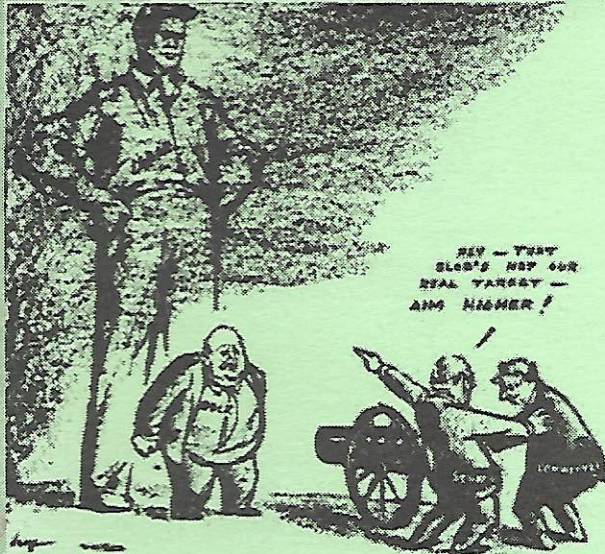


Defend Ron Carey!

Hands Off the Teamsters!



Cartoon by Laura Gray, originally published by *The Militant* in its April 8, 1957 issue, when the Senate McClellan committee was investigating the Teamsters.

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From the Managing Editors

This is a special issue taking up the government attack on Ron Carey and the threats against other AFL-CIO leaders. These mark the opening of a major new offensive by the capitalist government against organized labor. Much of this issue contains articles on this question, including historical background material by Farrell Dobbs (reprinted from 1967).

We include the texts of two resolutions and a petition circulating in the labor movement that call for defense of Ron Carey and resistance to the corporate-government-media offensive. But we also cite numerous articles in the left and liberal press that regrettably don't defend Carey or resist the onslaught; in particular, we reprint an article by Jane Slaughter, which appeared in the *Boston Globe* December 3 and which, in our opinion, concedes unnecessary ground to the government's attack.

The talk by Teamsters leader Eddie Kornegay, from a Detroit Labor Party forum, also deals partly with the attack on Carey, as does Mike Alewitz's speech from the tenth annual Jobs with Justice national conference.

Labor in Politics

This issue of *BIDOM* also features Jean Tussey's report on the Ohio labor movement's successful fight, by ballot referendum, against a law reducing workers' compensation for on-the-job injuries. The result has been increased political activity and political awareness in the Ohio labor movement.

On the national level, labor's increased political activity since the change of AFL-CIO leadership in 1995, its attempt to highlight issues of importance to working families and to oust the most blatantly anti-union politicians — even though this has remained in the dead-end trap of lesser-evil support to Democrats — has provoked retaliatory efforts by corporate America, acting mainly through its most unconcealed representatives, the Republicans.

The *Chicago Sun-Times* of December 8 reported a drive by corporate politicians in 50 states to enact legislation restricting unions' right to use members' money for political action. In California, the fight over this question, according to the November 30 *Los Angeles Times*, could become the biggest referendum battle between labor and big business

since 1958, when California unions mobilized to defeat a "right to work" initiative by a 3-to-2 margin. The *Chicago Sun-Times* reported that the AFL-CIO would hold a special national conference in Chicago on December 9 to consider ways of countering the corporations' new attempt to hinder labor politically.

The brouhaha in the big business media over "campaign funding scandals" is clearly related to all this. Tom Barrett looks at some of the past history and current hypocrisy around this question.

International Coverage

Tom Barrett also analyzes the recent "war scare" over Iraq, providing valuable history and background information for a better understanding of the situation. The demonizing of Saddam Hussein is the usual attempt by the big business media to whip up war hysteria in pursuit of the narrow special interests of the profit system.

Barry Weisleder reports on the recent teachers' strike in Canada, a significant struggle that unfortunately revealed a familiar inadequacy of leadership in the working class movement. From Mexico, we reprint two items revealing the continued violence and thuggery that mark the rule of the PRI. The Zapatista rebellion of the indigenous Mayan peoples in Chiapas is now threatened by genocidal repression. Every effort needs to be made to stay the hand of the murderers inspired by the Zedillo government in Mexico City and the imperialist government in Washington.

