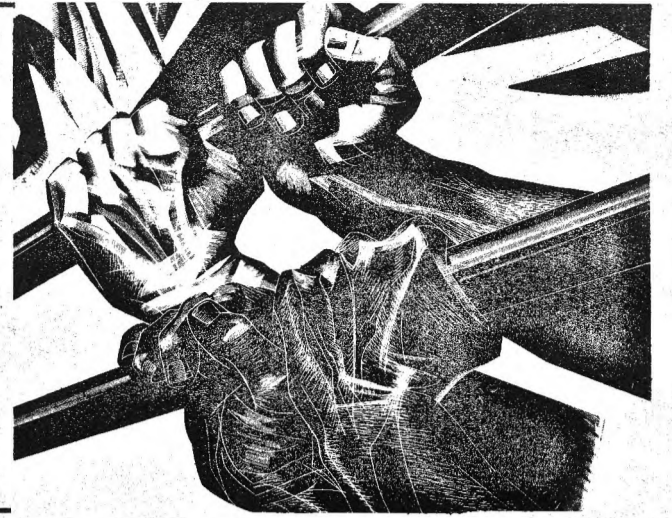


# COMMUNIST WORK IN THE FACTORIES

## A Report on the Atlanta Conference



### “Every Factory a Fortress!”

The October League organized a conference on “Communist Work in the Factories,” which was held in Atlanta, Ga., during Thanksgiving holiday and attended by more than 100 delegates.

The delegates came from communist organizations and collectives from around the country all working primarily among factory workers. Unity on many important strategic and tactical questions was reached including unity around the idea of a common effort in the upcoming labor struggles in 1973.

The Conference signified an important step forward within the ranks of the movement since 1969. It showed the developing integration of Marxism-Leninism with the newly rising workers' movement within the U.S. It also signified the defeat in large areas of the movement of many petty-bourgeois theories which attacked the vanguard role of the working class within the revolutionary movement. Such concepts as “student or lumpen-proletariat vanguardism” have been widely discredited along with the theory of the “bought-off” or “disappearing” working class.

The delegates heard several speakers make presentations on various aspects of working class organizing including Sherman Miller, Chairman of the Mead Rank and File Workers Caucus; Don Williams, a leader of the Black Workers' Congress; Odis Hyde, a veteran communist, active in many of the organizing drives of the old Communist Party.

Miller summed up the lessons of the seven-week Mead wildcat strike showing the various methods used to develop communist work and communist leadership in the daily struggles of the workers. He stressed the special need for work among white workers, a weakness in the Mead strike.

#### NEED FOR MASS STRUGGLE

Miller criticized those groups who limit their work to “simply talking to the two or three advanced workers in a plant.” Stressing the need to build the united front against imperialism among the masses of workers, he called for communists to integrate into the day-to-day struggles of the

workers for their basic needs and rights.

A film about the strike called “Strike at Mead,” was shown after Miller's speech. The film, made entirely from live footage of the Mead struggle, showed the political character of the strike and the role that communists played in it.

The film also demonstrated the merging of the workers' struggle with that of the national movement of the Afro-American people, especially in the South.

Odis Hyde then spoke on the “Role of Black Workers in the Class Struggle.” He traced the history of the Afro-American struggle from the period when they were “captive, slave labor” through their positions as share-croppers in the plantation system of the rural south and up to their present status as wage-slaves. Blacks now, for the most part, are scattered throughout the urban centers of the United States.

From this history of oppression and exploitation, he drew important lessons, stressing the need for both working-class leadership in the black struggle as a whole and the necessity for class unity between black and white workers. He pointed out that the history of the black struggle in the U.S. has seen most leaders emerge from ranks of the preachers, intellectuals and Democratic party politicians. But few if any from the ranks of the black workers themselves (who make up over 90% of the black population).

