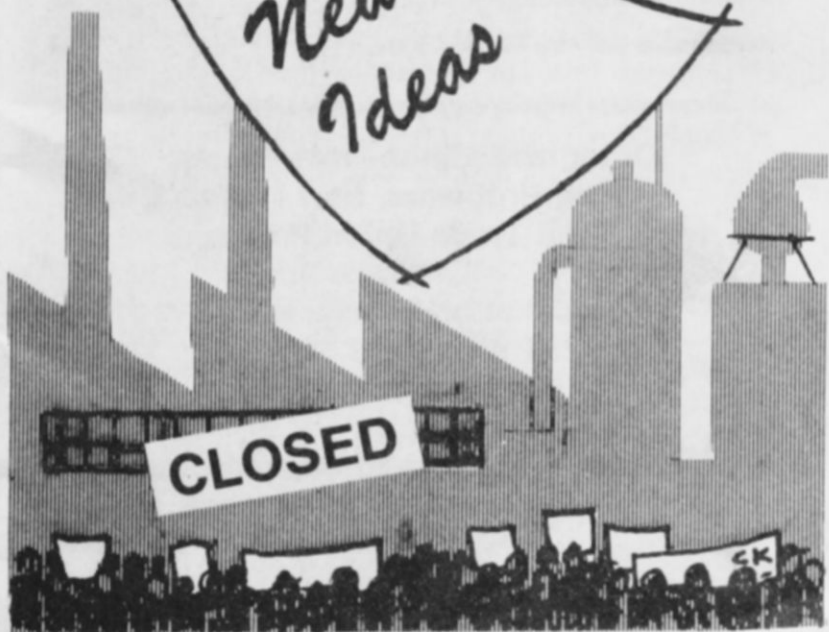


*New  
Times  
New  
Problems*

# Organized LABOR

*New  
Ideas*



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**Organized Labor—New Times,  
New Problems, New Ideas  
A Draft Trade Union Program**

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235 West 23rd Street  
New York, NY 10011**

***Your suggestions and comments are  
most welcome***

June 1985

# **Organized Labor — New Times, New Problems, New Ideas**

## ***A Draft Trade Union Program***

### ***COMMUNIST PARTY, USA***

#### ***Introduction***

Fresh winds are sweeping through the ranks of labor. Ferment and revitalization are beginning to replace the stagnation and decline that set in with the Cold War days of the 1950s. Powerful grassroots pressures are fueling a rising spirit of militancy.

Mass actions have become the order of the day. The half-million strong Solidarity Day March on Washington in September 1981 marked the return to mass demonstrations. Mass picketing and mass lobbying are once again part of labor's arsenal. Mass parades are restoring Labor Day to its rightful place as a workers' holiday.

The destruction of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) by the Reagan Administration taught the trade union movement a very hard lesson. Now, strike solidarity actions are on the increase. Workers forced out on long, hard strikes are no longer left to fight on their own. AFL-CIO support for the Greyhound strike marked a new beginning. Though belated, the national support now being given for the long strike of the heroic Arizona and Texas copper mine workers is another example. Mass strike

support organized by local Central Labor Councils, as in the successful strike of UAW workers at the A.P. Parts Plant in Toledo, is becoming more and more common.

Organized labor emerged from the tactically difficult 1984 presidential elections with a renewed sense of confidence. While Ronald Reagan won re-election, "Reaganism" did not. The trade union movement began to clearly establish its political independence in both the primary and general elections. This trend continues to strengthen as labor prepares for the coming legislative battles in Congress and the 1986 Congressional elections.

There is a better understanding of the need for unity and cooperation between labor and its allies. Mass involvement of the AFL-CIO in the nationwide protests against apartheid South Africa and the support it receives from the racist Reagan Administration, coupled with the refusal of the West Coast longshoremen to unload a cargo from South Africa, are striking examples. The active participation of the UAW and other unions in the mass fight for survival by family farmers is another. Labor support for "comparable pay for jobs of comparable worth" is yet another.

The peace movement has sunk deep roots in the trade unions. National and international unions representing well over half the membership of the AFL-CIO are an integral part of the campaign for a mutual, verifiable nuclear freeze. Such independent unions as the National Education Association, United Electrical Workers and the West Coast longshoremen's union are also active participants in the Freeze Movement. Many Central Labor Councils, local unions, and such labor groups as the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) and the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) are also important components of the Freeze Campaign.