A sense of the current struggle between labor and capital in France is included in Part One of an article whose significance is by no means purely historical — Paul Le Blanc's report on the Paris conference commemorating the 80th anniversary of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution.

Articles on the Left and on Black Liberation

New in this issue is a column by Joe Auciello, "Reading from Left to Right," which we hope will become a regular feature in our magazine. Auciello also provides a personal account revealing the terrible inadequacy of patient care in the U.S. medical system. There is a growing movement in this country to pro-

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Why We Should Defend Ron Carey and the AFL-CIO Leadership

by "Labor Defender"*

"Many Teamsters here [at the TDU convention] argued with utmost sincerity that Carey was being railroaded...to punish him for trouncing corporate America in the UPS strike. They said it was no coincidence that just four days after Carey won an impressive contract with UPS, his victory over Hoffa was overturned, and just days after the Teamsters and other unions defeated President Clinton's [fast track] trade bill, Carey was disqualified."

— *NY Times reporter Steven Greenhouse (Nov. 24)*

From the point of view of the employing class which runs this country, Ron Carey has been too effective as a working class leader for their taste; they don't want his example to take root and spread. That is the fundamental reason behind the various "legal" moves against him — not any alleged concern over "corruption."

The employers' government is also attacking corruption in the Laborers and Hotel Workers unions. But again, it's not because the government cares about anti-democratic union bosses or corruption. (In fact, big business thrives on such things.) What they really don't like about the Laborers and Hotel Workers is their successful organizing drive in Las Vegas! (This was a point well made by Alexander Cockburn in his article about the mounting "Witch Hunt" against labor; see the *Nation* magazine, November 17.)

As Cockburn put it, "A witch hunt advances methodically. Start with Carey, an indubitable reformer, who with no real war chest had to fight for re-election against James Hoffa Jr., a man well freighted with criminal associates and bulging with cash. Harass Carey, and ignore Hoffa, who raised \$2 million in unaccountable funds. Now harass the [AFL-CIO] leaders to whose project Carey is vital. Now probe anyone trying to build a combative, ... even radical labor movement. Get them on

the run. Get them in front of a grand jury. Get everyone frightened and persuaded that trying to build a radical, combative labor movement is against the law..."

The employers are furious over the defeat of UPS, brought about by the Carey leadership's mobilization of the union rank and file and winning of public support for full-time jobs with good pay, good pension plans, and other needs felt by working people. The employers countered the Teamsters' UPS victory with action on the political front, through the web of government institutions that seek to monitor and control the unions in various ways. Four days after the UPS victory, the election officer appointed by the judge overseeing the Teamsters under the 1989 "consent decree," annulled Carey's election. The Teamsters were told they would have to rerun the 1996 election, which had made Ron Carey president by a 52-48 percent vote margin, the position from which he was able to wage a model contract fight and defeat UPS.

Carey Touched a Nerve

At his televised press conference the night of the UPS settlement, Carey spoke as a voice for millions of American workers troubled and frightened by the loss of decent jobs. He had the audacity to declare that the economy should be run a different way! (And he had the mobilized power of tens of thousands to back up this demand, plus the sympathy of millions.)

You can be sure this caused acute anxiety in the ranks of big business and the circles of high finance. The businessmen and financiers assume they have the exclusive right to make decisions about the economy — because they are the "owners" — even though their decisions affect us all.

Yet here was Carey, backed by Sweeney, Trumka, Chavez-Thompson, et al., saying, No. We have a voice. We

too will decide what happens with jobs and the economy.

"Fast Track"

Then came the battle over "fast track." Again, Carey and the New Teamsters were in the forefront of the fight against expanding NAFTA, just as they had been in the unsuccessful fight to prevent NAFTA in 1993. This time the political mobilization of labor and its allies stopped the Clinton-Gingrich agents of corporate power dead in their "fast track" — at least for now.