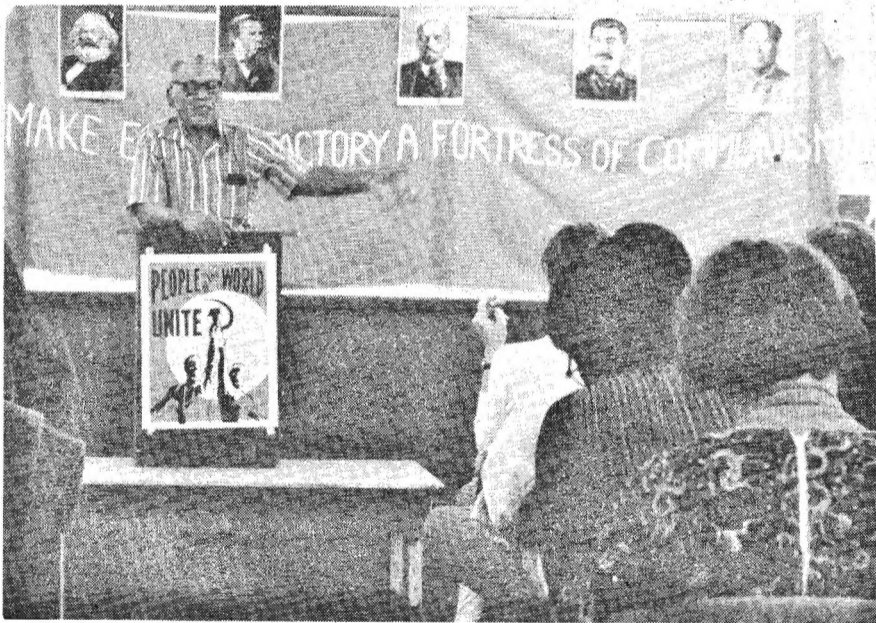
Hyde, a black worker himself in Chicago during the 1930's, described how and why he became a member of the Communist Party at that time. “I never heard people talk like this before—about Jim Crow, about lynchings, about unemployment insurance. . .” He then made the point that the communists did more than just talk, they acted. “When a family would get evicted, black and white communists would move their furniture in off the street back into their house.” By defending the rights of black people in practice, often in violent struggle against the landlord's police, the communists won the respect of thousands of black workers like Odis.

#### SOLIDARITY COMMITTEES

Williams gave a presentation on the tactics of in-plant organizing. He stressed the need to base our tactics on the concrete conditions within the plant and called for careful investigation of the issues which the workers themselves feel are important. He urged the development of left rank-and-file organizations and caucuses and the need for communists to fight for political content beyond the economic issues which arise.

The Conference heard a proposal calling for the establishment of such left rank-and-file workers' organizations, called “Solidarity Committees” which was proposed by one of the workshops.

Williams told the delegates that “an organizer cannot expect to go in and work miracles overnight but must have a long-term point of view and patience.” He then went into some of his experiences in working with such organizations as Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) in Detroit several years ago.



**Odis Hyde,**  
**veteran revolutionary,**  
**traces history of**  
**communist movement**  
**at Atlanta**  
**labor conference**

*The first time I saw a big communist demonstration was in the campaign of 1932 (the communist election campaign of Foster and Ford). They had a big march, a demonstration and a political rally at what is known as the Wabash Coliseum—15 Wabash in Chicago. The reason I went, and let's get this straight, was it was rumored, it was well-known that after the meeting, the communists fed you. I went for no other damn reason.*

*I wasn't talking then about changing the world, but when I got there the things they were talking about sort of left an impact on me. The fact that they had a black cat running for vice-president. James Ford came from Fisk University down in Tennessee. That impressed me a lot. I had never seen white folks talking like that in the midst of black folks, and black folks talking like they talked: about Jim Crow, lynching, and the poll tax. About unemployment—“People should get money whether they work or not, you had to eat!” The whole theory of unemployment compensation, that people should get just as much money when they ain't working or when they're too old to work as when they worked, cause it costs just as much to live for one as for the other. And these kinds of things impressed me.*

*The next thing that really shook me up, they got me reading them books. Then came the Scottsboro Boys case, then the Angelo Herndon case. And I never saw white folks do what I saw them do, fighting the police in the streets about black folks. Going to the relief stations and saying “we ain't gonna leave—we want food, we want money”. You call it welfare now—cash relief.*