**“Jobs with Peace” has received important labor support, as has the demand for economic conversion from military to peacetime jobs. National trade union formations are vigorously challenging the Reagan Administration’s military policies in Nicaragua, El Salvador and other Central American countries. For the first time, the AFL-CIO has begun to withdraw past unqualified support of military budgets. Important trade union contingents participated in the nationwide peace demonstrations on April 20.**

**In all these struggles, various forms of labor coalitions are playing special and significant roles.**

**Particularly important is the growing impact of such formations as the CBTU and CLUW. The CBTU has vigorously carried a progressive program throughout the labor movement, creating unity of action and of understanding between Black and white unionists through joint actions.**

**CLUW has focused attention on crucial problems women workers face. Like CBTU, its broader horizon finds CLUW in joint actions for peace, affirmative action, cooperating with their allies in and out of the labor movement on innumerable fronts.**

**Trade union publications are beginning to reflect the mood of the rank and file. Many are taking a more militant class attitude toward economic and political problems facing their members.**

### ***Very Critical Times***

**These are very critical times for the working people of the U.S. and the trade union movement. Unions in the basic industries are grappling with the problem of rapidly disappearing jobs. Transportation and communication unions strive to deal with the problems created by decentralization and decontrol. Public workers face a massive campaign to turn the functions of government over to private corporations for their private profit. New and difficult problems have**

been created by the introduction of chips, robots and the "technological revolution." The uncontrolled flood of mergers and the mushrooming of conglomerates are forcing a new approach to contract negotiations and other management relations. Millions of jobs are exported overseas as government policy encourages the transnational corporations to expand in countries controlled by right-wing military dictatorships where wages are low and unions and strikes are outlawed.

U.S. workers and the trade union movement are suffering from the impact of a triple-layered crisis of the capitalist system. This crisis is cyclical, structural and general, and can be briefly described as follows:

The cyclical crisis can best be compared to the ups and downs of a roller coaster. One cyclical crisis comes on top of another. Each "recession" is deeper than the last and each "recovery" is more shallow and unstable. Millions of workers are never able to get back on their feet between "recessions."

The structural crisis has hit the basic industries with the force of a hurricane. The steel industry has been especially hard hit. Industries such as auto, machine tools, rubber, glass and textiles continue to decline.

The general crisis of capitalism is both national and international. Our own country, once proclaimed "the richest country in the world," is suffering a general decline in living standards. Over 35 million people are forced to live in conditions of abject poverty. Labor economists have clearly proven that the number of unemployed is nearly double the official figure of 8.5 million released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Millions more are forced to exist on part-time jobs.

The quality of life is deteriorating before our very eyes. This affects medical care; social services; public schools and colleges; housing; public transporta-

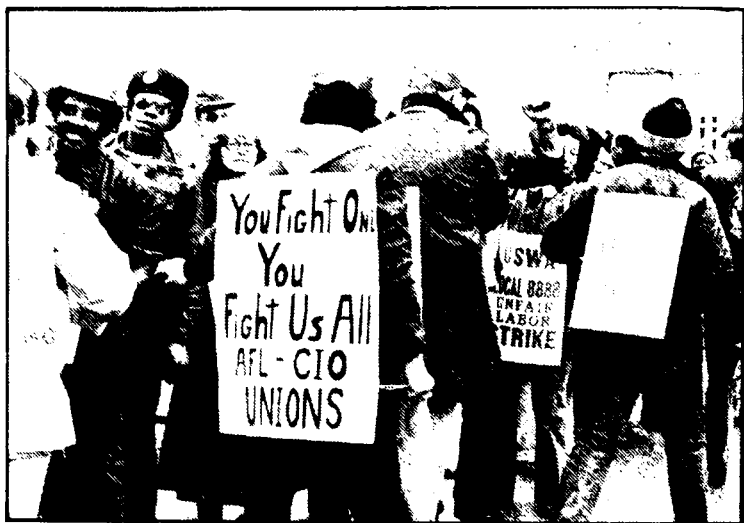
tion; the care of children and the elderly.

The corporate drive for profits has polluted our air, our water; has deforested much of our nation, killed our lakes. Our rich topsoil gets washed away or poisoned. Whole residential areas—especially where workers live—find their homes and lives endangered by chemical dumps.

The erosion of the over-all living standard is a many-sided process:

- Continued decline in real wages.
- Millions laid off from basic industries and forced into lower—and in many cases, below minimum wage—jobs.
- An increase in sweatshops and “home” industries.
- Overall growth of non-union conditions where wages are 33 per cent lower than union shops.
- An increase in the number of longtime unemployed—as the hungry and homeless get hungrier.
- Cuts in “fringe” benefits.
- Cuts in food stamps, medicare and welfare payments.
- Continuing increases in the price of food, rents and other basic necessities, and in taxes.
- Poverty on the farms.
- Increased racism, discrimination and attacks on affirmative action programs.

This all adds up to a declining standard of living. It is downward economic mobility for the working people as a whole. An additional factor is the vicious element of Big Business racism. As a result, Afro-American and other nationally and racially oppressed workers suffer doubly from the effects of the triple-layered economic crisis. Black unemployment is more than double the rate of other workers. Afro-American communities are also suffering disproportionately from the rash of plant closures in basic industry.



### ***The Antilabor Offensive***

In their greedy search for maximum profits, Big Business has used the crisis to intensify its attacks on the working class and the trade union movement. The result has been a closely orchestrated, anti-working-class, racist, anti-union offensive.