The giant corporations want "fast track" because it means greater opportunity for expansion of their profitable operations worldwide — and, as they see it, labor rights and environmental protections aren't relevant to "free trade." They want to be "free" to make the fast buck whenever and wherever in the world they can — without limits! Unrestricted profit-gouging from sweatshop labor and child labor. That's what free trade means to them.

Yet here comes the labor movement and says, No! We want labor rights and environmental protection. We want fairness and human rights. People before profits.

This infuriates the big money behind the Clinton-Gingrich "free marketeer" alliance.

The mouthpieces for the giant corporations answer with an intensified attack on labor. Class struggle leader Carey is now ruled ineligible to run again for the Teamsters presidency — by a former federal judge and current corporate lawyer, Kenneth Conboy.

Safire Weighs In

And here comes William Safire (on the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times* November 26) saying that labor has seized control of the Democratic Party. That's his twist on the fact that labor was able to mobilize so much public sentiment against "fast track" that most

*The preparation of this article was based on consultation with a number of Editorial Board members and contributors to our magazine. The byline "Labor Defender" indicates that the article generally expresses their collectively held views.

Democrat politicians were afraid to vote for it. (Similarly, in Ohio, labor mobilized a massive “No” vote that prevented implementation of a bipartisan, pro-business law cutting back on compensation for workers injured on the job.) This has been an exemplary model of political mobilization of labor and its allies — asserting the interests of working people against the profit-hungry interests of the dominant corporations.

(Of course, Sweeney et al. have no intention of trying to take over the Democratic Party, which remains under the control of big capital. But the unions’ political mobilization against “fast track” cramps the style of the global “free market” wheeler-dealers.)

Safire leads the corporate counterattack by accusing the new leadership of the AFL-CIO (Sweeney and Trumka in particular) —of “money laundering” and “corruption.” What a picture. Safire, the former speech writer for “Tricky Dick” Nixon, accusing the “union bosses” of anti-democratic practices.

Several different vehicles of ruling class policy are working in tandem in the present intensifying campaign against the unions. There is U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White in New York, for one. Safire praises her as “a serious prosecutor...unhindered by Reno Justice” (a reference to Clinton appointee Janet Reno, head of the Justice Department in Washington). Safire explains that “White is getting little crooks to rat on bigger crooks.”

This is a veiled reference primarily to the actions of Jere Nash, Carey’s former campaign manager, who has admitted illegal fund-raising activity and has agreed to “cooperate with the prosecution” by testifying against Carey — in return for a promise of milder treatment from prosecutor White. That’s how White gets an admitted “little crook” to rat on — in fact, to give self-serving false witness against — a genuine workers’ leader, who denies the charges and has not yet had his day in court to answer his accusers.

An editorial in the December 8 *Nation* points out that Nash “either lied at his hearing, when he pleaded guilty to conspiracy and making false statements and insisted Carey had been kept in the dark, or he is lying now, as he angles for a lighter sentence.”

Nash comes from the corrupt fund-raising culture of the capitalist Democratic Party. (For an excellent article detailing the backgrounds of the consultants and fund-raisers who abused their positions in the Carey campaign, see the December 14, 1997, issue of *In These Times*. The same corrupt culture of fund-raisers and political consultants exists among the Republicans too, but the media spotlight is avoiding that for now.) Carey does not come from that kind of background. As a leader of a UPS Teamsters local in New York for decades, he established a record of honesty, incorruptibility, and determination to fight for his members that was highly unusual in the extremely bureaucratized, Mob-connected Teamsters union before 1991.

Carey’s Record

Even the government’s “Independent Review Board” —which was imposed on the Teamsters as a result of the 1989 consent decree — cleared Carey in 1995 of all sorts of fabricated charges of Mob connections and corruption, charges brought by Carey’s old guard opponents, the great granddaddies of Mob connection and corruption.

Carey’s mistake was to uncritically accept and place his trust in the Democrat-connected consultants and fund-raisers recommended to him by other unionists. (William Hamilton, formerly with AFSCME, a man who had many Democratic Party connections, became political affairs director for the Teamsters. His associates, Jere Nash, Martin Davis, and Michael Ansara apparently refunneled Teamster money contributed to pro-Democrat campaigns to pay for mailings and other services of *their own* for the Carey campaign. They didn’t forget their own profit in these shady dealings.) These hustlers, probably well aware of Carey’s honesty and record of integrity, kept their operations to themselves. Now U.S. Attorney White, spurred on by the Safires of the press, encourages these hustlers to “rat” on Carey.