*And the other thing that impressed me was the transformation of words into deeds. Back in those days you couldn't pay no rent—you didn't have the money. There was no such thing as unemployment compensation, no organized welfare and they kicked you out of your home. I remember when the streets on South side of Chicago was not lined with cars but lined with furniture. The communists would come out in the streets saying “FIGHT DON'T STARVE! Don't let them put you in the street!” And they would help people put the furniture back in. They'd get put in jail. And that moved me, man. I knew the wealthy blacks wouldn't do it. I knew the preachers weren't doing it. They said that Jesus existed to resolve all these matters, that he had all power. All you had to do was to put your hand in Jesus.*

*These people were doing some real things. They got me involved. When you got involved, you got involved in everything, the labor movement, the community—the labor movement wasn't separate from the community in those days.*

—excerpts from a speech by Odis Hyde

# Strikes - A School of War

With the attempt on the part of the capitalists to shift the burden of the present crisis onto the backs of the workers, a new upsurge is taking place in the U.S. workers movement. During the first seven months of last year, 4,580 strikes took place with more than 3 million workers taking part.

These strikes play an important part in preparing the workers for revolution and educating the workers in the spirit of class solidarity and hatred for the capitalists..

As Lenin said, "Strikes are a school of war," in which the workers learn how to fight against their class enemy for the liberation of the entire people and of all the working men and women from the yoke of capital.

But this is only one side of the question. The other inseparable side of this problem is, as Lenin said, "we must say that strikes are as said above, a 'school for war' and not the war itself; strikes are only a means of struggle, only a form of the labor movement. The workers can and must pass over, in all countries, from separate strikes to the struggle of the whole working class for the liberation of all the working people."

## MAJOR CONTRACTS EXPIRE IN '73

In the coming year, a number of significant strikes will take place. Contracts in major sections of industry including rubber, electronics and auto are expiring and the workers are faced with the fascist measures of the Nixon government in its attempt to drive down wages and working conditions while it drives up monopoly profits.

Another significant development in the strike movement is the growth of the communist movement in the U.S. and its gradual merging with the labor movement. This is having the effect of changing the character of these struggles and giving them more of a political content.

In the Strike Strategy Workshop, the tasks of uniting the class in struggle and "increasing the workers ability to fight" was stressed. The need to "build self-reliance" in the face of collaborationist policies of the labor opportunists, was also pointed out.

On the question of communist work in the shops, it was stressed the communists "must play a leading role in the day to day struggles." This was put forth in opposition to the line of some other groups who call for simply "winning the advanced workers" through propaganda only. The workshop agreed that,

"The way we do this is by practicing the mass line. That is gathering the unsystematic and spontaneous ideas of the masses and formulating them into demands, programs and actions. Then putting them out to the workers and winning them to them."

## WORK IN THE TRADE UNIONS

The need for communist shop papers was emphasized. More than a dozen communist shop papers from around the country were exchanged. The workshop concluded that "A communist shop paper can play an important role in leading the struggle, maintaining our independence as communists and as a collective organizer."

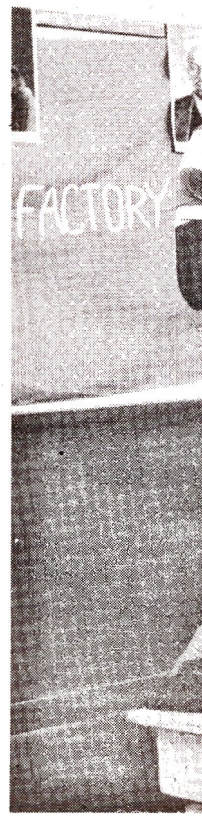
Another point of agreement in the Strike Strategy Workshop was found on the need to work in the trade unions, "because this is where the majority of the workers in big industry are at." At the same time, a program must be put forth to struggle against the undemocratic, chauvinist policies of the labor leadership and a struggle must be carried on to place the unions into the hands of the rank and file. The workshop statement said,

"We must fight for the unions to unite the class and not divide it by fighting against all forms of national chauvinism and raising the special demands of the minority and women workers. Lastly, we must push the union to militantly take up the economic struggle of the working class in a way that will promote class struggle, instead of class collaboration."

In preparing for strikes this year, the main thing stressed was the building of mass rank-and-file organizations and caucuses along the line of the Worker's Solidarity Committees which could mobilize the rank and file in political action in preparation for the struggle and through the strike.

(A report on the conference workshop on "Strike Strategy.")