Not content with huge concessions, corporations are replacing union recognition with corporate union busting. Labor relations have been relegated to viciously anti-labor "consultants" whose specialty is to cut wages, break strikes and destroy unions. Two-tier wage systems are being used to permanently lower the wages of newly hired workers. The two-tier system is a time bomb designed to wreck the unity of younger and older workers, skilled and production workers. Once the two tiers are in place, in a short period the lower tier becomes the overall standard. "Contracting out" is sweeping the country like a plague.

Hard-won prolabor legislation began to erode with the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act at the height of the Cold War hysteria. This profascist legislation



was put over on U.S. workers in the name of "fighting Communism." A few years later the Landrum-Griffin Act was put over in the name of "fighting union corruption." Today the figleaf is "making industry competitive." Using this phony cover, the National Labor Relations Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the Civil Rights Act and other progressive legislation have been either destroyed or badly gutted.

The National Association of Manufacturers, the Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, the Committee for a Union-Free Environment, the National Right to Work (for less) Committee and outfits spawned by the ultra-Right such as the Heritage Foundation (financed by Coors Beer and the Mellon Bank) are pressing for new antilabor legislation. Hack lawyers in their employ have already prepared legislation designed to destroy the economic rights of labor and outlaw political activities by the trade union movement. The Hatch Act has been used for an attack on the political rights of the leaders of three unions of federal workers. A new tax program is already in the works designed to further shift the tax burden onto the backs of workers.

Corporate "think tanks" are heading a well-financed ideological campaign designed to denigrate, downgrade and besmirch the working class of our country and its trade union movement. Most of the press, the air waves, schools, colleges and universities, as well as Right-wing churches and leaders are actively participating in this anti-working-class ideological offensive.

### ***A Search for Solutions***

At this critical moment in the life of organized labor, rank-and-file workers are demanding more aggressive leadership. They want a more militant struggle against the mountain of unsettled grievances piled up at the shop floor level. They want an end to conces-

sion contracts supported by union officials influenced by "class partnership" concepts.

From rank-and-file members to the AFL-CIO Executive Council, trade unionists are probing and debating questions relating to the crisis facing the trade union movement. There is a widespread search for more effective ways to defeat the antilabor offensive; how to launch an effective organizing drive; how to solve the many new and complicated problems facing organized labor.

The Communist Party welcomes this debate. It is a manifestation of the new positive trends emerging in labor. With this Draft Program, we formally enter the discussion. We do so as staunch, frontline partisans of the trade union movement. Our long history of active participation in and unswerving support of labor struggles is well known. Some of labor's most important advances have been made with Communist and other Left-Progressive leadership. We are proud of the fact that we have won the enmity of the enemies of labor.

The outcome of this debate will have a profound influence on the future of the trade union movement. The new, hopeful upsurge that is developing in labor can reach new heights. A great deal depends on a militant program that meets the needs of the times. A program that projects bold tactics to capture the courage, initiative and fighting spirit of the rank and file.

There is no easy way out. Fundamental changes in policy and structure are required to meet today's realities. Halfway measures will fail dismally. "Class partnership" concepts that have been dominant in top levels of the AFL-CIO will never check the antilabor offensive of the corporations and the government. Participation in Big Business conferences in White Sulphur Springs or serving on such reactionary corporate outfits as the Committee on the Present Dan-

ger, the Atlantic Council, the Foreign Policy Association, the Trilateral Commission and the "Endowment for Democracy" will never produce the answers needed.

Labor history has decisively established that the trade union movement only makes real progress when it is committed to militant, class struggle policies. The program which we present for your consideration is based on the conviction that the problems facing the trade unions today demand radical solutions.

### ***A Program for Progress***

Many fundamental problems in the trade union movement stem from the fact that little more than 20 per cent of those workers eligible for union membership are organized. This is the lowest percentage of any of the developed capitalist countries. The future of the trade union movement as a dynamic force in our society demands that the organization of the unorganized be given the highest priority.

There are some who claim that now is not the time. They say unemployment is too high; that the bosses are too powerful; that labor has a "poor image." Several academics have surfaced the thought that all we should work for now is some sort of loose associations.

Such ideas are rubbish. The trade union movement must build its numerical strength in order to defend itself. The weaker the unions, the more arrogant the bosses. In the Great Depression of the 1930s, the rate of unemployment was the highest in our history. Yet labor made historic advances as it united with the unemployed in the fight for jobs. For the first time, the workers in basic industry were successfully organized. The false image of labor projected by the corporations very quickly dissolves in the basic need of unorganized workers for the protection and dignity

provided by a union.

The question is not if, but how? Labor itself can help create the climate for a successful organizing drive. First of all, it must be a united campaign. Fragmented organization with a variety of unions competing among themselves regardless of jurisdiction is both self-defeating and a disgraceful waste of resources.