The important fact is that, despite his mistake in trusting inside-the-Beltway consultants and fund-raisers, Carey demonstrated beyond any question his ability as a genuine working-class leader in standing up against the

employers. That, as we have said, is the real reason for the attack on him.

In the UPS strike, he delivered the goods for his members, setting an example for the whole union movement and for all American workers. He presided over a tremendous membership mobilization, winning massive support from other unions and the public in general, and negotiated an excellent contract for his members. The employers undoubtedly fear he would lead the Teamsters in the same way in the upcoming freight talks, and so they wish to sideline Carey.

But rank-and-file Teamsters, and all workers, need the kind of leadership Carey can provide. The Teamster ranks deserve the chance to vote for him again. They should have the right to choose whomever they wish from within their union to lead their organization.

Union members’ right to choose their leaders is a fundamental part of the freedom of association that must not be infringed on by government. Without that right, union democracy has no meaning. Otherwise, “leaders” can be imposed on unions by arbitrary government decree. Government control of unions is a hallmark of fascism and Stalinism. Workers need to oppose any trend in that direction, to insist on the independence of the unions from government control. Workers need to fight for the principle of democratic control by union members over their own organizations.

More Levers of Ruling Class Attack

In addition to U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White, and corporate lawyer Conboy, the Independent Review Board has also been mobilized against Carey. On November 25 it announced its intention of placing charges against Carey (based on Conboy’s assertions) before the Teamsters General Executive Board.

Then there is the “Labor Subcommittee” of the U.S. House of Representatives, headed by Michigan Republican Peter Hoekstra (a recipient, according to Alexander Cockburn, of the maximum legal campaign contribution from none other than UPS — and of who knows how many other less publicly recorded emoluments for his services to the corporations).

Carey Fights to Defend Himself

"Mr. Carey filed a lengthy appeal yesterday that sought to overturn [his] disqualification on the ground that the Federal monitor had engaged in inaccurate fact-finding and had denied him due process by not granting him a hearing..."

"Mr. Carey...argued in his appeal that the Federal monitor Kenneth Conboy had denied teamsters the right to choose their president when he disqualified Mr. Carey."

[Carey's appeal was addressed to Judge David N. Edelstein of the Federal District Court in Manhattan. Edelstein oversees the 1989 consent decree that allows Federal supervision of the Teamsters and that the old-guard union leaders signed at that time rather than face prosecution under a federal racketeering suit.

—Eds.]

"...Mr. Carey's lawyers wrote, 'Although any union member subject to temporary suspension of membership would be entitled to advance notice of the charges, an opportunity to present a

defense, the right to confront witnesses and the opportunity to respond to the allegations,' Mr. Carey was 'accorded none of those rights.'

"Mr. Carey's lawyers argued that Mr. Conboy put too much stock in the testimony of Mr. Carey's former campaign manager, Jere Nash, who pleaded guilty in September to conspiring to divert teamster funds to Mr. Carey's campaign. In his decision, Mr. Conboy said he did not believe Mr. Carey's protestations of innocence, but believed Mr. Nash, who is awaiting sentencing.

"'At bottom,' Mr. Carey's lawyers wrote, 'the election officer accepts the uncorroborated, untested and unreliable statement of a convicted felon who hopes to reduce his sentence, and uses it as the basis to disqualify a union president and disenfranchise his supporters.'"

[From a New York Times report of December 3]

A Network of Government Interference and Control

Thus we see an entire web of government bodies, court officials, review boards, election officers, auditors, supervisory personnel, congressional investigators (armed with their own investigative legal teams), and the media mouthpieces who publicize, interpret, and play up the preferred angle for all these operatives and their operations.

The goal of this multifaceted campaign is made clear by Safire, who speaks gleefully of "the potential fall of John Sweeney."