Don Williams (right), of the Black Workers' Congress, discusses the importance of rank-and-file organizations. Lyn Wells (below), of the Central Committee of the October League speaks about the upcoming labor struggles in 1973.



Women on strike at the Telephone Company. "They are severely exploited in the lowest paying jobs."

## Organize the Women

Communists have to pay special attention both to fighting for women's equality and to drawing the masses of working women into the class struggle.

Women workers are doubly oppressed in capitalist society. They are severely exploited in the lowest-paying jobs, are used as a reserve labor force to swell the ranks of the unemployed and welfare roles as well as being denied their democratic rights which every person is supposedly guaranteed under the Constitution.

Therefore, we must raise the banner of equal rights for women and be the staunchest defenders of women's rights and fight especially for the demands that meet the needs of the great majority of women, the working women. In this way, we can forge unity between the masses of oppressed women and the general movement of the working class as a whole.

The workshop reached agreement on several such demands which can be brought into the upcoming struggles in labor in 1973:

- 1) Equal pay for equal work!
- 2) Equal job opportunity for all women!
- 3) 24-hour, free child-care centers which provide decent care for the children of all working families!
- 4) An end to forced labor legislation—so called "welfare reform"—designed to use welfare mothers as semi-slave labor and strike-breakers.

# of War

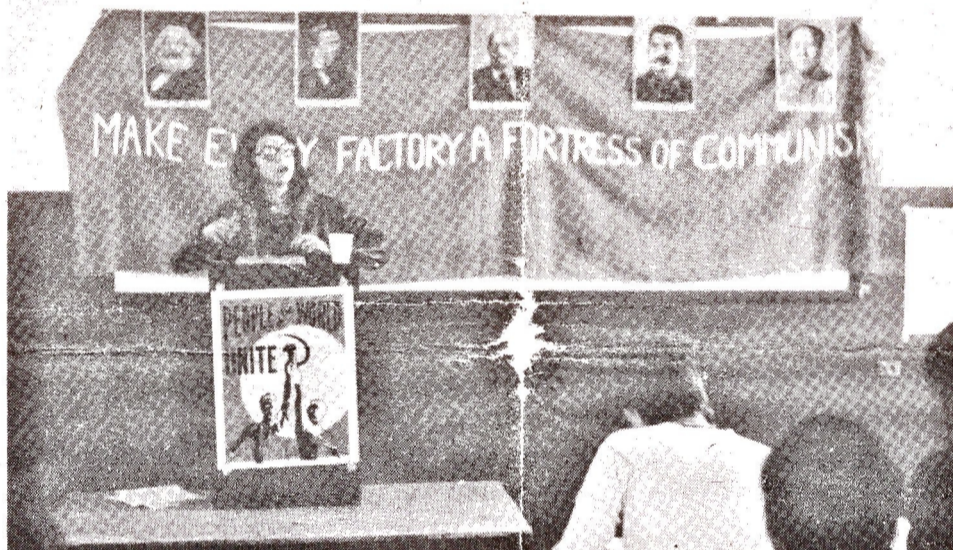
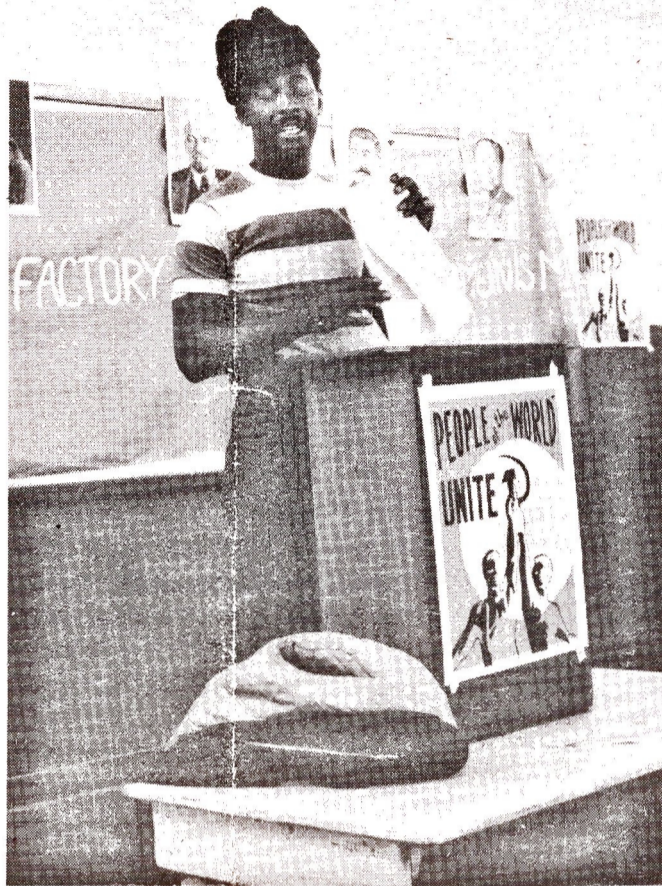
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# Rank and File

