled workers, regardless of sex. . . . Most unions did not want women members, and women generally did not join unions, thus establishing the myth that women could not be organized."

The legacy of this past discrimination against women workers carries over into the present. While women entered the labor force in large numbers during the Second World War, and union membership among working women reached a high of almost 22 per cent, women were pushed out again after the war; their numbers in unions declined, and remained relatively low for the next two decades.

Finally, in accounting for the relatively low level of trade union organizing among women, we should note that the proportion of male workers organized into unions has also declined in recent years. This indicates, in part, the failure of the AFL-CIO to conduct the kind of organizing drives among the unorganized of both sexes that should be conducted. The male proportion dropped from about 32 per cent in 1966 to 28.5 per cent in 1970. (*Ibid.*, pp. 118-119.) Although some unions, like AFSCME, have been growing rapidly, this

is not the general situation for the trade union movement as a whole.

For all of the above reasons, the founding of the Coalition of Labor Union Women in 1974 struck a responsive chord among thousands of working women. The objective need continues for a movement and an organization dedicated to wiping out all forms and vestiges of discrimination against women workers, as well as the double discrimination faced by Black and all nationally oppressed women workers.

### *A True Story of a Labor Union Woman*

The stranger-than-fiction story of what happened recently to one woman worker in an electrical shop of several hundred workers illustrates the kinds of problems women *and* men workers face because of this legacy of discrimination, perhaps better than 100 pages of statistics could.

This young woman was the only woman apprentice in her shop. She was a highly respected shop steward as well. The shop had a health plan through the union. In addition, the most highly-skilled workers also had a private health and welfare plan through which they received additional benefits. This private club had a clause that stipulated that only men could belong. When the young woman applied for membership, she was refused, and thereby denied the benefits the other workers enjoyed. She decided to fight, and took her case to the State Human Rights Commission and the federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. The club was ordered to admit her, and rather than comply, the men broke up the club. The result was that not only did they deny her the health and welfare benefits, but they lost their own benefits as well! The day after she won her case, the young woman was arbitrarily removed as shop steward by the business agent, and removed from all union committees. She has now been forced to take her case to the courts. She is suing the company, charging it with a long history of excluding women from the skilled trades departments. She is also suing the international union for discrimination in dismissing her as shop steward. For a while, the skilled male workers refused to talk with her and refused to continue to teach her as an apprentice; but that gradually began to change. Now, when she points out to the men that they have cut off their own noses to spite their faces, they are forced to admit she is right.

If this story sounds strange, it should be kept in mind that nearly every working women, more than once in her working life, faces instances of discrimination as arbitrary and damaging to the overall

interests of the working class as the instance described above.

### *The Coalition of Labor Union Women*

The list of special problems working women in the U.S. face is nearly endless. To summarize briefly what we have been saying throughout this article, these problems begin in the high schools and even the grade schools, where stereotypes are perpetuated as to what female students should aspire to do with their lives. Women are discouraged from entering traditionally "male" occupations. This is particularly true for Black and other nationally oppressed women, whose job horizons are even more restricted than their white counterparts.

The problems continue when these young women leave school and enter the work force. There they face discrimination in apprenticeship and other job training programs and in hiring and promotion policies. Even where women do manage, despite these obstacles, to acquire needed skills, they are often passed over in favor of male workers, who are often less qualified than they are. Women are slotted into lower-paying, often dead-end jobs, again with nationally oppressed women being most discriminated against. Women with children face a multitude of particular problems because of the double burden they carry. Lack of adequate child care facilities is on the top of the list, as well as denial by employers of paid maternity leave, and discrimination against women who become, or might become, pregnant. Then there are such annoying problems as lack of proper dressing rooms, bathrooms and rest facilities for women workers and petty harassment and sexual advances by male employers—often with racist implications where nationally oppressed women are involved. To all of these problems the labor movement has generally failed to give proper attention, and has often displayed discrimination against women within the unions themselves.

It is no wonder, then, that the founding of CLUW in 1974 evoked such a widespread and enthusiastic response among women workers all over the U.S. While over 3,000 women attended the founding convention in Chicago, undoubtedly tens of thousands more eagerly awaited the results of the convention with great interest and hope that CLUW would become an organization that would begin to find answers to their needs.

The anger, resentment and frustration, as well as the hopes of millions of working women, built up over generations of struggle, gave rise to this strong welcome women gave to the founding of CLUW. While CLUW was initiated mainly by trade union staff

women and union officers, its need was clearly felt deep within the rank and file of trade union women.

The potential of CLUW to organize and galvanize the militancy of trade union women was, and is, enormous. CLUW can become that instrument which moves the trade union movement into effective action around the problems of working women, including the particular problems nationally oppressed women face due to racial and national discrimination and oppression. It can be that force which helps unite Black, brown and white women workers, together with their union brothers in the fight for full equality for women workers and thereby strengthens the entire trade union and working class movement in this country.

To fulfill this potential, CLUW will have to overcome a number of problems. It is apparent that the ruling class as well as its labor lieutenants (George Meany, Al Shanker and others) recognize the significance of CLUW. They have moved to contain and control it from the Right, and to derail it from the Left. The Right-wing social democrats among the trade union leadership have done everything in their power to try to guarantee that CLUW mirrors as closely as possible the policies and programs of the AFL-CIO officialdom. Political maneuvering, undemocratic procedures that stifle the rank and file, and bloc voting have all contributed to this process. The ultra-Left, on the other hand, in the name of "militancy" has operated with such disruptive tactics within CLUW as to divide the ranks of CLUW and block effective actions. The Right and the ultra-Left feed each other, to the detriment of the millions of working class women who want CLUW to become the effective, fighting organization of trade union women that it can become.

The solution of these problems lies in large part in the building of strong rank-and-file bases among women in each and every union, based on the problems and issues that women workers face. Such organized groups of women can and should become the major influence in CLUW, shaping its program and activities to meet their needs. This is where the effort and energy of advanced political activists should be directed. Male workers can also play a role in this process, by helping to bring women with whom they work into contact with such rank-and-file formations and with the CLUW organization in their area.

While the form that is developed will often (though not necessarily always) be women's committees, or CLUW caucuses, in the unions, women should and will also play an active role in rank-and-file formations of both men and women workers. The two comple-



ment, rather than contradict, each other. Every rank-and-file formation should pay special attention to the problems its women members face and develop a strong program around these problems.

In addition to building strong rank-and-file bases among working women, there is a need also to build Left-center alliances among CLUW activists. It is clear that many progressive women in CLUW all across the country are seeking such ties with advanced forces, and welcome the kind of clarity and direction to the struggle that such relationships can provide.

The role of women members of the Communist Party and other progressive women can be decisive in shaping the future of CLUW. They can be the forces that help guarantee that the greatest unity among working women is built, that the fight around the special problems faced by nationally oppressed women are a central aspect of CLUW's program, that the most democratic procedures prevail in CLUW, and that the damaging influence of both the Right-wing social democrats and the ultra-Left are curtailed. Only if this is done will the tremendous potential that exists for CLUW and for working women and the trade union movement as a whole be realized.

The rank-and-file upsurge among working women will continue to grow in coming years, propelled by objective conditions. Not only will this have a direct and beneficial influence on the working class as a whole; it will also have an important influence on the struggle for women's equality. Indeed, it has already had such an influence, and this will grow. Working-class women—Black, brown and white—will become the *dominant* force in this movement, and will more and more define its goals and guarantee its character. Because the working-class faces most urgently the need to struggle against racism and to unify its ranks in its own class interest, it is working-class women who will guarantee that this question is brought to the fore in the overall movement for women's equality. It is for all of these reasons that the movement among working women demands renewed and ongoing attention and leadership from left and progressive forces, beginning with our Party.

## Rediscovering the Dialectics of Nature

A science of society could never have arisen in an age which had not yet developed a science of nature. The idealist dialectics of Hegel could never have been turned right side up and "placed on its feet" to become dialectical materialism had not understanding of the material world developed to the point where science was clearly showing that natural processes are dialectical and not metaphysical. Natural science had laid the foundations of human knowledge and the task before Marx and Engels was, as Engels said, "bringing the science of society . . . into harmony with the materialist foundation, and of reconstructing it thereupon" (*Ludwig Feuerbach*, International Publishers, 1941, p. 29).

Now we are faced with an environmental crisis on a world scale, intimately related to the world crisis of capitalism. In other words, the material foundation of all human life, all human society, is in danger.

Natural science has provided us with knowledge of our natural environment far beyond what was known a century ago when Marx and Engels wrote. And they gave us the principles of dialectical materialism which can guide our examination of the interactions of human society and the natural environment. This examination is a task we have too long neglected.

Too often in the past we have looked on nature as if it would provide endless sustenance to any social system. Our concern was with the effect of the capitalist system, not on nature but on people, as if people could somehow be separated from the very source of their lives. Gus Hall made it clear in *Ecology: Can We Survive Under Capitalism* (International Publishers, 1972) that the era when such a thoughtless approach to nature could be tolerated is now past. The people of the United States, he said, must "accept our share of the world responsibility of ending the destruction of the environment," and this is part of our struggle against monopoly capitalism.