Every experience of the past proves that grass roots organization is the key to success. There must be: in-plant organizing committees among the unorganized; organizing committees in every local union and Central Labor Council; organizing committees in communities. Unemployed workers must become part of a combined drive for jobs and for the organization of the unorganized. The vibrant energy of young workers—organized and unorganized—of the student movement, is ready to be tapped. Another guarantee of success is the involvement of labor's allies from the very beginning. This includes the Afro-American community, the Hispanic community, peace movement activists, women's organizations, churches, environmentalists. The participation of retirees is an invaluable asset.

An organizing drive must be militant, with clearly defined demands, committed to the use of strikes and boycotts, if and when the situation demands. Union organizing drives are most successful when labor champions the needs of the people as a whole. For example, in the 1930s it was the fight for jobs, for the 40-hour week, social security, unemployment insurance, the right to vote, and against lynching, the poll tax and other acts of racism.

Today the fight for full employment remains a major issue. Labor must take its place in the leadership of this fight. The linkup between antilabor trends and racism makes clear the need for joining the struggle against racism and for affirmative ac-

tion with a militant struggle to organize the unorganized. Black workers have proven to be most receptive to union organization. The influx of women workers into the work force and the trade unions makes it essential that labor be in the forefront of the fight for women's equality and rights.

The desire for peaceful negotiations between the USA and the USSR, for an end to the arms race and a sharp reductions in the military budget, is uppermost in the thoughts of the overwhelming majority of the population. The trade union movement must be clearly identified in the eyes of the nation as the leading force in the struggle not only for jobs and against racism and discrimination, but for peace.

### ***Jobs and Job Security***

High unemployment and the fear of a loss of a job have cast a pall of uneasiness over U.S. workers. Millions who thought their jobs were secure found them wiped out over night. Workers, looking forward to retirement, have seen both their jobs and pension rights vanish. Millions of first-time job seekers vainly search for steady employment at a liveable wage. Gloating corporations seek to recruit desperate unemployed workers as strikebreakers. They see the jobless as a vast reservoir of workers who can be forced to take jobs at low wages. Corporations daily use the threat of plant closings, runaways or lay-offs to bludgeon workers into accepting wage cuts, speed up, loss of vacations, health benefits and other fringe benefits.

Therefore, the fight for jobs and job security is another item high on the agenda of the trade union movement. This fight has many sides.

Our nation is badly in need of repairs. Taking care of these alone will create millions of jobs. A report in the *Chicago Sun Times* claimed that the steel needed to repair the roads and bridges of the country would

keep the mills going for ten years, and put 100,000 steel workers back on the job. We sorely need a vast low-cost housing program. Public transportation is a problem in all parts of the country. Floods continue to ravage large areas of land. Our environment needs a good facelifting.

We need a federal public works program of the scope that would guarantee a decent-paying job at union wages for all who are willing and able to work.

New technology has dramatically increased the productivity of U.S. workers. While the profits of the corporations have gone through the roof, all that most workers are getting out of it are layoffs, wage cuts and insecurity. The fight for the six-hour day with no cut in pay has become a must. It will increase jobs by nearly 20 per cent. At the same time, contract loopholes that permit forced overtime must be eliminated. Let's make it too expensive for the corporations to benefit from forced overtime. Outlaw it altogether. Triple time for all overtime work. Forced overtime has been used to virtually destroy the hard-won forty hour week.

The six hour day with no cut in pay, an end to forced overtime, triple time for overtime must become common demands of the unions at the bargaining table and in the halls of Congress.

In such basic industries as steel, public ownership under democratic controls has become the logical way to save the industry. We advocate national authorities to take over basic industries such as steel, mining and auto. These authorities should be composed of representatives of the unions, communities and management. Representatives of the banks and corporations must be barred. Existing facilities should be taken over without compensation. They have already been paid for, many times over, in the form of huge profits, fat tax rebates and a whole variety of government subsidies.

We have to put an end to corporations closing plants and running away to low wage areas either at home or abroad. The same goes for corporations which shift their money from one industry to another in search of maximum profits. We need a federal law to bar corporations from shutting down plants or curtailing work without warning the union and the workers. Federal, state or local governments should invoke the right of eminent domain to take over such plants and facilities in order to save jobs and keep them in operation.

The fight for jobs and job security requires the trade union movement to take the lead in organizing the unemployed. Every local union and Central Labor Council should have a committee on unemployment. It is in the self-interest of labor to lead in organizing unemployed first-time job seekers. Unemployment compensation from paycheck to paycheck and for first-time job seekers is an important part of the struggle for job security. Laidoff union members should be able to retain their membership at nominal cost.

The fights against contracting-out, speedup, job combination, forced overtime are all forms of the fight for jobs and job security.

### ***United We Stand, Divided We Fall***

Unity is the great strength of the working-class and trade union movement. Unity is labor's answer to the power, wealth and greed of the monopoly corporations and banks. Economic, political and social justice can only be won with mobilization of the united strength of our multinational, multiracial, male and female, young and old working class and its trade unions.