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## Organize the Women!

(A report on the conference workshop on "Work with Women Workers.")

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- 5) An end to legalized, forced prostitution!
- 6) Special protective legislation against heavy lifting and dangerous work; convenient rest room facilities; proper ventilation and lighting where women work.
- 7) Paid pregnancy leaves!

We oppose the method of struggle used by the union bureaucrats when they half-heartedly take up demands for equal employment and other reforms exclusively through the courts and the legal complex. In this way they forget mass struggle and rely on the mercy of the capitalists. The women's movement is an important component part of the anti-imperialist united front and the women must be mobilized in militant struggle.

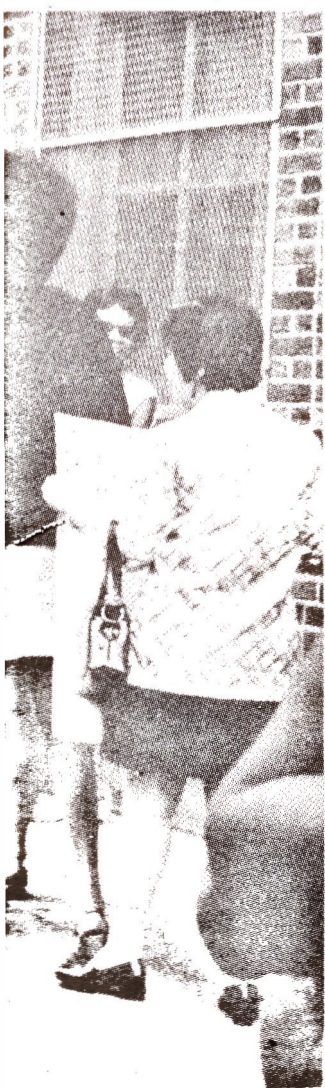
The working women are also opposed to narrow feminism which directs its main blow against the men workers, against men in general or against the family. The struggle for women's rights must be taken up by the men because it is in their class interests, not out of some abstract sense of bourgeois morality. Both organizations of men and women as well as all-women's organizations are necessary, depending upon the concrete conditions in each factory or community.

Where and how should we take up the struggle for the rights of women? In the daily struggles in the plant as well as in strikes we should educate the workers against male chauvinism and about the role of the women in the class struggle. We

should also ally with the women outside the plant whenever this helps the fight. The shop newspapers should have a place to take up the women's struggles in plants where only male workers are present. This type of shop-paper has been

The special need for the male workers is to bring up the issue of combating male chauvinism among the men and bring up the issue of combating male chauvinism among the men. In the fight against male chauvinism it is important to place the blame where it belongs—on the capitalists who initiate it and who benefit from it. One example of this was the battle in the steel industry by forcing men and women apart. There were no adequate lunch facilities for men and women were forced to eat in the men's rooms. When decisions had to be made in the course of the strike, the capitalists in the union to spread male chauvinism and to exclude the women from the decision-making process. The strike was then easily defeated.

Women under capitalism, are driven into production and into the working class. Advances that struggle. However, in the capitalist system, work in production means women are saddled with two jobs—in the factory and at home as household laborers. A struggle must be centered on the fact



the lowest paying jobs."