Since Hall's book was published, our press has become more critical of pollution in the environment, but to criticize the *results* of capitalism has never been more than a small part of our task. It is necessary for Marxists to probe more deeply in order to understand and explain *how* and *why* specific results are the outgrowth of specific features of capitalist development. If we consider only

the symptoms of the environmental disease now afflicting the world, the treatment we recommend may alleviate the symptoms, but it will not attack the cause and therefore will not effect a cure. The symptoms in this case—pollution of air, water and soil—are indeed serious, and alleviating them by measures to clean up pollution may temporarily save the patient's life. In the long run, however, there is no avoiding the need for diagnosing the disease itself and identifying its causes.

In a general way we know the cause is to be found in the ruthless exploitation and wasteful destruction of our environment by capitalism. We expect the cure to be found when we succeed in moving the patient into the climate of socialism. But this is the beginning, not the end, of the wisdom we need. While it is the social climate of capitalism that provides the breeding ground for the world's environmental disease, the specific mechanism by which capitalism wreaks environmental havoc is found in the tools it uses—the tools that go by the name of modern technology. As Marx said, technology "discloses man's mode of dealing with Nature." (*Capital*, International Publishers, 1967, Vol. I, p. 372).

If a technology employed by capitalism is transferred to socialism with its use unchanged, the environmental problems peculiar to it will also be transferred. While environmentally the Soviet Union is far ahead of the U.S. and other capitalist countries, its history provides an example of what can happen when technology is transferred almost unchanged to a socialist society.

As Soviet writers have said, the technological backwardness of tsarist Russia at the time of the Revolution and the urgent tasks of building socialism under conditions of capitalist encirclement required that the Soviet Union make use of technology developed under capitalism. The devastation of World War II put rapid use of existing technology ahead of environmental considerations in Soviet plans at that time. (*Soviet Studies in Philosophy*, Winter, 1974-75, p. 177.) As a result, the USSR has been faced with some of the same environmental problems as the United States. A lead mine, a paper mill, a chemical factory or a utility plant may be intended to make profits under capitalism, while it is intended to improve the living standards of the people under socialism, but no matter how much the *social* design has changed, if the *technological* design remains the same, the same effects on the environment will be produced.

Of course, there are many areas in which the Soviet Union did not take over bourgeois technology or utilized it in a way that prevented or reduced environmental problems. Because production

is for use, not for profit, it is far less wasteful; planning has meant that cities and transportation facilities could grow together in a rational way, resulting in better land use and less air pollution. The vastly different approach to occupational health and safety has inspired technological changes in capitalist methods of production when they are adapted to a socialist society, and an improved work environment often means an improved outside environment. Furthermore, the social basis of the system and its planning structure put it in a far better position to deal with those environmental problems that have arisen. It would take a book to describe all the differences between the U.S. and the USSR in environmental policy and practice. The point here is simply that to prevent environmental catastrophe in a developed nation, social and political change is necessary but technological change, change in "man's mode of dealing with nature" is also necessary.

This means that we must learn to understand nature and nature's laws—the material foundation of society. We must learn to understand the effects upon nature of a given mode of ownership of the means of production and of a given production technology. Then and only then will it be possible to move simultaneously toward socialism and toward the achievement of an equilibrium between the world's people and the natural environment that supports them.

This is a task for the Communists of the whole world. As we in the United States begin to grapple with it, we have much to learn from the socialist countries, particularly the Soviet Union. In the last few years they have been seeking to develop Marxist theory on this question to guide their practical work. A series of roundtable discussions on "Man and His Environment" was sponsored in 1972 by the journal *Natural Philosophy (Voprosy Filosofii)*. The reports and summaries of the discussion are now available in English in the Fall-Winter 1974-75 issue of *Soviet Studies in Philosophy*. We can expect more of such stimulating ideological work as well as new practical developments from the Soviet Union.

But we cannot leave it all to the Marxists in the socialist countries, for as part of our main task of moving toward socialism in the U.S., we have two important environmental tasks which differ from those of the Parties where the transition from capitalism has already taken place. We ourselves must therefore participate in developing the theoretical base on which to erect our practical program.

### *Tasks of the CPUSA*

1) The United States is the largest and strongest remaining bastion of monopoly capitalism and the greatest threat to the world's people

and their environment. Our program must therefore include opposition to assaults by U.S. capitalism on the environments of particular countries outside our own borders and on the global environment.

2) The exploitation of nature has become so extensive in our own country and new intrusions into the environment are proposed on so large a scale that the material basis of socialism and the survival of future generations are threatened. Our program must therefore include measures for the protection of our own people and their environment in the present and the immediate future. Unlike the environmental programs of other organizations and political parties, such measures in our program must have a working-class character: they must not be at the expense of the living standards of the workers and the mass of the American people; they must protect the working environment as well as the living environment; they must not be limited to palliatives, but must be such as to move our society forward in the direction of a transition to socialism.

### *Understanding Nature*

The most basic principle of the relationship of people and nature is the simplest and easiest to understand: we are part of nature. Yet in the arrogance that has characterized capitalism with all its technological marvels, this is all too frequently forgotten. The Soviet Union also suffered severely from this mistake during the Stalin period and as recently as 1972 one of the participants in the *Natural Philosophy* roundtable said that technology and economic activity were changing nature to such an extent that the biosphere would be replaced by a new system, the "biotechnosphere, which will develop according to unique laws as yet unknown to us" (p. 20). Other participants pointed out that no matter how great our capacity to alter the natural environment becomes, "The creative and transformative activity of society certainly does not mean changes in the very laws of nature" (p. 38). As Engels put it:

. . . we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature—but we, with flesh, blood, and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, . . . and all our mastery of it consists in this fact that we have the advantage over all other beings of being able to know and correctly apply its laws. (*Dialectics of Nature*, p. 292.)

One such law, which has only in recent years begun to be widely understood, is that nature, with all its bounty, has limits which human society cannot exceed. There are limits to the iron, copper,

aluminum and all the other inorganic raw materials from which we fabricate both means of production and consumer goods. There are also limits to the synthetic substitutes, for all synthetics have a natural base. (Many are petroleum products.) There are limits to the fossil and nuclear fuels, and although present "shortages," as Gus Hall pointed out in *The Energy Rip-Off*, are artificially contrived, even coal, the most plentiful, is not unlimited.

There are limits to the amount of living, renewable resources that can be produced by the soil, water and air: the plants and animals from which we get our food, the forests, the fish. Therefore there is a limit to the total number of people the earth can support. There are limits to the types and quantities of synthetic chemical materials that can be injected into living systems—including the human organism—without disrupting these systems beyond repair. These materials are not found in nature and there are therefore no natural means of adapting to them or decomposing them. Essentially the same thing applies to the radioactive materials which may reach the environment from the weapons program and from other uses of nuclear energy. Although they lose their radioactivity over a period of time, this is in some cases far longer than a human lifetime, even thousands or millions of years. There are also limits to the ability of living systems to accept without serious harm the kind of pollutants that are natural materials displaced, whether they come from factory stacks, auto exhausts or sewer pipes.

To say that nature has limits is not to say that we have reached those limits. People who starve in the world today are not without food because the earth has no more to give, or because there are too many people in the world. They are starving because the production and distribution of food, except in the socialist countries, is not organized to meet the needs of the people. In the capitalist world, food is a profit-making commodity and an instrument of a foreign policy in search of greater profits.

Although we know that nature has limits, we are in many cases very far from knowing what they are. These limits, even dimly perceived, seem constricting only because they stand in the way of unending progress as capitalism understands—in terms of profits. We are still only at the threshold of knowing and correctly applying nature's laws. As we gain in such knowledge and application, we will learn that nature's limits need not stand in the way of progress, understood as fulfilling more of the needs of more of the people of the world. A society that lives in harmony with nature will expand and enrich the lives of its people. But it is knowledge we need, patiently sought and carefully applied, not a blind faith that

we will somehow be able to brush aside nature's laws and supersede its limits. We who are materialists must keep our feet firmly on the material earth.

Among the dangers in the relationship of monopoly capitalism to nature, the most serious are:

1) Acting in accordance with the laws of capitalist development regardless of natural laws, corporations and the governments they control will endeavor to push—in one or more areas—beyond nature's limits, with catastrophic consequences.

2) Perceiving an approaching limit, they will resort to profoundly reactionary solutions.

### *Capitalism vs. Nature*

There is a strong tendency for capitalism to press nature to its limits. As Marx showed, capital constantly seeks to increase surplus value by heightening the productiveness of labor. This is done by investing more and more capital in machinery and energy relative to the amount used for labor. This is one of the characteristics of the system that periodically brings it to grief economically, and it also brings us to grief environmentally.