Big Business also understands the meaning of working-class unity. For them it is something to fear, to be destroyed. Racism, redbaiting, male supremacy

and appeals to false patriotism are used to hinder the efforts of workers to secure a better life.

In our country, a virulent instrument of division is the corporations' use of racism against Afro-Americans. Therefore the fight against racism, for unity of Black and white workers and between Organized Labor and the Black community is the key to winning the unity of the whole class. Workers of all races, nationalities and religions were organized in the basic industries under the historic slogan, "Black and White, Unite and Fight." Innumerable labor struggles have driven home the lesson that the trade unions must lead the struggle against racism and for working-class unity in the unions' own self interest.

The economic foundations of our country were built on the backs of millions of immigrant workers from all over the world. Today, millions of unorganized men and women, undocumented, work in thousands of small sweatshops throughout the nation. Their very superexploitation poses new problems for the organized labor movement. Undocumented workers are entitled to the full rights guaranteed to everyone under the U.S. Constitution. The trade unions should develop special drives to organize these workers.

Affirmative action programs have emerged as the most effective way to end discrimination against Afro-American, Hispanic, Native American Indian, Asian-American and other specially oppressed workers and against women of all races. Affirmative action programs with quotas help rectify past corporate hiring and promotion policies based on racism and discrimination. They help prevent the recurrence of these divisive policies.

Concrete affirmative action agreements need to become a permanent feature of every national and local contract. We need affirmative action committees in every local union and central labor council.

The fight to end discrimination against women



workers needs to be elevated. While some progress has been made, the demand for "Equal Pay for Comparable Work," has not been fulfilled. Women are rapidly approaching half the workforce and are entering the trade unions in growing numbers. As with Afro-American and other racially-discriminated-against workers, affirmative action programs are the key in the fight for women's equality. At the same time, the principle of "equal pay for comparable work" must be applied in reevaluating jobs held primarily by minority and women workers.

## **ALERT**

The 5-to-4 ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court on June 28 regarding unions and strikers' rights, is directed at union busting and strike breaking.

United, militant labor resistance can force nulification and unenforceability of this ruling until it is repealed.

On the political front, the trade union movement has joined with the Afro-American community and other democratic forces in support of concrete affirmative action programs at all levels of government.

It is not accidental that the Reagan Administration, the most antilabor administration in modern times, is at the same time an adamant foe of affirmative action.

Seniority systems are again under heavy attack by the corporations. These systems have the purpose of protecting militant workers from abuse and discrimination by the boss. To preserve them they must be strengthened. Anything that smacks of racism or discrimination weakens them and must be eliminated. Corporations invariably attempt to use seniority systems to perpetuate racist and discriminatory practices. "Last hired, first fired," is still a problem that weakens class unity.

As first steps toward equality for all workers, we would like to offer the following proposals:

- Adjust seniority systems to compensate for the many years the seniority of Black and other discriminated-against workers have not been counted. This can strengthen the seniority system.

- Special seniority provisions for older workers, entitling them to retire with full benefits.

- Make the corporations pay for their racist and discriminatory hiring and promotion policies. All costs for affirmative action adjustments should come out of their profits.

- Link the fight for a six-hour day with no cut in pay to affirmative action hiring policies.

- In the fight to end forced overtime, affirmative action must be a yardstick in filling the jobs created.

- Incorporate affirmative action demands in the campaign for a national jobs program.

- By union contract and by federal and state legislation, affirmative action must be a factor in filling new jobs and in promotions.

The process of trade union revitalization requires that Labor put its own house in order. Only a bare start has been made in most unions to advance Afro-

American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian-American and women workers into policy-making positions of leadership. While organized labor has adopted a much more favorable position toward affirmative action, the top leadership of the American Federation of Teachers and of some building trades unions remain in adamant opposition. The trade union movement will grow stronger as it learns that acts of racism and discrimination are on a par with scabbing.

### ***Redbaiting***

The fight against redbaiting is an inherent part of the fight for working-class unity. Historically, anti-Communism has been used to attack militant trade unionists who fight for the rights of the members, regardless of their political persuasion. It is a weapon constantly used by reactionaries to attack organized labor and other people's movements. It has taken thirty-five years to even begin to overcome the enormous damage done to the entire trade union movement by the anti-Communism that permeated the cold war years of the 1950s. Anti-Communist clauses befoul the constitutions of a number of unions. Most were injected during the cold war under pressure of the corporations and the FBI. They are held as threat over militant trade unionism. They have never saved organized labor from attack, but have only encouraged labor's enemies. The fact that the national AFL-CIO and some of its affiliates still retain remnants of McCarthyism in their constitutions is a national disgrace.

### ***Imports***

The problem of imports has created serious problems for the U.S. working class. These problems are caused by the growth of U.S.-based multinational corporations, by the internationalization of both capital and the production process.