## Rank and File Win Bitter Strike

Newark, California—On Nov. 29, about 200 workers in Local 355 of the Sheet Metal Workers International Assn. won a 5.3% wage increase and ended their 26 day strike against National Steel Corp. This settlement was a clear victory because the company had consistently refused to offer any wage increase at all. The strike was between a small corporation and a weak union, but it had real significance as an example of the rapidly developing class unity among workers of different nationalities, as well as an example of the growing independence and initiative of the rank and file.

The work force at National Steel is about 50% white, 30% Chicano and the remaining workers are mostly Portuguese. For years National Steel, like the roughly 100 other small shops in Local 355, has used racist hiring practices and discrimination on the job to keep the workers under control. One aspect of the strike itself was the company's active recruitment of the black workers to replace the strikers. But despite these efforts to divide, the workers developed an iron unity in response to worsening conditions on the job and the company's arrogant stance on the negotiations. Furthermore, the strikers developed an understanding of the use of scab labor, never losing sight of the company as the real enemy. As one worker said, "If there was enough work to go around, the company wouldn't be able to use these brothers against us." (Unemployment rates in some Bay Area minority communities are as high as 33%.)

During the 3½ weeks of the strike, the men had to survive without income because the union leadership had blocked several rank-and-file efforts to establish a strike fund in the local. And though potential support existed in the many other 355 shops in the area, the union leadership did nothing to inform the rank and file. But in spite of these hardships and isolation, the workers stuck together even when it seemed the strike might go on for months. On Nov. 22 they unanimously rejected a proposal by the company which offered a token wage increase attached to a provision for reinstatement of 70 workers with all others to be placed on a "preferential rehire list." The workers instructed the union officials that "all would go back or none would go back" and stuck firmly to their wage demands.

In response to the militancy of the workers, the company ran immediately to the courts. On the basis of the fascist Taft-Hartley Act, the local court quickly granted the company permission to hire strikebreakers. The court also issued stiff injunctions against effective picketing. With strikebreakers walking freely in and out the gates and freight moving at will, the workers complained bitterly that the courts and police protect only the rich owners and don't care what happens to the workers.

The company also experimented with a plan to bust the union out of the shop. National Steel filed a suit claiming that it no longer had a contract with Local 355 and that the union no longer represented its "employees" (strikebreakers). But here the company was so far out of line that the strikers saw this action as just a desperate bluff to make them give in. Whether seriously intended or not, the company's attack on the union was a complete failure.

National Steel was badly hurt, while the strikebreakers, due to the company's disorganization, got out little production and in fact they made a lot of junk and ruined some machinery. The company gave in because it saw it couldn't break the spirit, unity and determination of the strikers. Though a suit against the company for unfair labor practices through the NLRB definitely helped, without the unity of the men, this action would have been too little and too late.

The most serious weakness of the strike was that it was carried on only within the limits set by the Pay Board. The spontaneous unity that developed among the workers was enough to defeat the company but not enough to challenge the wage-freeze. Though the original demands of workers did exceed 5½%, the advice of their union leaders who fully accepted the terms of struggle offered by the capitalist class was not challenged. The future success of the workers' strikes and economic struggle depends upon their willingness to oppose the government's anti-labor policies and the growing awareness the the "wage-price" freeze is a weapon long used to crush the workers' movement. This consciousness is developing in opposition to the class collaborationism of the trade union bureaucracy and will develop further as the general workers' struggle links up more closely with the revolutionary movement to defeat U.S. imperialism.



# en!

(A report on the conference workshop on "Work with Women Workers.")

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Where and how should we take up the struggle for the rights of women? In the daily struggles in the factory as well as in strikes we should educate the workers against male chauvinism and about the role of the women in the class struggle. We

should also ally with the women's movement outside the plant whenever this will strengthen the fight. The shop newspapers are an important place to take up the women's struggle, especially in plants where only male workers are employed. This type of shop-paper has been badly lacking.

The special need for the male comrades to work among the men and bring up their level while combating male chauvinism must be stressed. In the fight against male chauvinism, it is important to place the blame where it belongs on the capitalists who initiate it and who profit from it. One example of this was the breaking of a strike by forcing men and women apart at lunch time. There were no adequate lunch facilities and both men and women were forced to eat in locker rooms. When decisions had to be made about the course of the strike, the capitalists used their agents in the union to spread male chauvinist ideas, exclude the women from the decision-making at lunch time and thereby weaken any strike effort. The strike was then easily defeated.