It leads to a drive for ever more materials and energy obtained in the cheapest, that is, the most wasteful way. It is true that the material is not totally lost; the biosphere is an almost closed system, and therefore all material remains within the system. However, as machines, automobile tires, and a thousand and one other commodities wear out, they deposit on streets and factory floors particles so fine as to be irrecoverable. These particles become one form of pollution. Eventually, the thing itself is discarded, often to be burned or dumped on land or in the ocean in a manner that makes it totally or partially irrecoverable.

Rapid technical progress has been characteristic of capitalism throughout its existence, stimulated by the effort to obtain higher labor productivity and also by the tendency for the production of new products to be more profitable than old ones (*Capital*, Vol. III, p. 259). Technical change has been tremendously speeded up since World War II. As Victor Perlo explains in *The Unstable Economy*, "War was a catalyst, speeding the opening of the new era of the direct, large-scale application of science to economic life. . ." (International Publishers, 1973, p. 162). What this has meant for the environment has been described by Barry Commoner in *The Closing Circle* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1971). He traces a series of replacements of old products by new ones since World War II. In each of the cases he examines, the new product has little or no

advantage over the old except in its profitability, but has a decidedly more negative environmental effect.

Because this direct, large-scale application of science and technology has meant environmental destruction, there has been a trend within the environmental movement to assume that the two are inevitably linked, and therefore that technical progress should be opposed. While Commoner directs his criticism at particular technological developments stimulated by the profit drive, less perceptive environmentalists have attacked technology *per se*. The keys to understanding the link between technology and environmental destruction are found primarily in understanding how capitalism operates. In addition, this new era in capitalist technology was profoundly affected by its military origins, not only in the sector of industry which retained its direct connection with the Pentagon, but also in other sectors, particularly in the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology.

Another characteristic of capitalism that makes for pressing nature to its limits is the effort of the corporation to avoid paying any of the environmental costs of its operation. For example, the air has been treated as a free resource, into which any amount of waste could be poured. When an aroused public finally demanded some protection for the quality of the air, standards were set in such a way that only where harm to human health could be proved—that is, only where it could be demonstrated that a natural limit was being exceeded—would control measures be taken. This by no means guarantees that no harm will come to people or to the environment.

Capitalism is not concerned with the value to society as a whole of nature's gifts. "The whole spirit of capitalist production—which is directed toward the immediate gain of money," said Marx (*Capital*, Vol. III, p. 617) is "in contradiction to agriculture, which has to minister to the entire range of permanent necessities of life required by the chain of successive generations. A striking illustration of this is furnished by the forests, which are only rarely managed in way more or less corresponding to the interests of society as a whole, i.e., when they are not private property, but subject to the control of the state."

Capitalism is not even concerned with the value of nature's gifts to the future of the capitalist system. It is concerned only with keeping their exchange value low—that is, getting them out of the ground and into the factory with the least possible labor. Cheap extraction and wasteful use in the past have made extraction in the present more difficult and costly in labor, and therefore in



money. The wasteful and destructive way energy and materials are extracted and used in the process of capitalist production not only means the depletion of non-renewable resources. It also means that more and more human labor is required to restore air, water and soil to their previous condition, making them suitable once more both for production processes and for maintaining human life. As capitalism operates, this is unproductive labor because it does not contribute to the expansion of profits. Capitalism always tries to shift the burden of unproductive labor to the public sector and then—through regressive taxation—to the working class and other low income groups. For example, the rising cost of handling urban sewage costs arises in part from the problems caused by mixing industrial waste with domestic waste. These costs are usually paid, not by the industries which failed to process their own wastes, but by the municipalities, with some assistance from the federal government.

A fourth aspect of capitalism that presses nature to its limits is the willingness of any capitalist or group of capitalists to "kill the goose that lays the golden eggs." That is, a business based on a renewable natural resource need not—from a business point of view—maintain that resource in a state which will permit it to continually renew itself. The resource can be driven to the point of extinction as long as the capitalist can get his money out and profitably invest it in some other business. (See Daniel Fife, "Killing the Goose," *Environment*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 20-27.)

Capitalist corporations and governments sometimes do not know or do not care to know, and certainly do not correctly apply those laws of nature which *must* be applied if we are to preserve and renew its bounty. Take, for example, that very important dialectical law of the development of nature, the negation of the negation. Engels explains that a grain of barley is negated in the process of growth, being replaced by the plant which

grows, flowers, is fertilized and finally once more produces grains of barley and as soon as these have ripened the stalk dies, is in its turn negated. As the result of this negation of the negation we have once again the original grain of barley, but not as a single unit, but ten, twenty or thirty fold. (*Anti-Duhring*, International Publishers, 1935, p. 154.)

A grain of barley can be negated in other ways; it can simply be crushed, or it can fail to germinate because the suitability of the soil has been destroyed, or because the seed is denied the proper heat or moisture. This kind of negation destroys the grain or interferes with the growth process. To preserve the process of na-

tural growth "I must," says Engels, "so construct the first negation that the second remains or becomes possible. . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 160).

To use our grain of barley as a symbol of nature under capitalism, only if it will produce a profitable plant next season will the first negation be so directed that the second remains possible.

What has happened to our forests is an example. Some trees, particularly fast-growing species, are planted, harvested and the same area replanted by lumber companies because a second harvest will be profitable within the foreseeable future of the corporation. But thousands of acres have been denuded of the forests that took hundreds of years to grow without directing that negation so that a regrowth—a negation of the negation—would be possible. Instead, erosion or conversion of the land to other uses has interfered with the natural process and made it extremely difficult and in some cases impossible to restore forests. Of course, this does not mean that we should—even if we could—return our agricultural land to the primeval forests of the past. It does mean that in forestry, as in every other aspect of the interaction of human society with the environment, we must understand what we are doing. We must be guided by the long term needs of the whole society rather than the short term interests of individuals and we must not destroy beyond repair resources which can and should be renewable.

Take a basic law of ecology: a natural community, over time, will tend toward stability based on diversity; a variety of plants, animals and insects will keep each other in balance. But our agriculture replaces diversity with thousands upon thousands of acres of the same crop, destroying the basis of natural pest control, which is then replaced with chemical control. The manufacture and sale of these chemicals is a business like any other capitalist business, with its agents in the field to "advise" farmers, its influence in the Department of Agriculture and in the departments of entomology of many universities. Ever greater quantities of pesticides are used, ever new, "improved" products are sold without adequate testing of their human and environmental effects. What is supposed to be protection all too often turns into its opposite: desirable as well as undesirable species of insects are destroyed, further reducing natural control; target species develop resistance to the chemical, requiring heavier doses or new formulations; farm workers suffer an occupational hazard.

We are all familiar with examples from nature of the dialectical law of the transformation of quantity into quality, such as a gradual temperature change which does nothing but make water colder and colder until it reaches 32° F (0° C), at which point a qualitative

change of state takes place and the water becomes ice. This change can be reversed and the water restored to its previous liquid state by a temperature change in the other direction. The operation of the law of quantity into quality becomes much more complex when living things are involved, and still more so when entire ecosystems are involved.

Temperature change applied to a living thing evokes a series of adaptive changes because a living thing is in dynamic equilibrium with its environment, constantly changing to adapt to environmental change. Yet each plant or animal has only a limited range of adaptations to temperature change. It can become so cold or so hot that a qualitative change takes place and living tissue becomes dead tissue. Unlike the qualitative change of state in water, this is an *irreversible* change.

The environment of an entire species of plant or animal—including the human animal—can be changed in many, many ways more complex or more subtle than temperature change—and having effects much less well understood. Such changes may exceed the ability, not only of a single individual, but of the entire species to adapt. A species can sometimes adapt to an environmental change by natural selection, but this requires many generations and the death of thousands of individuals within the species. This is one reason for caution in introducing vastly increased quantities of natural substances and *any* quantity of new chemical or radioactive substance into the environment.

Another reason for caution is that when quantitative changes in one aspect of a complex system become transformed into qualitative ones, this affects all the relationships within the system in ways that are difficult to predict. When Engels described the revolutionary developments of 19th century natural science, he spoke of them as culminating in a “new conception of nature” in which the whole of nature was “shown as moving in eternal flux and cyclical course” (*Dialectics of Nature*, p. 13). This cyclical course is not a single cycle but a whole series of interrelated cycles, making up just such a complex system.

Capitalist industry and agribusiness repeatedly disrupt some aspect of one of these cycles. When such a disruption is viewed with alarm by environmentalists, the usual response is that the disruption is “negligible,” which is to say that it is only a small quantitative change. This defense was heard when one of our society’s most trivial (but highly profitable) technologies—spray cans using a fluorocarbon propellant—was implicated in a possible reduction in the ozone layer.