The question of imports raises some difficult questions and contradictions. On the one hand, we are bound to defend the interests of U.S. workers. But we must not do this at the expense of workers in other countries. We must not in any way help the capitalist class put our working class in opposition to the working class of other countries.

Corporate propaganda that blames "low-paid foreign workers" for the loss of U.S. jobs must be rejected with the contempt it deserves. It is the policies of the transnational corporations and banks that are the source of the problem, not our exploited brothers and sisters abroad. These problems are caused by the growth of U.S.-based transnational corporations, by the internationalization of both capital and the production process.

Federal laws regulating imports and exports are basically for protection of corporate profits because most of the foreign imports are not really foreign. They are U.S. corporate and bank-owned imports under foreign labels.

For example, the 1985 informal quota for Japanese car imports is 2.3 million, up 450,000 from 1984. Of this increase, 367,000, or 80 per cent, goes to the Japanese affiliates of General Motors and Chrysler. Ford also has a stake in the Japanese company, Mazda. At the same time, new superautomated plants are being set up by the Japanese-Big Three partnerships, with new labor setups weakening existing unions.

The welfare of U.S. workers demands curbs on the U.S.-based transnationals.

Why not outlaw investing abroad, especially in such countries as South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan and other such nations under the heel of Right-wing military dictatorships which hold power only with military and financial support of the U.S. government, and where wages are low, unions persecuted,

**union leaders jailed and strikes outlawed?**

**Why not a law that stipulates that for every dollar U.S. banks or corporations invest in other countries they must invest five dollars in the corresponding domestic industry?**

**Why not tax the superprofits from foreign investments?**

**Why not outlaw all export of capital by private corporations? All loans to needy developing nations, for example, should be made by our government at low interest rates, not by private profit-makers. They have impoverished other countries while destroying millions of jobs at home. U.S. workers have nothing in common with the U.S. transnational corporations. Our best interests lie in building strong fraternal relations with unions in other countries, regardless of political orientation; in helping to strengthen the ability of the workers, particularly in the newly developing countries, to build strong unions that will be able to fight for better wages and working conditions.**

**It is a grave misfortune that this is virtually impossible under the present policies pursued by the top leadership of the AFL-CIO and the AFL-CIO International Department. Since the very founding of the AFL-CIO, the International Department has been a willing tool of the transnational corporations—the very corporations that are exporting abroad the jobs of U.S. workers. The International Department gives lip service to the building of strong unions in Central and South America, Africa and Asia. In reality, its policies have worked to benefit Right-wing military dictatorships which have destroyed trade unions, broken strikes with bayonets and jailed and murdered thousands of union leaders. These same reactionary policies still continue in Central and South America, South Korea, Taiwan and other new countries of Asia and Africa. In such countries as Chile, El Salvador and South Africa, the name of the entire**

**AFL-CIO has been besmirched by the role of the International Department.**

**AFL-CIO international policy has helped put an iron curtain around the U.S. trade union movement. Refusal to encourage fraternal relations with Communist and other Left trade unionists has cut U.S. labor off from some of the most important trade unions in Western Europe, as well as from the world's largest trade union center, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU).**

**AFL-CIO refusal to have fraternal relations with the trade unions in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries is a disservice to the cause of international peace. It has severely impaired possibilities for cooperation on such questions as industrial health and safety and other matters of mutual concern. The International Department, as presently constituted, should be immediately dissolved and reconstituted as an instrument for honest international trade union relations.**

**Fortunately, a growing number of trade union leaders are beginning to reject the reactionary role of the International Department, the American Institute for Free Labor Development, the Asian-African Committee and their ties with the CIA, whose only objective is to serve the U.S. transnational corporations.**

### ***Political Independence***

**The old labor maxim, "What you win on the picket line, you can lose at the ballot box," has more meaning today than ever before. The economic and political struggles of workers have become inseparable. Events have proven that the trade union movement dares not leave its future to the two-party system of Big Business. The building of an independent antimonopoly political formation led by labor has become a historical necessity. Among all the developed capital-**

ist countries, only in the U.S. does the trade union movement lack an independent political party to which it gives leadership.

The trade union movement took important steps in the direction of political independence in the 1984 elections. Labor's entry into the selection process for the presidential candidate in the Democratic primary elections drew cries of outrage from Big Business and the leaders of both the Democratic and Republican Parties. However, the most important expression of labor's political independence came from its political activities conducted through local unions and not within the framework of the Democratic Party machine. To all intents and purposes, the Democratic Party literally folded after the primary election campaign was concluded.

The trade unions ran their own phone banks, assembled membership mailing lists, put out quantities of election material on their own, raised money and worked in close alliance with Black and Hispanic communities, with women's organizations and other allies to register workers and get out the vote. The building of grassroots political action committees during the course of the elections was blunted when Senator Gary Hart charged that the political action committees (PACs) were illegal and organized labor was a "special interest." Mondale refused to rebut this false accusation, which was picked up by President Reagan.