Women under capitalism, are drawn into production and into the working class struggle which advances that struggle. However, under this system, work in production means that women are saddled with two jobs—in the factory and in the home as household laborers. Although the struggle must be centered on the factories, it must al-

so be carried into the community and into the home. Women are isolated from the struggle otherwise, with the daily drudgery of household labor. The fight for equality in family life, child-care and decent working hours as well as an end to forced overtime are issues which must be raised in the community as well as in the plant.

Finally we recognize that imperialism is the greatest enemy of women everywhere and that equality for women means the destruction of the whole system of imperialism. In this struggle, the fight for unity is the key to victory. Examples have been given of the attempts by some to use the women's movement to divide the anti-imperialist struggle, especially the organizations of national minorities, along the lines of men and women. The woman question should be a weapon for uniting the people not dividing them. Minority women are the most oppressed people under imperialism and therefore have the greatest interest in forging unity to defeat imperialism.

In summary, the workshop of "Work with Women Workers" stressed that the "woman question is a class question" and the fight for women's rights is a vital part of the workers' movement and the peoples' struggle against imperialism.

# UAW "Leaders" Won't Take the Offensive

The upcoming 1973 auto workers contract negotiations and the UAW's current "hit and run" strikes, once again calls into question the willingness of the UAW leadership to wholeheartedly fight for the workers. International UAW bureaucrats represented today by Woodcock and Mazey have over the years given away many of the workers' most effective weapons for fighting the big auto companies, winning economic gains, and defending democratic rights.

The UAW leadership followed right behind the other union misleaders by forfeiting the right to strike except when the contract expires or when health or sanitation is the issue. The "no-strike clause" states that labor and management agree to keep militancy down by not allowing wildcats, slowdowns, or work stoppages during the life of the contract. These are the workers' most powerful weapons and without them they are hamstrung.

It is no wonder that so few grievances are settled in the workers' favor. To take these weapons away from auto workers who are up against one of the most powerful sections of the ruling class is outright collaboration with the companies by the leadership.

Discrimination is a major area where the misleaders have failed to represent and protect the rights of workers. While there are over 250,000 black auto workers, 121,000 are concentrated in the lowest paying categories, with only 8,000 in upper strata. In 1967, four out of five workers laid off were black. In their southern plants GM and Ford have long had separate seniority lists for black and white workers. A 1961 ruling against this changed this policy only in words. By 1966



UAW workers on strike last year at GM's Lordstown plant.

only 9.7% of Southern auto workers were black and they held even worse jobs than black workers in the North.

In 1969 women constituted only 8% of all auto workers compared to 28% in manufacturing as a whole.

In economic issues the UAW leadership's record is just as bad. An escalator clause that would automatically increase wages as the cost of living increased was established in 1948. In 1967 a "cap" or maximum of 2% increase was placed on the clause even though the cost of living has risen 9% at times.

Though the leadership made militant grumbles in 1970 about "fighting to the end to defeat man-

datory overtime" in the Big Three, the 10-12 hour day and the six-day week is still standard in most plants.

Other clauses in the contract considerably weaken the workers bargaining position. Twenty years ago GM and UAW leaders agreed to a security clause. GM drew up the security rules, now listed in the contract which punish workers by immediate dismissal if broken. The worker must then go thru outside sources (lawyers, courts) to reclaim his job. The 90-day probation period is also used to intimidate workers. Since UAW agrees not to represent the workers for 90 days, it gives the company a golden opportunity to speed-up and add on work.

In order to keep control of the union, Woodcock and the executive board reactionaries have restricted democracy in the unions. They gave retirees, a conservative bloc which in some plants almost outnumbers in-plant members, the right to vote in plant issues as a way to manipulate elections.

In the upcoming auto struggle, the fight for a one-year contract is one of the best ways to prevent Woodcock-company collaboration. This fight should be taken up within the ranks of the UAW in order to give the workers more participation and to weaken the wage-freeze efforts of the government. In the face of the company's all-out attacks on the right to strike, the fight for a one-year contract will help sharpen rank-and-file resistance. The sharpening struggle within the UAW against the policies of racial discrimination, undemocratic unionism and sell-out anti-strike collaboration on the part of the leadership will only help the workers defend themselves against the attacks of the company and the government.