The ozone layer is always "moving in eternal flux and cyclical course." It is in a state of dynamic equilibrium with other atmospheric components and processes, so that some ozone is always coming into being and some is always dying away. These two parts of the process may not be in balance in any particular month or year; the total amount of ozone fluctuates; but over time they do balance each other. The overall effect is that the protective ozone shield between the sun and living things is always maintained, filtering out much of the ultraviolet radiation before it reaches the Earth, and thereby protecting people and other forms of life.

Because fluorocarbon is very stable, not readily interacting with other chemicals, it remains in the atmosphere for a long time, slowly drifting upward until it reaches the high atmosphere. There it encounters the conditions under which it loses its stability and in the interactions which take place, ozone is destroyed. One year's "negligible" quantity of fluorocarbon added to another and another may gradually reach the point where a qualitative change takes place in our protection from ultraviolet radiation.

The specter that is beginning to haunt environmental scientists with a Marxist perspective is that one of the intrusions of capitalism into a natural cycle will result in an *irreversible* change before basic social changes in the mode and technology of production can intervene.

The significance of natural cycles and of current interference with them is illuminated in the book already mentioned, *The Closing Circle*. This book goes counter to the trend which has so seriously limited science under capitalism, a trend toward the division of labor which already in Engels' day had become dominant in natural science and had "more or less restricted each person to his special sphere, there being only a few whom it did not rob of a comprehensive view." (*Ibid.*, p. 10.) Yet a comprehensive view is desperately needed,

for in nature nothing takes place in isolation. Everything affects every other thing and vice versa, and it is usually because this many-sided motion and interaction is forgotten that our natural scientists are prevented from clearly seeing the simplest things. (*Ibid.*, pp. 289-290.)

The barriers between the natural sciences and between natural science and political economy are partially responsible for the counter-ecological technology that has developed (see *The Closing*

Circle, pp. 187-197) and to the present limitations in the struggle for environmental protection. Piecemeal scientific analysis of environmental problems and failure to understand their relationship to our economic system and its technology have resulted in programs for only partial and inadequate—sometimes useless—reforms. *The Closing Circle* was the first book on the environment to break through these barriers in a meaningful way. The chapter called “The Economic Meaning of Ecology,” which could just as well have been called “The Ecological Meaning of Economics,” is required reading for anyone trying to understand the relationship of economic and environmental issues and to formulate a relevant program.

Such a program is becoming increasingly urgent for reasons that are peculiar to the period in which we live, but which all arise from the basic contradiction in capitalist society’s relationship to nature, as succinctly expressed by Marx in a description of capitalist agriculture:

Capitalist production . . . develops technology, and the combining together of various processes into a social whole, only by sapping the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the laborer. (*Capital*, Vol. I, pp. 506-507.)

If we read “soil” in the general sense of all natural resources, this is as applicable to every other industry as it is to agriculture.

This is by no means a comprehensive treatment of Marxist theory on the environment. Its purpose has been to open up a theoretical discussion which can help us to develop a practical program. The second part of the article will discuss some aspects of that practical program.

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# BICENTENNIAL

GRACE ARNOLD

## My Parents

My father, John E. Snyder, was born on the fifteenth of April, 1875, in Louisville or Louisburg, Pennsylvania (it's not quite legible on my birth certificate). He was descended from old Pennsylvania Dutch stock, immigrants who settled in the Penn colony in 1706. They were "Wiedertaufer," followers of that sect which supported Jan Hus and later formed the Munster Commune, who had gone to Pennsylvania in search of religious freedom.

My father's parents left Penn State when he was a child, going first to Florida, then on to Kansas and finally to Oklahoma, where they settled as homesteaders. Though deeply religious, my father's parents believed in social and racial equality, in humanity, and raised their children in this spirit. My grandfather had been a courier for the North in the Civil War, working mainly behind the lines in the Southern states. For his services he received a personal government pension.

Still, the family could barely eke out a living and Father took on his first job around the age of twelve at a halfway station of the Pony Express. There he found time for reading, and he read everything that came his way. There he met with all kinds of people of many countries and races, including Mexicans and Native Americans, and it was through him that I grew up with quite another conception of these peoples than we were ever taught in school. It was his brother-in-law who at that time probably had the greatest influence on my father. The brother-in-law was a born naturalist, a materialist, who finally became a populist and marched with Coxey's Army.

I don't know when or how Father finished school, but he went to study agriculture in both Oklahoma and Kansas, finally ending his studies in Trenton, Missouri, at Ruskin College, at the time a progressive college. He earned his way doing clippings for local papers and by writing now and again. At Ruskin he published a little magazine called *Young Ruskin*, where his own poetry brought him the name of "Sweet Singer of the Ozarks." In many of his later writings his love of poetry and his own poetic strain colored much of his style of

writing.

Around this time he became a socialist. Of the earlier period he wrote in an editorial in the *World* in his own defense (he had been arrested and accused under the Espionage Act), that his readings in history had brought him closer to Tom Paine, Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams, the "undesirables" of their time. He wrote that he had believed in the Declaration of Independence and saw in the first ten amendments his Bill of Rights and regarded political democracy as a safeguard for American liberties. He read Emerson, Ingersoll and Dietzgen. Walt Whitman became his favorite poet. Of Lowell's poem

New occasions teach new duties,  
Time makes ancient good uncouth,  
We must ever up and onward  
Who would keep abreast of truth

he wrote that it opened his way toward socialism. The writings of the Abolitionists brought him a further step on his way. And he wrote that Marx's call "Workers of All Countries, Unite," broke down the line between nations in his mind.

Father had believed in America as a "haven of every dauntless rebel the world over" until, as he wrote, he came to realize that class lines had long been drawn and determined the history of all mankind; that all working men and women were his kinsmen; all exploiters his enemies; that the future belonged to the men of labor.

I don't know when he joined the Socialist Party, but it must have been before 1907, since I remember his stories about the struggles of the miners in the Black Hills and in Colorado, where he knew Big Bill Haywood. By 1907 he was in Girard, Kansas, where he was secretary for the Socialist Party Branch and editor of the Oklahoma and Kansas section of the *Appeal to Reason*. This brought him into close contact with Eugene V. Debs, travelling with him on lecture tours. To him Debs was not only a staunch rebel, but a great humanist, devoted to the American working class. (For me remains only the memory of a tall, gaunt man, who when speaking reached out far into his audience with his long arm that seemed to punctuate his words.) For Dad one of the most stirring speeches Debs ever made was after the "Cherry Mine" disaster, when the mules were brought up before any attempt was made to rescue the entrapped men. I suppose this doesn't belong here but somehow that story has always remained with me as a symbol of the atrocities of capitalism. It was in Girard, Kansas, that my father and mother met (at a

meeting where Debs spoke), and in Girard they later married.

Mother was born on the 23rd of August, 1885, in the mining town of Kirkville, Iowa. She was one of twelve children of Henry and Marie Bilterman, German deportees under the "Sozialisten Gesetz." Grandfather had worked in the coal mines of the Ruhr before he joined the Party and continued as a miner in Iowa. Somehow he was connected with the "Chicago anarchists," and I remember standing under the pictures of the Haymarket victims while Grandmother, with tears in her eyes, told me their story. For organizing for the miners' union Grandfather was on the blacklist for years. His four older boys all went to work in the mines from the age of twelve. Grandfather then kept a little shop to keep the family going. He was always interested in education and sent his girls to school; one of them received teacher's training. But though Granddad was blacklisted and could only now and again go into the mines, when his own sons hired him, he was to receive the injury that caused his death in the mines.

Like her parents, my mother became a socialist and has never left the progressive movement for a day since then. In 1909 or 1910 my father was sent to Los Angeles, where I came into the picture. Here, alongside his work for the Socialist Party, he worked as associate editor on the *Los Angeles Citizen*, a paper of the central labor council. For his defense of the MacNamara brothers he lost his job, and was then appointed to the Southern states as field organizer for the Socialist Party. Sometime after the 1912 convention of the Socialist Party, to which he was a delegate, he returned to Los Angeles. He was secretary of the SP for Los Angeles and wrote for the *World*, organ of the SP in Oakland, California. The *World* was founded in 1904 as the *Socialist Voice*. In 1915 he became associate editor of the *World* and in May 1916 editor. Father was in full support of the St. Louis resolution on the war and almost every issue brought his editorials against the war and militarism, against "preparedness." In the columns of the paper appeared articles from and on Karl Liebknecht (whom Father and Mother had met during Liebknecht's tour of the United States in the fall of 1910), from Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin (on their fight against the imperialist war) and on Franz Mehring. It was only natural that under Father's editorship the *World* came out wholeheartedly in defense of Tom Mooney and Warren K. Billings. Almost daily my parents were in the courtroom during the trial (and I was left to shift for myself—even then I was supposed to understand, as so often in later years). In a letter, published on the ninth of February, 1917, Tom Mooney



thanked the Oakland *World* and its readers in his own name and in the name of his codefendants "for the stand the *World* has taken and for the aid its readers have given during this six months of false imprisonment and persecution . . . Believing you all to be my True Comrades in the Social Revolution, I am your Comrade, Tom Mooney." I mention this because all too often in writings on the Mooney case he is pictured as only a fighting trade unionist and somehow the fight for his life is pictured primarily as a labor fight without participation of militant socialists. From the beginning, as long as the paper remained in the hands of militants, the campaign for the lives of Tom Mooney and Warren K. Billings, through all its stages, never left the pages of the *World*. The same is true of the *Western Worker*, founded after Right-wing Socialists closed the *World* following arrests under the Criminal Syndicalist Law in December 1919. During the trial Bob Minor came to the coast to work on the defense—his cartoons appeared in the *World*. One of these was "Lest We Forget," dedicated to the memory of the Haymarket martyrs, which it linked with the fight of the railroadmen for the eight hour day.