Another target of the campaign, singled out by Safire, is Sweeney's "strongest left-wing [?] supporter, Gerald McEntee of the public employees' union."

McEntee, the head of AFSCME, and Andy Stern, head of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), have both been targeted in this broad campaign. In 1995, the votes of Carey as head of the Teamsters and of McEntee and Stern as heads of AFSCME and SEIU were crucial to putting the Sweeney, Trumka, Chavez-Thompson team in office, replacing the do-nothing heirs of George Meany and Lane Kirkland.

In contrast, Safire refers favorably to "the clean-union, anti-Communist era of George Meany and Lane Kirkland." Of course it wasn't a "clean-union" era; there was plenty of corruption in the unions then as now, but the Meany-Kirkland leaders were unashamedly committed to working with the bosses. They completely shared the employers' mentality, as Farrell Dobbs has explained, and wished to act as "social stabilizers." They wouldn't fight back against what UAW leader Douglas Fraser in 1978 described as the employers' "one-sided class war" against the unions and against workers in general. All workers have been feeling the squeeze since the late 1970s.

Safire doesn't like the fact that the reign of "anti-Communist" social stabilizers who wouldn't fight back ended in 1995, thanks to the votes of the above-named union leaders, among others. He makes clear that the purpose of this whole campaign is to get the AFL-CIO back under the kind of docile leadership it had before, the kind acceptable and

Safire, in the *New York Times*, beats the drums for this other component of the multi-structured corporate campaign against the unions. (The notorious Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee in the 1950s showed most dramatically how Congressional committee hearings can be used to manufacture hostile public opinion against those whom the employing class finds displeasing. Later, Robert Kennedy and others used similar hearings against the Teamsters and other unions, as Farrell Dobbs has described.)

(Elsewhere in this issue of our magazine we reprint a 1967 article by Farrell Dobbs on government intervention in internal union affairs entitled "Threat to Independence of the Unions." Dobbs was a leader of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strikes and of the over-the-road truck driver organizing campaign in an eleven-state Midwestern region, 1936-38, that effectively transformed the Teamsters from a narrow craft union into the giant industrial union that it still is today. He and other leaders of Minneapolis Teamsters Local 574 were ousted prior to a government witch hunt trial in 1942. Daniel Tobin, the corrupt top bureaucrat of the Teamsters union,

cooperated in the witch hunt. That in fact opened the door for the reign of corrupt, gangster-connected bureaucrats, such as Dave Beck and James Hoffa Sr., who flourished especially in the 1950s and '60s.)

Safire says that Hoekstra is going to go after AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Richard Trumka and President John Sweeney in hearings beginning in December. "He's hired the team of Joseph Di Genova and Victoria Toensing as counsel" for these hearings, "which means he's serious."

Safire charges that Trumka accepted a check for \$150,000 from the Teamsters treasury and then paid the same amount to Citizen Action (a liberal, pro-Democrat get-out-the-vote group). Citizen Action then, Safire claims, "skimmed one-third of it as a laundering fee [sic], passing the remaining \$100,000 to the campaign consultants handling the re-election of the teamsters' Ron Carey."

Safire quotes Hoekstra: "We want to find out how that money went through [AFL-CIO] headquarters without violating internal rules."

amenable to the profit-hungry “free market” employing class, which for two decades and more has been waging its “one-sided class war” against American workers.

Because of the AFL-CIO’s defeat of “fast track,” Safire bitterly describes Sweeney as “the undisputed enforcer of liberalism-protectionism within the Demo-Labor Party.” But Safire looks forward to “the potential fall of John Sweeney” in 1998.

They Dream of a Shanker Clone to Replace Sweeney

The right-wing, pro-employer “anti-Communist” labor skates are already boosting a candidate to replace Sweeney. Just as their hearts are with Hoffa Junior, candidate of the truly corrupt old-guard bureaucracy in the Teamsters, so too they would like to see the AFL-CIO housebroken again under the leadership of — Sandra Feldman, spiritual heir of the racist teachers’ union bureaucrat Albert Shanker.