Some of those groups attending the meeting were: The Black Workers' Congress, The Boston Workers' Group and a collective from Cambridge, Mass., Communist Workers' League (Baltimore), Red Flag League (N.Y.), Red Star League (Chicago), People's College (Nashville), Association of Communist Workers (Louisville), as well as organizers from North Carolina, Chinatown in New York, Chicago and community workers from both the Chicano and Afro-American communities.

The conference ended on a note of unity with the singing of the "International."

## Conference...

Joe Dougher, a long-time worker and organizer who sat on the National Committee of the CPUSA in this earlier period, stressed the need to build a new communist party. "Without a communist party, the people have nothing." His talk centered on the role of the CP as a once-valiant fighter and leader of the U.S. workers' movement and how it degenerated into the swamp of revisionism, corruption and abandonment of the workers' movement.

Dougher said that communists must "never abandon even one tenet of Marxism-Leninism, because if they do, all the others will soon follow." He stressed the need for "an iron will and strict discipline," pointing up the need for organization based upon democratic-centralism—that is, democracy within our own ranks and in our relationship with the people and strict centralism and unity in action.

### BUILD A PARTY

Other speakers at the meeting hammered home the need not only to "build the party at the point of production"—in the form of factory nuclei, but also the need to develop the new upsurge of the workers towards the formation of left workers organizations with a mass character. These Workers Solidarity Committees, (anti-imperialist workers groups) "are needed to give expression to the militant sentiments of the workers in both the economic and political struggle and to oppose the collaborationist policies of the trade union bureaucrats who attempt to sabotage the workers movement."

Through the meeting, stress was laid on "practicing the mass line" and the need to get involved in the day to day struggles, no matter how small. This was said to be the basic method for accomplishing the organizational tasks in the factories.

Workshops were held during the conference, on such topics as: "Building Solidarity Committees and Rank-and-File Organization"; "Organizing the Factory Nucleus"; "Work With Women Work-

CONTINUED FROM FIRST PAGE

ers"; "The National Question in the Plants"; "Agitation and Propaganda"; and "Strike Strategy". These workshops gave people an opportunity to exchange experiences from different cities and industries and reach unity on a common approach to practical work among the workers.

The following day, each workshop presented a statement giving guidance to factory work for each of these areas. Some excerpts from these reports appear in this supplement. As well as clarifying long-range goals for work at the point of production, conference speakers and participants agreed that the next period will be a crucial one for the development of the U.S. workers' movement.

One speaker stated that, "with the sharpening of the crisis and imperialist contradictions, the Nixon administration will more and more adopt policies to shift the burden of the crisis onto the backs of the U.S. workers and people with increased speed-up, 'productivity campaigns,' wage cutting, lay-offs, and new slave labor programs for those on welfare. Increased political repression will also become the order of the day."

### AUTO STRUGGLE

Given these objective conditions and the surety of a new mass upsurge against these attacks, the conference delegates began laying some concrete plans to prepare for 1973, a year of intense labor struggles. A special workshop was held on "The upcoming Struggle in the Auto Industry." Looking to when the UAW contract expires next fall, auto organizers from plants across the country discussed possibilities of a united Left effort in the strikes. Such questions as a possible one-year contract and the fight against Nixon's economic policies were also discussed.

A real tone of unity prevailed throughout the conference. This was made possible by a conscious fight against sectarianism, a self-critical approach and most importantly because the political unity reach was based not on abstract phrases but on actual practice of the participants and organizations involved.

## WILDCAT!

HEAR:

SHERMAN MILLER

Chairman of the Mead Rank and File Workers' Caucus



SEE: 'STRIKE AT MEAD'

"Strike at Mead" is a full-length film made from actual footage of the militant struggle of the Mead workers in Atlanta Ga. during their 7-week battle against racism and for decent working conditions.

IN LOS ANGELES: JANUARY 13 8P.M.

Channing Hall 2936 W. Eighth St.

IN LONG BEACH, CALIF. JANUARY 12 8P.M.

Long Beach Peoples' Community Center  
1810 E. Anaheim St.

IN BERKELEY JANUARY 7 7:30P.M.

Newman Hall  
2700 Dwight Way