But it was not only the Mooney case which found a supporter in the *World*. The cases of the IWW (the "Wobblies"), beginning with the Centralia case and the announcement that Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was to speak in Oakland on behalf of the defendants, on through the trials in Sacramento and Chicago, the General Strike in Seattle and the defense against persecution of those who addressed the letter of the American workers to Lenin and the Bolsheviks—all found due support in the pages of the *World*. It joined in the condemnation of the murder of Joe Hill. The paper came to the defense of those Socialists within the U.S. who stood firm on the war, preparedness and U.S. entry into the war, rallied around the trial of Kate O'Hare, and above all joined the fightback of Eugene V. Debs, doubly accused for his stand as a socialist against the war and for his defense of the Soviet Union. The paper took up the cause of the accused of the Mesaba Range, the cause of Jim Larkin, came out against the "thugs of Lawrence," spoke out for "the strike of the Steel Trust serfs" during the great steel strike, came to the defense of the striking tailors and the shipyard workers. This latter defense was not only through the paper, but through organizational work among the strikers, through leaflets and soup kitchens maintained with donations coming from California farmers organized by the paper.

But it was not only the spirit of rebellion within the United States that found space in the paper, and it was not confined to the above

mentioned Left wing of the German Social Democratic Party. The paper followed the beginnings of a breakaway from the Right wing in England and in France. It sided with the Irish Rebellion and the struggle of the Mexican people, beginning with the "Republic of Yucatan," and condemned the landing of American marines and direct intervention. It took up the cause of India. It came to the defense of the workers of Finland, condemning the counter-revolution and the white terror and published the appeals of the Finnish Communists after their defeat. It took up the cause of the workers of Hungary. But above all it came to the defense of the first workers' government of the world—Soviet Russia. Though it hailed the February Revolution, as the months passed the paper sided more and more with the Party of Lenin. In editorials, articles and cartoons it brought home to its readers the truth about Soviet Russia. Debs' stand on Soviet Russia, articles by John Reed and Alexander Trachtenberg, speeches of Bob Minor on the Russian Revolution, the story of the first emissaries of the Soviet Union in Seattle, the "Shilka," were all carried by the *World*. This was followed through in later years by the *Western Worker*, which became an organizer of the Hands off Russia and Aid to Soviet Russia movements on the West Coast. When I say organizer, I mean it literally. News of active intervention of the seamen and longshoremen against the sending of munitions and troops to Vladivostok and Archangel helped to mobilize the Hands Off movement. In the campaign for aid even the children took part, going from house to house, from store to store, collecting food, clothing and pencils and crayons. The paper's appeal went out to the farmers for aid and they responded.

And here a word on my mother and her part on the paper. Father was often away, travelling up and down the coast to keep the paper alive, especially in the later days of the paper. Mother was copy-writer, makeup man and proofreader, all in one person, during his absences. She is proud to this day of putting in the paper one of its first articles on "Lenine." Yet she belongs to those who never take credit for anything done. It was she who organized the first sewing circles in the Bay District making garments for the hungry children of the most stricken areas of the Soviet Union; she helped to organize the first shipments of medical stores, food and clothing from the West Coast. Sometimes I wondered when she slept. But more about Mother later.

One more thing before leaving the subject of the paper, because of its link to the present day. It was during Father's activities for the Socialist Party in the Southern states that Father first met DuBois.

I think that his own long experience in the South, his previous readings of the Abolitionists, made him feel the way he did on the importance of the "Negro Question" for the whole of the American labor movement. Not only did the paper publish articles from the *Messenger* on this subject, but it also carried articles by that grand old man of the Black liberation movement, William D. Patterson, which are now in his possession. I have gone into too many details on the role of the paper under my father's editorship because it was so much a part of his life.

Now to Father's affiliation to the Communist Party. Here again I must rely on the paper and what my mother could tell me. I already wrote that news of the rise of the Left Wing in other countries was published as regularly as could be expected during those days. Within the country Father sided with the Left Wing on the question of World War I and argued this position with as much force as he could muster. After the United States went into the war, though, he had to carry through the California leadership's decisions, for example on the question of the draft and war bonds, but went against these decisions on the question of conscientious objectors. By February 1917 it had become obvious in California that the Right wing was trying to take over completely, and in an editorial on the California convention the warning went out that unless the rank-and-file of the membership stepped in, the old time leaders would open the door wide for "membership" without regard to card-holding or class consciousness; dues were to be abolished, and then registered Socialists would be given equal privileges in all purely political activity with the red card members; the party was to put no ticket in the field until the party membership equalled ten per cent of the registered voters; the pledge card was to be abolished, and as a "compromise" if the pledge card remained, then any mention of the class struggle between the workers and capitalists was to be cut out. These proposals were voted down by the convention by a narrow margin. In this struggle Max Bedacht played a major role in the name of the so-called "minority," which in the end won out with the exception of the question of organizational forms, where two proposals were put up for referendum by the membership. (See editorial in the *World*, February 22, 1917.) This struggle was reflected in the entire period of 1917 and 1918 within the California organization, as in all parts of the United States. On the war, the Oakland branch concurred with the majority report of the National Convention and proclaimed unalterable opposition to war and militarism. In February 1918 Local Oakland proposed Max Bedacht, L. E. Katter-

feld and J. E. Snyder as members of the National Executive Committee from District Five, consisting of the states of Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, New Mexico, Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Arizona and Alaska. All three were opponents of the organizational liquidation of the Party and for an internationalist standpoint on the war.

In April 1919 a new trend set in and was reflected in the paper. From the *Ohio Socialist* an article appeared on "Tactics and the Revolution," a call for opposition to the reformers. On April 4, 1919, the "Manifesto of the Left Wing Section of the Socialist Party of New York City" was published in full, alongside of a Debs plea for harmony. On May 16 appeared the "Program of the Communist Propaganda League." On July 4, 1919, the paper reported on the Manifesto and Program of the Left Wing Conference. On July 11, 1919, there appeared an editorial from my father, "How Shall We Work for Socialism?" on the coming convention of the Socialist Party. He spoke of the tactics of the past, of which he said, "We are all guilty," emphasizing the need for education in organization and training men and women to be organizers by giving them a sound foundation of Marxian fundamentals, as the Russian comrades did after 1905. The editorial called for delegates to adhere to the new order, to positive tactics, to the tenets of socialism. On September 4 the Manifesto of the Socialist Party against the blockade of Soviet Russia was published. In the issue of September 12, there appeared a temporary report on the Socialist Party Convention. Father had been proposed as delegate but could not go (just no money for the fare) so that news came through too sparsely and lacked clarity. On September 19 the Platform of the Communist Labor Party of the United States of America was published in full. By November 1919 the majority of a number of branches of the California Socialist Party had voted for membership in the newly formed Communist Labor Party and on November 21, 1919, the Constitution of the Communist Labor Party of California was published in full in the *World*. Father was still editor and took the paper along with him, so to say, into the CLP.

The reprisals came quickly at the beginning of November 1919, when the Loring Hall and the *World* offices were raided in Oakland, and warrants for arrest issued against a number of the founding members of the CLP in California. Among those arrested were Anita Whitney, James Dolsen, Alsin Tobey and J. E. Snyder. At the time of the arrests my father was facing another trial in the federal court

under the Espionage Act for an editorial on the American Constitution, which he considered then to have outlived its time, since the Bill of Rights had practically been removed from the boards through violations of the rights of free speech, assembly, press. He claimed—you can call it utopian—that the soviets would be only too glad to take over. Now along with the others he faced the charge of criminal syndicalism. Anita Whitney was the first to be tried. She was convicted, including under the so-called red flag clause, but thanks to the nationwide protest did not have to go to jail. James Dolsen's first case ended in a hung jury. After Dad's acquittal on the espionage charge, a new trial began on the charge of criminal syndicalism. This time all defendants were lumped together in one big case. The whole proceeding dragged on, finally ending in a hung jury—it was the women on the jury who held out against conviction. One of them was a tailor, the other the wife of a shipyard worker. After the arrests the Socialists took over the paper, but on January 19, 1920, the *Western Worker* began publication. Father was editor until toward the end of the trials.