There were important lessons learned in the 1984 elections. The first is that organized labor can be a powerful political force. Second, political harmony with the Afro-American community and other of Labor's allies is key.

A strong surge of political independence emerged in the Afro-American community around the candidacy of the Rev. Jesse Jackson. This converged with the political activity of the trade unions to guarantee

a setback for Reaganism on election day.

The 1984 elections and what has transpired since have clearly established that organized labor and the people's movements can not rely on the Democratic Party. In the 1984 elections the Democratic presidential candidate refused to offer a program around jobs and other economic issues despite pressure from the trade unions and Afro-American leaders. He went to the Right on the peace issue. Since the elections, major Democratic Party leaders have openly sought to reject any electoral role for organized labor other than fundraising and providing foot soldiers.

Labor's great political strength lies at the grass-roots. It can effectively be tapped through political action committees at the local union and central labor council level. The strength of labor PACs is their ability to politicize the membership, to mobilize the rank and file for: on-going voter registration drives; membership involvement in mass lobbying and demonstrations; lobbying members of Congress and other politicians; letter writing campaigns; getting out the vote on election day. Labor PACs can build the mass base on which trade unionists can win political office. We need a great many more trade unionists in Congress and other political offices. Why depend on self-proclaimed "friends of labor"?

In 1946 the CIO adopted a program that had wide national appeal. In this period of labor upsurge, it's time to revive and update such a program—a program around which labor and its allies can rally:

- A federal jobs program to provide work for the jobless.
- Extension of unemployment insurance from layoff to recall. Unemployment insurance for first-time job seekers.
- The 6-hour day with no cut in pay. Outlaw forced overtime. Triple time for all overtime.
- Repeal the Taft-Hartley Act and the Landrum-



Griffin Law. Outlaw injunctions and other restrictions on the right to strike (without excluding public school teachers and federal, state and municipal workers).

- Strong federal laws that guarantee all workers the right to organize and bargain collectively without interference from the company. Illegalize all antilabor "consultant" outfits and professional scab-herders.

- A national health act guaranteeing free adequate health care for all.

- The legal right not to work on any job that threatens a worker's life or health until the working conditions are corrected.

- A national pension program guaranteeing the right of all to a secure old age.

- A graduated income tax to be the base of all tax legislation. End tax breaks for corporations and the rich. End the sales tax.

- The public school system is under intense attack. Only the trade union movement has the organizing strength and capabilities to lead a broad democratic movement to defend and strengthen public education.

- An end to the arms race. Peaceful negotiations with the Soviet Union, leading to the reduction and elimination of nuclear arms. End restrictions on trade with the Soviet Union, Cuba and other socialist countries. Strengthen the UN in the interests of peace.

### ***Trade Union Democracy***

Strong shop steward systems were among the first victims of the cold war. In one industry after another, the number of shop stewards was cut drastically. Reliance on arbitration replaced union representation on the shop floor.

Revitalization of the trade union movement means revitalization of the shop steward systems as

the key to democratic trade unionism. Workers need again to see their union representatives fighting for them on the shop floor. To begin with, this means more shop stewards—one to every 25 workers or to every boss. It means the right to strike over a company's stubborn refusal to settle grievances.

Reliance on arbitration has been costly in more ways than one. Arbitration costs have virtually broken many local union treasuries. Almost invariably, arbitrators base their decisions on self-styled "company prerogatives." In a period of massive technological development, this has been very costly to workers both in wages and jobs. Grievances have piled sky-high as foremen refuse to settle even minor grievances. Workers are told, "take it to arbitration."

Other democratic trade union practices essential to revitalization are: the right of union members to elect all officers and committees with the right to recall; right to vote on concrete demands and negotiated contracts; the right to vote to strike and to end a strike.

Not least important would be for the labor movement to adopt the guiding principle that the salaries and expenses of their union officers and staff should be in line with the earnings of the membership that elected them to represent their interests.

### ***Union Fragmentation***

The present fragmented state of the trade union movement poses a serious threat to its growth and development. Jurisdictional lines are virtually non-existent. As many as five or six national unions compete for members in a single industry. A number of unions which have suffered severe loss of membership due to plant closures, technological changes and the economic crisis have sought to fill the gap by recruiting new members regardless of jurisdiction.

"Jurisdictional conglomeration" is severely

weakening the ability of many unions to represent their membership either at the shop level or in contract negotiations. Consolidation along more clearly defined jurisdictional lines would strengthen the trade union movement immeasurably. Some recent mergers have been helpful, but mergers, in themselves, are not adequate.

Craft unionism is outdated. New technologies are rapidly destroying the old craft structures. Most "craft" unions are now made up primarily of industrial workers. Isn't it time to consider building an industrial union in the construction industry? A Building Workers Industrial Union would greatly strengthen the hand of building trades workers in an industry where the old crafts are disappearing and the unions are under heavy attack.

In spite of hesitations, craft unions in the printing trades and on the railroads are moving in the direction of industrial unionism. The slogan of the U.S. trade union movement should become, "One Industry—One Union!"