For an excellent account of Shanker’s unsavory career, see Paul Buhle, “Albert Shanker: No Flowers,” in the summer 1997 issues of the magazine *New Politics*. As Buhle so well puts it: “one image of the late American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Albert Shanker that is most likely to remain in memory” is the one of him “on the 1995 [AFL-CIO] convention dais, fairly choking with rage and frustration, handing over leadership of the AFL-CIO to the reform forces in the person of John Sweeney.”

“The Kirkland clique,” Buhle continues, “of autocratic functionaries, heretofore failures at almost everything except retaining power, was in disarray. Their credibility had been undermined and with it, the presumed legacy of Albert Shanker...”

Here is how Jonathan Mahler, managing editor of the newspaper *Forward*, which reflects the views of the right-wing “Social Democrats USA,” describes the dream candidate of the unabashedly pro-employer union bureaucrats. Here is the candidate they

would like to see replacing Sweeney — if this scandal were to bring him down, as they hope it will.

“It’s rumored in labor circles that if the Teamsters are indeed expelled from the federation (or leave voluntarily), the unions that were defeated in the 1995 election may unite behind the president of the American Federation of Teachers, Sandra Feldman. Ms. Feldman, the protégé of the late Albert Shanker, says she is 100% behind Mr. Sweeney; at a recent executive council meeting, however, she pressed the AFL-CIO chief about the Teamsters debacle. What’s more, the AFT is currently in the process of merging with the National Education Association, a deal that could put her at the helm of the largest trade union in the free world.”

(They’re still talking about the “free world”; apparently they haven’t heard the latest: it’s the global “free market.”)

“...[There] is also the possibility,” Mahler continues, “of an alliance between traditional Social Democratic forces like the AFT and the so-called bread-and-butter unions,...which are primarily concerned with wages, pensions and benefits. There is a precedent for such an alliance: George Meany, the plumber who commanded the labor movement during the waning years of the Cold War, was closely aligned with the intellectual [?] Albert Shanker.”

Mahler voices the fond wish of the utterly reactionary Social Democrats USA: “The scandal engulfing Mr. Carey just might pave the way for the return to power of the labor movement’s *Cold War brain trust*.” (Emphasis added.)

Mahler’s anti-Sweeney, anti-Carey ravings appeared on the notoriously anti-union editorial pages of that flagship publication of finance capital, the *Wall Street Journal* (November 19, 1997).

How Can Labor Counter This Campaign?

As Canadian labor leader Tommy Douglas explains in the labor party video “Mouseland,” the fat cats of capital don’t like it when the many-

millioned “mice,” the working people, resist their rule. There are good laws in place — good, that is, for cats.

And if the mice look out for themselves, then of course from the cat’s point of view, they’re breaking the law — the cats’ law, that is.

One obvious conclusion from the whole present situation is that labor needs its own independent political vehicle, a labor party based on the unions. Labor cannot leave the political arena to the fat cats, unchallenged. Victories gained on the economic front, on the picket line and at the bargaining table, can be snatched away on the political front, by the employer-controlled web of government institutions that we have seen put into operation against the Teamsters — and potentially against the AFL-CIO as a whole.

Another conclusion is that to defend themselves, both Carey and the AFL-CIO leaders need to appeal to the rank and file, to mobilize them and to win over public sentiment in an aggressive campaign, just as they did with the UPS strike and “fast track.” They need to audaciously expose the hypocrisy and corporate greed behind this whole “anti-corruption” ploy and “campaign-funding scandal.”

Resolutions by local unions and union bodies everywhere are needed defending the leaders under attack. (Some such resolutions that have already been passed are reprinted in this issue.) Teach-ins, rallies, marches, demonstrations, and every kind of pro-union publication and medium of communication are needed to explain the issues and defend the right of workers to fight for their own interests free of government interference and the right of union members to elect people of their own choice to lead that fight.

We need to demand that the government back off. “Hands off the unions!”

Will the union leaders see their way clear to fight back as needed against the august power of the law and government? If they don’t, their own fates, and the best interests of their members, will be seriously endangered. □

December 5, 1997

NY Times and Others Join the Attack on Carey, Trumka

by "Labor Defender"

In an earlier article we cited William Safire's column in the *New York Times* of November 26. Two days after Safire weighed in, the *Times* editors essentially endorsed his position. An editorial in the November 28 *New York Times* showed that Safire was not just off in right field, barking by himself. The editorial placed the publishers of this molder of bourgeois opinion squarely against Carey, Trumka, and Sweeney, along the same lines taken by Safire.