Here again a word for Mother. Not only did she work tirelessly to raise bail for all the defendants, but also gathered the much needed information on the candidates for the jury on the panel. She always had a sense for people and where they really stood. I have seen her in action in this respect a number of times, opposing my father and other comrades when she thought they were being too compromising on people and sometimes on issues. She was generally right. She insisted that the above mentioned women be left on the jury.

When the case against him was finally dropped, Father went to the Middle West, operating from Kansas City, Missouri, as organizer of the unorganized. It was in the midst of the efforts for a farmer labor party. It was at the request of Ruthenberg that he founded a farmers' paper, I believe, in North Dakota. He worked hard organizing the workers and farmers for what he considered a breakthrough towards a mass party, backed by the Communist Party. I don't think Father ever agreed with the decisions that followed at the next convention on this issue, but he abided by the decisions. After the convention Father returned to California and went into trade union work, writing and touring for the Friends of the Soviet Union. He helped, among other activities, to organize the reception for the flyers of the "Wings of the Soviets" which had flown over Siberia to Alaska and to Seattle, a good will flight. For May Day 1930, he went with a delegation to the Soviet Union, was in Lenin-grad, Magnitogorsk and Moscow. My mother was with him. That

was the last time that I saw my father, since in the meantime I had gone into international work. In our all too sporadic letters (I often had no address) my father kept me abreast of events in the United States.

Mother worked as a seamstress, and when the WPA projects were formed, received work on one of the projects, helping at the same time to organize the women workers there. During the war, after the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union, Mother and Dad both went into the war industries. Father in the tool room and Mother packing equipment at the shipyards. While on this job she was badly injured and finally lost, for all practical purposes, the use of her left hand (after the war she received a compensation of \$50 dollars for her injured hand). Father was the guest of the Soviet delegation at a banquet during the San Francisco Conference in recognition of his loyalty and support of the Soviet Union through all the years.

After the war, Dad took seriously ill. His illness was finally recognized as cancer, but he lingered on until 1959, when he passed away.

Mother is to this day a member in good standing of the Party, goes regularly to club meetings (the club for senior citizens—she said she was much happier in a club with young folks), contributes regularly to the Party out of her small pension, subscribes to and reads the *Daily World*, the *Peoples World*, *Political Affairs* (except when the articles are too philosophical, as she says), read while I visited her last year Gus Hall's report to the 21st Convention from cover to cover. She is active at the bazaars for the paper and at picnics. The Party was and is a part of her very life. She is now 90 years old, has stuck through thick and thin, always active in her own way. When she received the biography of Karl Marx with the appreciation for charter members of the Party signed by Gus Hall and Henry Winston it was a great moment in her life. She deserved that appreciation in every way. She will always be active as long as her eyesight lasts, I think as long as she lives. She is a splended comrade, as are so many raised and steeled by the Party.

# COMMUNICATIONS

CARMEN RISTORUCCI

## A Correction on the ERA

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you on the successful March issue of *Political Affairs*.

As the author of the article on the Equal Rights Amendment, I wish to correct something which I feel confuses the intention of the article. The title of the article, "Why We Oppose the ERA," is not the one which I had intended to be used. The article attempted to detail concretely why the ERA is inadequate, while being careful to place on the agenda an alternative program for today's struggles which could guarantee equality for women legislatively. It pointed to the Women's Bill of Rights proposed by Women for Racial and Economic Equality (WREE) as a concrete legislative form for struggle.

The title actually used serves to abstract our position on ERA from our involvement in the movement for equality, and misleads the reader into thinking that we are opposed to a Constitutional amendment in general and not to the ERA as presently worded, for the reasons mentioned in the article. We would not be opposed to the introduction of a New York State amendment, as is being discussed in

some organizations, which would allow the passage of legislation such as is presented in the WBR. Unity can certainly be won around such an initiative. The title originally chosen by the author was embodied in the last section of the article, "Equality under the law shall mean . . ." which would give the reader a positive rather than a negative approach to the struggle for women's equality.

I also wish to add certain important conclusions concerning the controversial questions of weightlifting limitations and overtime. The controversy stems from the blatant abuse of health and safety requirements by monopoly capital during this heightened economic crisis. It is certainly true that because of the abuse of protective legislation by bosses, many women have been denied access to jobs by laws restricting hours of overtime work for women. Some important demands to counter this are prohibition of compulsory overtime for all workers, a shorter work week without loss in pay and steps to achieve full employment.

Regarding weight lifting, it should be pointed out that health is a factor for male workers, too,

and no worker should be compelled to lift weights above a reasonable maximum. While we conduct the fight for extension of protective legislation to all workers, stiff penalties should be levied against employers who refuse to hire women based on abuse of protective laws.

Our position is for the extension, strengthening, updating and enforcement of legislation within the context of the special needs of women. (*The editors were responsible for the change of title. We apologize for the error.*—The editors.)

WILLIAM L. PATTERSON

## Judge Horton and the Scottsboro Boys

On Thursday, April 22, 1976, at 9 P.M. the National Broadcasting Company, through a two hour script called *Judge Horton and the Scottsboro Boys*, reopened the infamous legal frame-up of nine Black lads in the state of Alabama known the world over as "The Scottsboro Case." The arrest of those nine Black youth took place in 1931. It was near the beginning of the crisis period of the 1930's.

The purpose for the reappearance of the Scottsboro Case at this momentous hour is not at once obvious. But a thoughtful examination of the material used in producing this program reveals facts that are politically significant.

The Bicentennial of our country is now being celebrated. It ought to be a moment for an exhaustive accounting for the economic, political and cultural instability of the capitalist regime in which we live. The centuries-

old continuance of racism should be explained from the standpoint of social science. The cyclical crisis, with its disastrous unemployment and inflation should be carefully analyzed and the source of these evils described in great detail. The foreign policy of government so advantageous to those in power and control of our natural resources, and so heedless of our economic and social demands for schools, jobs, housing and a host of other social needs, should be thoroughly discussed. But that is not the case. In fact, those in power scrupulously ignore these vital issues.

The Black liberation struggle is being deepened and sharpened by an awakening people. The fight for peace intensifies on an ever broadening scale. There is growing unity of Black and white as struggles develop. That is what they fear. But what they confront is a changing relation of forces. In their view, hatred among the



masses must be heightened, as in Boston and other cities. The ideological attacks grow in subtlety.

The face of American imperialism does not appear in any guise in the Horton show. The relentless, murderous enemy of the Scottsboro lads, all Black youth, and their people is not shown in *Judge Horton and the Scottsboro Boys*. The main enemy of the victimized and degraded young white prostitutes who were forced into framing those Black "boys" is hidden. The social forces that caused millions of poor white lads to be jobless, wandering, hapless vagrants are not in the picture. Nor does a thinking person expect to find these matters discussed. The Blacks have nothing of material value. The whites, only the myths of white superiority. The ideologists of television have a job cut out for them.

In *Judge Horton and the Scottsboro Boys* the center of the stage is given to James Edwin Horton, Jr., "liberal" trial judge. He becomes the heroic figure. He is the symbol of decency. But as courageous as his dismissal of the monstrous verdict of guilty and the motion of execution may appear or in reality is, the negative aspects of this production outweigh the positive and that is consistent with the existing needs, practices and policies of the top echelon of racist reaction. They no less meet those needs today. The unity of Black and white in the battle for peace, against racism and inflation is the Achilles

heel of U.S. racist reaction and imperialism.

At whom does Horton rail? Whom does he charge with endangering the play of justice? Everything the learned judge said or did brings the all white jury of men, imbued by the ruling class with racial hatred from their cradles and taught in street and school and church the myth of their intellectual superiority over Blacks, to the center of the stage. They become the perpetrators of those racist crimes of government. Horton, quite unconsciously it would appear, makes the white dupes of those in power emerge as villains, the major villains. He meets with his peers at lunch but does not accuse them of the crimes against the obviously innocent lads. It makes no difference whether Horton knows the guilty parties. NBC does.

A lynch-thirsty mob mobilized by the incitement of a ruling class press forms the jury's supporting cast. Horton's exhortation has turned the hapless agents of the racists into leading figures. He has aided in the concealment of those guilty of the crimes of government, those who must be removed from the seats of power. White and Black *en masse* have again been hoaxed. The ruling class subverters of these lynch mobsters are hidden behind the scenes.

For the racists this television picture comes at a timely moment in history. Blacks can be led by this picture to believe that "poor white trash" were responsible for the savagery surround-

ing Scottsboro. That is what NBC desires.

Henry Moon, a highly placed official of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) until his recent retirement, said in his book, *Balance of Power*: "To the Communists . . . the whole campaign was much more than a defense of nine unfortunate lads. It was an attack on the system which had exploited them, fostered the poverty and ignorance in which they were reared and finally victimized them by legal proceedings which were a mockery of justice."

Henry Moon adds: "The defense of these (Scottsboro lads) was first undertaken by the NAACP. But the Communists, through the International Labor Defense, captured the defense of the imprisoned youths and conducted a vigorous, leather-lunged campaign that echoed and re-echoed throughout the world. The Scottsboro Boys were lifted from obscurity to a place among the immortals—with Mooney and Billings, Sacco and Vanzetti, fellow victims of bias in American courts."