Fragmented contract negotiations have seriously damaged labor's strength at the bargaining table. Industry-wide bargaining has been virtually destroyed. Three-year contracts, or even longer, are the pattern. The trade unions have been cleverly maneuvered into a situation where major contracts expire in different years over a three-year period. And in each year, contract expiration dates are staggered over a twelve-month period. Some companies have contracts with twelve or more unions, many with different expiration dates. The energies of the trade unions are continually sapped by endless rounds of contract negotiations. Valuable time and resources are consumed which could otherwise be devoted to organizing and other union activities if there were a more cohesive bargaining pattern.

## ***Federation Bargaining***

In many countries, union strength is consolidated through the organization of federations. This form of organization reduces jurisdictional disputes and greatly consolidates union strength in dealing with the corporations.

For example, in the U.S. a Metalworkers' Federation would include such unions as the Steel Workers, Auto Workers, Electrical Workers, Machinists and other related labor bodies. As a federation, these unions would have a common contract expiration date with the companies. They would enter contract negotiations with a common set of demands. They would have a common strike deadline.

A federation form of organization helps prevent individual unions from being picked off one by one. It has helped the unions in Western Europe resist the kind of "concession contract" that became prevalent in the U.S.

In West Germany, the Metal Workers Federation won a partial victory in a militant strike to save jobs by cutting the work week.

One of the greatest contract victories in U.S. history was won in 1945-46 when the unions in steel, auto, electrical and packinghouse struck simultaneously around a common set of contract demands. This strike resulted in a historic victory that raised the wages of workers—organized and unorganized—across the nation.

The federation principle can also apply to unions in transportation, communication, the service trades, "white collar" and government. Federations in other countries have proven far superior to the loose structure that exists in our country.

## ***Communists and the Trade Unions***

The entire world is in the throes of a tremendous transition from one society to another—from capital-

ism to socialism. This historic revolutionary process follows earlier revolutionary changes from slave society to feudalism, and from feudalism to capitalism. Like the earlier systems, capitalism is no longer capable of solving the urgent problems facing mankind—unemployment, poverty, declining living standards, the growing chasm between the rich and the workers. Like its predecessors, it has had its day and is in the process of being replaced. Already, socialism is a living system for a third of mankind. It is impossible for trade unions in any country to cope with the problems of today without understanding this historic reality.

Failure to recognize this fact is at the root of many problems the unions face. The U.S. is one of the few remaining capitalist nations where trade union officials still dare to extol the capitalist system as good for workers. From this have grown the “class partnership” concepts that have led U.S. labor into one corporate trap after another.

Organized labor needs the Communist Party for many reasons. The trade unions need more members who are Communists. Because of our working-class policies, we are sparkplugs of the trade union movement. Our science, Marxism, has clearly proven the irreconcilable conflict between capital, in search of maximum profits, and the working class, in search of a decent life.

As adherents of this science, we have consistently rejected such schemes as concession agreements, profit sharing, Quality of Worklife Circles and employee stock option programs (ESOPs), as illusory solutions to such problems as plant closings and layoffs. In all relations with the corporations, we advocate a class struggle position, be it fighting grievances on the shop floor, at the negotiating table or in the political arena.

As Communists, we work for close fraternal ties

with the trade unions of all other countries as being mutually beneficial.

The trade union movement makes its greatest strides when Communists and other Left forces work in harmony with socialists and other Center forces around programs of common agreement. We work for the revitalization of this process as essential to the revitalization of the trade union movement.

We Communists support the building of rank-and-file committees inside of and in harmony with the trade unions, in support of more advanced union leadership. Rank-and-file committees emerge naturally as the frontline shock troops around such issues as public ownership, the fight for the shorter work week, affirmative action programs and independent political action, including support for trade union candidates for public office.

Members of the Communist Party expect no special treatment as union members. We expect to be accepted on our merits and elected to union office based on our program and our leadership ability. Anti-Communist clauses in some trade union constitutions are an aberration and a threat to the democratic rights of all members to elect leaders of their own choosing.

Fellow workers, sisters and brothers, this is the Draft Trade Union Program all members of the Communist Party are now discussing. We heartily welcome workers and trade unionists who are not Party members to join us in this discussion. We value your proposals and suggestions. This Draft Program indicates the direction that guides the work of Communist trade union members. For you who are not members, we hope you get to know us better. We most sincerely want you to join us and help build a new and better society for all.

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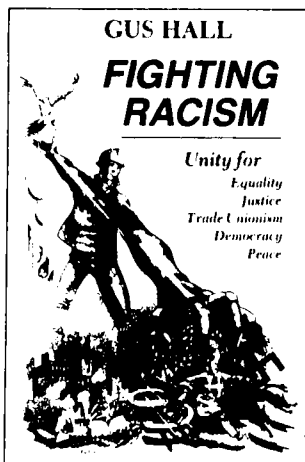
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