

CWP Supporters Set Up In San Diego

Defend NASSCO Frame-Up Victims!

LOS ANGELES—Three San Diego left-wing union activists face serious frame-up charges for allegedly plotting to blow up the main power transformer at the National Steel and Shipbuilding Company (NASSCO), the largest shipyard on the West Coast. The NASSCO 3, as they are called—Mark Loo and Rodney Johnson of the Communist Workers Party (CWP), and David Boyd, another union militant—were arrested September 16 by a San Diego police SWAT team and the FBI. Union officials and others have linked the crude frame-up attempt with NASSCO's attempt to bust the union in the shipyards. According to newspaper accounts, the three militants were among 28 unionists fired by NASSCO for their participation in union protests last August over safety conditions in the yard, culminating in a three-day wildcat strike.

Los Angeles attorney Leonard Weinglass said the three arrests grew out of "entrapment" by FBI and local police intelligence agents in collaboration with NASSCO (*San Diego Evening Tribune*, 19 September). Boyd and Johnson were arrested in a van allegedly containing a pipe bomb and two vials of acid. The van belonged to an FBI informer who drove the two union activists to a pre-



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Ramon Barton, FBI provocateur.

arranged pick-up spot where the cops were waiting. Loo, an IAM shop steward, was arrested a half hour later at his home. The three are now out on bail; if convicted of the charge of "conspiracy to bomb affecting interstate commerce," they face prison terms of five years and \$10,000 fines. Additionally, Boyd is accused of planning to assault a labor relations manager (who was never assaulted) and threatening the life of a security guard (who was never identified). All FBI evidence against the three is based on the testimony of one Ramon Barton, an agent provocateur who says his goal was to "penetrate the CWP, expose them, and stop people from getting hurt" (*San Diego Evening Tribune*, 26 September).

The arrests were the latest in a series of union-busting moves by NASSCO, where unsafe working conditions culminating in the on-the-job death of two machinists in September had sparked an angry protest movement by workers at the plant. In June, Loo and Boyd led a work stoppage over noxious fumes in the hull of the Navy destroyer tender, *Cape Cod*. On August 2 Iron Workers

Local 627 at NASSCO demonstrated at the launching ceremony of the *Cape Cod* to protest health and safety conditions. On August 4 the company retaliated by firing 17 trade unionists. On August 5 the workers responded with a three-day wildcat strike whose picket lines were respected by all the unions at NASSCO. Seven more workers were fired during the strike. A month later, on September 2, machinists Michael Beebe and Kenneth King were asphyxiated by leaking argon gas from an open unmarked tank on the *Cape Cod*—the sixth and seventh deaths due to gross company negligence in the last five years at NASSCO. Beebe and King's funeral was attended by over 900 workers. Two weeks later the NASSCO 3 were arrested.

FBI informer Barton was one of the 28 NASSCO workers originally fired in August. During this period, Barton now testifies, he had been constantly wired with recording and transmitting devices. This provocateur spoke with and attended meetings of fired union activists, taping conversations while he tried to involve workers in plans to blow up the homes of NASSCO officials, tape propane tanks to mufflers of cars, kidnap Labor Relations officials, throw gasoline bottles through company windows and so forth. As former Local 627 Assistant Business Agent Miguel Salas commented,

"The company is desperate. They've tried to divide the union by offering to hire back some of the 28 fired workers. They've tried red-baiting, and now an informer is used in what appears to be entrapment of three of our members."
—*San Diego Evening Tribune*, 17 September

While shop stewards and many rank and file unionists in the shipyard have come to the defense of the NASSCO 3, several of the local union tops have supported NASSCO in its frame-up and McCarthyite red purge. With contract expiration less than a year away and union elections due to be held this January, the company had been using the union safety protests as an excuse to fire many union leaders. Assistant BA Salas, one of the original 28 fired workers, was removed from his union posts after coming to the defense of the arrested three and expressed the fear that the arrests will be used to put the militant local into international trusteeship.

On September 16 Salas had distributed a leaflet calling on the union ranks to defend the arrested union brothers from the NASSCO/government attack. The next day Salas was removed from all his union positions by Lou Goodwin, head of the Shopmen's Division of the International Ironworkers. Goodman says there was a "deplorable" situation at NASSCO, "which I think we all know now was created by the CWP." Working hand-in-glove with the company, Goodman continued his red-baiting smear. "The criminals will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law, and I think the CWP will find itself on the decline..." (*San Diego Union*, 18 September).

The NASSCO frame-up comes in the context of a national media attack against the CWP ever since KKK/Nazi murderers shot down five CWPs in cold blood in Greensboro last November. One ominous sign was an NBC-TV special on the CWP November 10, which skipped over the fascist killers then on trial, instead stirring up fears of the "party [which] vowed to avenge the deaths" of Greensboro. Police officials were quoted that the CWP "are for violent overthrow of the government."



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IAM shop steward and CWP supporter Mark Loo victimized in union-busting at NASSCO shipyard, San Diego.

The NASSCO bomb-plot charges were linked to CWP antics during the presidential campaign, throwing eggs at Anderson and Kennedy, and their clash with NYC cops outside the Democratic convention in August. And the commentator made a pitch for beefing up federal secret police powers to persecute left-wing groups:

"So far police in 20 states have sought information on the organization [CWP], but because of new restrictions, the FBI cannot provide it. As a result the Greensboro police department has become a national clearing house for information about the party."

Now it's Reagan country, and should the bourgeoisie step up repression against the left as part of its renewed Cold War anti-communist drive, the frenzied CWP may well be first in line for attack. It is the duty of all left and labor militants and defenders of democratic rights to defend the NASSCO 3 against these blatant frame-up charges. But the CWP certainly makes itself an easy target. According to a fact sheet put out by supporters of the NASSCO 3 defense, there were no less than 12 specific incidents during the two-month period of August-September that Ramon Barton behaved as an agent provocateur—trying to suck workers into his plans, bringing semi-automatic rifles and shotguns in his van to the picket lines, approaching workers for various bomb-making plots, suggesting

the buying of expensive surveillance equipment and so forth. So why did Boyd and Johnson stupidly enter Barton's van on September 16 and let themselves be taken for a ride?!

The closely coordinated government/company conspiracy to frame the NASSCO 3 is an attack on the entire labor movement. If left-wingers are picked off in San Diego, it makes it that much easier to go after militant unionists around the country. And what are they accused of? Alleged plans to sabotage the operations of a bloodsucking company engaged in a vicious union-busting drive. Even if anyone besides the feds and their paid provocateur had dreamed up such fantastical plans it would be no crime, merely a stupid diversion from the class struggle. Such alleged plots are the product of a raving cop mentality—the demented idea that communist revolution is a conspiracy to bomb, loot and maim.

This vicious lie must be denounced and the charges dropped against the victimized San Diego union militants! Let's talk about the real criminals: NASSCO gets seven workers killed and scores seriously injured, while the FBI is called in to frame up labor activists. Socialists and class-conscious unionists must respond to this anti-red witchhunt by mobilizing labor and minorities against the capitalists and their secret police. Defend the NASSCO 3! ■

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