The position of the Communists, merging relentless, mass demonstrative, democratic struggle with court action was to add a new political dimension to Black liberation struggles. It heralded a new historic step in the tactics of anti-racist battles.

Within the "life and death" circumference in which the vicious racist ideologists posed the case of those nine Black lads were the class issues of human dignity and

of life and liberty. These are not the property of citizens of any color or creed. These are issues of decisive importance to all supporters of a people's democracy.

The histories of state and federal courts of this country, North and South, East and West, are replete with cases revealing frame-ups and legal murders of militant trade union leaders and Black liberation fighters. Their "crimes" have been almost identical—they were against the same powerful enemy. They fought to broaden democracy until it embraced them and their followers. *Judge Horton and the Scottsboro Boys* reveals none of these facts.

To the courage of James Edwin Horton, whose career as a judge was at an end by his decision, we pay just due. But Judge Horton did not dominate the Scottsboro Case. It was a crime of a racist government and those who held the reins of power. The onus was placed upon the people by NBC. To all who intimate that racism is inherent in a white skin, we say, No! Racism has to be taught and its teachers are like war criminals. The Scottsboro lads and many of those who fought to save their lives did not see clearly the face of the main enemy.

The lessons of the Scottsboro Case are rich indeed. They are being learned. The heroic Communist Angela Davis is among us because of the achievement of world unity in struggle. On today's agenda is the case of the Wilmington Ten which must be won.

*Judge Horton and the Scotts-*

*boro Boys* holds no lessons concerning the limitless potentialities in the unity of Black and white in the struggle for peace, freedom

and human rights. That film belongs in the ideological arsenal of the ruling class.

A. W. FONT

## The Real "Nate Shaw"

John Pittman's review in *Political Affairs* (February 1976) of Theodore Rosengarten's book *All God's Dangers—The Life of Nate Shaw* had all the good qualities we have come to expect in Pittman's work. It expanded our store of information and extended our understanding. It also sent me in search of more facts about "Nate Shaw."

"Nate Shaw" and the "Tukabahchee County, Alabama" in which he lived sound fictitious, like names invented for a novel by William Faulkner. But "Shaw" and "Tukabahchee" were real enough. They are respectively the pseudonyms chosen by Rosengarten to preserve the anonymity of New Cobb and Tallapoosa County. But there is now no longer need to hide the identity of Cobb, who died in November 1973, or of the sparsely settled rural area in which he spent his long, toilsome life.

When *All God's Dangers* appeared a couple of years ago it was praised in the *New York Times Book Review* in an article covering many columns. When I felt prompted to look for a contemporary account of the climactic event which, in 1932, led to Cobb's twelve years' imprisonment, I

naturally turned to the *New York Times*.

*The Times Indexes* for 1932 and for 1933 are each about five inches thick and each contains almost 3,000 pages. In neither of these volumes could I find a reference to Cobb or the Tallapoosa sharecroppers or the Alabama Sharecroppers Union. A newspaper which claims to carry "all the news that's fit to print" and has the self-cultivated reputation of being America's "newspaper of record" might be expected to carry a paragraph or two about an event which cost the lives of four persons, injured several, and resulted in long prison terms for five men. I could not find such a paragraph. (By contrast, the *Times* on April 14, 1976, carried a front page item on the anatomy of woodpeckers.)

However, in the *Daily Worker* of December 21, 1932, I did find the story I was looking for—and it was considerably more than a paragraph. The *DW* featured the Tallapoosa confrontation of Black sharecroppers and white sheriff's deputies in a headline that spread across the eight columns of the paper's front page. Followups were prominently displayed for days and weeks afterward and the developments of the Talla-

poosa story were followed for the first half of 1933.

In its characteristic manner, the *Daily Worker* was not content merely to report and deplore the attack on the Black sharecroppers—it immediately tried to mobilize support for the victims. “Nate Shaw”—Ned Cobb—could not have read of this for he was totally illiterate.

The *Daily Worker* and the International Labor Defense (ILD), under Communist leadership, promptly began the legal, moral and financial support which helped sustain Ned Cobb and his family through the twelve years of his imprisonment.

The small sums sent to his family, the five dollars a month sent to him in prison, the annual Christmas box of chocolates and fruit cake—these modest encouragements never failed him.

And there were letters. One arrived while he was awaiting trial. Rosengarten tells of it in “Nate Shaw’s” words:

There was a white gentleman in prison in some part of California at the time I was waitin for my trial, wrote me a letter wishin me well—was all he could do, you know—feeling my sympathy and tellin me how *he* got into it: had a union out there and he belonged to it and tried to get other folks to join. Moneyed people of the state of California didn’t like that and throwed him in prison—that was his troubles. Told me that the high people of that country fought his union. Well, I reckon near about all of them fought it all they could; a thing of this kind is ever dangerous to em.

The letter was sent to my wife

and she brought it to me. The man that wrote it called himself Tom Mooney, out of the state of California. . . .

I sure taken him to be a friend to me. He just wrote in a way to let we know straight that he was tied up in the same thoughts and acts as I was. . . . I stuck there and stickin today. I stuck there so good and tight, and this white gentleman that wrote to me, he had confidence in me that I would. You take such work as this: from the beginnin up until this minute, I believe in it and see good of it, I see more good of it than I really can explain. And I believe in stickin to a thing that’s right until whenever my eyes is closed in death. (Pp. 334-5.)

The ILD was quick to furnish legal defense to the Tallapoosa defendants. William L. Patterson was then ILD national secretary and, with Joe North, edited its publication, *Labor Defender*.

One can only marvel today at how the ILD was able to respond to the many cries for help which reached it. At the time of the Tallapoosa case (December 1932 to April 1933) heavy demands were being made on its financial and personnel resources. There was the case of the nine youths facing death in Scottsboro some 200 miles north (though a Reeltown resident spoke of it as being “half a day’s mule ride away”). There was the death rap confronting young Angelo Herndon over the border in Atlanta, Georgia. And there were numerous other cases all over the country being fought by the hardpressed ILD.

The cry for help which came

out of Reeltown was a cry from the most oppressed section of rural Black America. The Sharecroppers Union had been organized on Communist initiative in the spring of 1931—and by July 15 of that year the white landlords had served notice of their opposition to the organization by murdering one of its leaders, Ralph Gray, a sharecropper at Camp Hill, Tallapoosa County. (When the clash occurred near Reeltown on December 19, 1932, one sharecropper *walked* the twenty-plus miles to Camp Hill to report to the union what had taken place, and to start the defense response.)

Ned Cobb knew of the Camp Hill episode before he joined the union. Once he had joined the organization he was totally committed to it. His commitment soon brought him the supreme test of facing death and imprisonment. A painful gun shot wound and twelve years in Alabama's prisons were his penalty for helping a neighbor, Cliff James, resist the seizure of his cow and mule to satisfy a mortgage. James, a leader of the Sharecroppers Union, was defending his means of livelihood.

The price of resistance was high for all concerned. But, forty years later, while commenting on new laws barring the hiring of child labor in the cotton fields, Ned Cobb told his biographer: ". . . this organization I joined in 1932 was so stout, it was able to hold up in them times for conditions that the government is putting on today." So bold a union must

have been rebaited in those parts but, if so, Cobb put that matter in its place. "There's a secret in this union somewhere and I ain't ever understood it. They talked to me about it, that this union came from across the waters, and they called it a 'soviet' union. It was said to me by some of the white folks at my trial. . . . It was a things that I never did thoroughly understand and get the backgrounds of it, but I was man enough to favor its methods. My head and heart had been well loaded about the condition and the welfare of the poor—I couldn't stand no more. I jumped in that organization and my name rings in it today. I haven't apologized to my Savior for joinin; it was working for right. A man had to do it."

A review of the Tallapoosa case appears in *Labor Defender* (July 1933). It was written by Benjamin Goldstein, who had been rabbi of a Montgomery temple but was forced to resign because of his activities in the Tallapoosa and Scottsboro cases. Goldstein reported:

"Only Negroes testified for the defense. Several whites had promised to come as character witnesses but stayed away because of threats which were made against them by friends of the deputies. . . . But most impressive of all was the testimony of Ned Cobb, one of the defendants. It was generally whispered when he took the stand, that he would try to lie his way out of the situation by claiming that he was not even

there. As the result of this presumption, Cobb's straightforward story of how he had argued with the deputy; how the deputy had threatened saying he 'was going to get some more deputies and kill the whole pile of you n----s'; and above all, how he had remained at the house for five hours waiting for the deputies to return and then how he had been shot in the back as he turned to walk into the house, all this was delivered to a silent courtroom. This testimony of Cobb's and the manner in which he gave it, won much sympathy and respect for the union from the white farmers present."

Cliff James, the sharecropper and union leader whose refusal to surrender his mule and cow brought lynch-law to Reeltown, died of wounds. Judson Simpson was shot twice and left for dead, but recovered and stood trial with the five others. He got 12-15 years. Simpson's wife electrified the court when she defiantly resisted the prosecutor's attempt to browbeat her. *Labor Defender* remarked that this behavior by a Black witness "was a protest not often heard in southern court rooms."

Outside the court Mrs. Simpson said: "The 'law' and the white landlords had no use for Cliff James because he stuck to his rights. Cliff was a proud man, proud and a strong man. He was our leader around here. The folks tell me that they ain't treating the Negroes so bad since this fight, about taking their land and their stock." Op-

posing the Simpsons and the Cobbs and their chief counsel, Irving Schwab, was the county's prosecutor—none other than the notorious former U.S. Senator "Cotton Tom" Heflin, an infamous anti-Catholic, anti-Black bigot.

The people of Tallapoosa county did not surrender to the terror and the pressure. The union survived and grew across county and state lines into a union of Black and white until, around 1936, it merged into the American Federation of Labor. In the summer of '33 at Camp Hill, site of the 1931 murder, Black farm laborers employed on a plantation controlled by Southern Industrial College went on strike against a 60 per cent wage reduction—their wage of \$1 for an 11- to 12-hour day had been cut to forty cents!

But perhaps the most appealing footnote which can be added to a discussion of Ned Cobb and the union of Tallapoosa sharecroppers has to do with an unrelated event which took place months after Cobb had been sentenced to prison.

June 24, 1933, had been designated as National Anti-Fascist Day. Hitler had taken power in Germany in February and this was to be a national day of protest. In New York City, for example, the day was marked by a demonstration and parade in which thousands marched from Madison Square Park to Union Square.

A brief article signed "A Sharecropper" and titled "Inter-

national Solidarity in Tallapoosa" later appeared in *Labor Defender*. It says in part:

Negro sharecroppers and poor farmers who heroically resisted the illegal seizure of livestock by the landlords and armed deputies in Tallapoosa County, Dec. 19, 1932, on June 24th came in mass to discuss the brutal actions of Hitler and to adopt a resolution against his present activities against the German and Jewish toiling masses

and pledged to support the struggle against fascism in Germany and to continue this until Hitler has stopped and is dead. We realize this upsurge of terror that is being sprayed over all the working class of Germany is not only directed against our Jewish and German brothers but is an especial attack upon the international working class. . . .

These were Ned Cobb's brothers.

## LORENZO TORREZ

# On the Colombian Situation

To be a delegate to a Communist Party congress is indeed a significant opportunity to make a concentrated study in a few days of the political mood of a given country. As a U.S. delegate to the 12th Congress of the Colombian Communist Party (December 5-9, 1975), I wish to share with my comrades in this country and the American public in general some of my impressions and observations.

Colombia is a country in great political turmoil, as is all Latin America. Demands for the nationalization of all of the natural resources, as well as the financial sector, are on the rise. The historical struggle of the campesinos (small farmers), which has at times been accompanied by armed struggle, is also accelerating. The struggles of the countryside are being joined with the urban

struggles for jobs, for decent housing and for a decent standard of living. The enemies in these struggles are two-fold: the ever-present imperialism, especially U.S. imperialism, and the local oligarchy, with the armed forces at their side.

The two traditional parties, the conservatives and the liberals, are experiencing great pressures from the masses of people. The very sharp focus of this pressure has been against foreign imperialism and local oligarchic control. The two traditional parties have been able to confuse the masses by maneuvering on these issues for many years. However, with the sharpness of the economic crisis, which is part and parcel of the capitalist world crisis, the masses are becoming extremely restless.

Large sections of the local oli-

garchy sympathize with the nationalization moves as a method of ousting imperialism. At the same time they make ever greater demands upon the army to guarantee their control over the local masses. In this situation, the role of the armed forces becomes very crucial in the eyes of the local oligarchy and the ruling parties. The net result is that Colombia now operates under martial law (estado de sitio).

It is in this vein that the ruling forces are demanding the censorship of the press and the institution of the death penalty. On the other side of the political spectrum are the Colombian masses, who are demanding more freedom, jobs, higher pay, better education, a life free of the constant inflationary crisis and independence from imperialism.

The sharpness with which the issues are being placed faces the armed forces with a certain dilemma. What will be the army's role? Will it continue to reflect the interest of the ruling class and their government, or will it respect the wishes of the majority of the Colombian masses? This has become a current debate among the armed forces and the Colombian population. It is a debate which engulfs the whole of Latin America.

On the subject of nationalization, I would like to state the following: it is obvious that nationalization of the type which exists in Mexico, the type which simply allows U.S. imperialism to hide its fangs, is not the type of

nationalization which is acceptable at this period of history.

In the face of the threats posed by martial law, I was surprised to note how openly and courageously the Communist Party of Colombia operates. In fact the CCP is the mainstay and furnishes leadership in the popular unity program of UNO (Union Nacional de Oposicion). It also plays a leading role in CSTC (Confederacion Sindical de Trabajadores Colombianos). CSTC works to form a united front of labor unions in the struggle to overthrow the local oligarchy and foreign imperialism. Its main problem is "yellow unionism." Yellow unionism is the term used to describe the type of unions that were built by the cooperation of the local oligarchy, the government, the imperialist monopolies and the CIA. As in the USA, the rallying call of these unions is anti-Communism. The current disclosures of CIA interference now makes these unions very unpopular among the workers. Added to the revelations of CIA ties, the subversive role that these unions played in Chile during the Allende government and the temporary support which they gave to the Pinochet junta makes Latin American workers increasingly aware of the real role of these class collaborationist unions.

During a break in the Congress, we fraternal delegates had an opportunity to speak to the CSTC trade unionists. The delegates of the European socialist



countries spoke of the role played by the trade unions in their countries. They spoke of the political strength of the unions, the economic benefits which they have achieved, such as higher wages, free medical care, low rents, free education, etc. I had an opportunity for an exchange with the Latin American delegates on what our labor unions are doing to overcome the pressure of the economic crisis in each of our countries, as well as how class collaborationist union leaders, government agencies and the CIA and FBI have conspired to weaken the labor movement behind the screen of anti-Communist slogans. We discussed the development of the fascist trend which strives for the elimination of the unions altogether.

The Congress was self-critical of weaknesses in work among women and in the campesino movement, and resolved to work energetically to correct this problem. However, the Party faces severe obstacles in its work in the countryside. Three leaders of the campesino movement, all Communists, have already been assassinated. They are Antonio Jiminez, Javier Baquero and Nicolas Mahecha.

The charged political atmosphere indicates that Colombia is going to move very rapidly forward in the revolutionary process. The Chilean experience has taught that the proper subjective conditions must be created and strengthened constantly to be able to surmount the attacks of the re-

actionary forces from both the Right and the "Left." Gilberto Vieira, General Secretary of the CCP put it in the following way: "the solution for Colombia is none other than to take power for the people, for an effective democracy and national independence, thus we lay the foundation to take the road of a socialist construction in Colombia."

Addressing the congress on behalf of the CCP Central Committee, Comrade Vieira spelled out the program in this manner: "The job of every Communist," he said, "is to work for a united front in order to participate in the electoral process of the country." The Congress resolved to join with every democratic organization working to oust the local oligarchy and imperialism. At the same time they implemented the resolution of the Cuban conference (June 1975) of Latin American and Caribbean Communist Parties. The resolution enunciates the line that it is not possible to work in unity with any organization which is anti-Communist or anti-Soviet. In this light, it is clearly stated that the Maoist organization, Moir, is considered reactionary and is excluded from the unity program.

The CCP program further states that the ideological and political influence of the two major parties is a major obstacle to progress. This is so because they foment opportunism, cultivate backwardness among large sections of the population, and impede the development of new

political currents.

Colombia is a country where monopoly and oligarchic control is highly developed. It is estimated that four or five financial families own most of the material wealth of the country. Eighty per cent of the country's export earnings are committed to pay for foreign commitments such as service on the U.S. debt or repatriated profits of U.S. multinationals. A walk through the streets of the capital, Bogata, confirms the extent to which American goods are dumped on the country's economy. The stores look exactly like shopping centers in the USA, with everything from clothes to electrical appliances imported.

Based on what I observed, one can only conclude that the Colombian Communist Party is des-

tined to continue its rapid growth. It is a well organized Party. It is a courageous Party which enjoys increasing respect among the masses. The Young Communist League is also very strong and influential. Within Colombia, the economic crisis is still deepening. There is no place for the revolutionary forces to go but to march forward. This situation raises the question of how the U.S. people are going to respond. President Ford and Mr. Kissinger state their willingness to continue the blockade of Cuba. Will we permit this kind of attitude toward our neighbors? Will we permit other Chiles, Santo Domingos or Guatemalas? This question is particularly close for the more than twelve million Chicanos and Latinos living within the United States.



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