Referring to Trumka's decision to invoke the Fifth Amendment when questioned by the Teamster election officer, the *Times* editorial said that Trumka should step aside "for the sake of propriety."

"Refusing to testify on grounds of self-incrimination may be acceptable in a criminal trial, but it hardly instills confidence in his leadership of the AFL-CIO," said the editors.

The *Times* placed its attack on Trumka, and by implication, Sweeney, in the following framework:

"Three months after triumphing in the United Parcel Service strike, the labor movement is reeling from the corruption charges against the Teamsters' union.

"Now that Ron Carey has stepped aside as Teamsters' president, the spotlight [whose spotlight? that of the anti-union corporate media] has shifted to other labor leaders who may have been involved in the alleged plot to divert union funds for Mr. Carey's election campaign.

"This is a painful moment for the union cause, but its commanders would be mistaken to hunker down and belittle the charges against them. Only by *cooperating fully with investigators* can they redeem the promise of a reborn labor movement." [Emphasis added.]

Oh sure, the "union cause" and "the promise of a reborn labor movement" are dear to the hearts of the *NY Times* owners. In a pig's eye. This mouthpiece of the employing class is putting on the mask of "fatherly concern" — now, we

want you to *cooperate fully*; this is for your own good, to "redeem the promise"; don't go "hunkering down"; above all, don't TAKE THE FIFTH; don't dare to defend yourself, or "belittle the charges." Above all, don't say what this is really about — although the *Times* did let it slip by referring to the labor movement's "triumphing in the [UPS] strike."

A week later, in its December 6 issue, the *Times* trotted out a Princeton professor, one Sean Wilentz, on its Op-Ed page to further downgrade Carey, but also to indicate again what's behind this corporate-government-media campaign, in addition to the UPS strike. Wilentz wrote:

"On numerous issues like Nafta [as the *Times* spells it], the labor movement needs as much debate as possible, lest Mr. Sweeney and the other new reformist leaders become, in their own way, just as myopic and unyielding as their predecessors did."

That's the real complaint. The labor leadership was too unyielding on NAFTA, too "myopic." They couldn't see that they should go along with "fast track." They should have debated its pros and cons (and let it go through) instead of mobilizing all-out opposition and derailing it temporarily.

Wilentz says he's not for Hoffa, but adds: "it is important to remember that the Hoffa slate does enjoy strong rank-and-file support in several regions of the country." Wilentz's convoluted argument (abstracting from the class struggle) is that "the existence of an opposition to the reform movement within the teamsters is actually healthy for the organization — for without principled electoral opposition, movements stagnate and democracy ossifies."

Democracy in the Abstract

Wilentz doesn't see (or wants to distract attention from) the fact that Hoffa and the old guard are *agents of the employers inside the unions*. Their history is one of making sweetheart deals with the

bosses, enforcing contracts that the membership voted against, enforcing submission to these sell-out deals by violence, and collaborating with mobsters (who are also *capitalists*; it's just that their business operations aren't generally acceptable under the present form of "democratic" capitalism in the U.S.).

Hoffa and the old guard — and their Mephistophelian mouthpiece and eminence grise, Richard Leebove, a former follower of neo-fascist Lyndon LaRouche — are stalking horses for the corporations within the Teamsters union. If they enjoy support among the ranks in some areas, so much the worse for those members taken in by the Hoffa myth of the powerful leader who'll get things done while the members sit back and keep quiet.

Wilentz, who claims nothing but sympathy for reform of the labor movement, misleads his readers. He portrays the federal government as an *impartial* ensurer of the interests of union members. Listen to Wilentz:

"Every reasonable measure that could be taken to insure a fair and open debate of the issues had been taken. The Federal Government was overseeing the [1996] election. And...would continue to oversee future teamster elections until there was strong assurance that democracy had been firmly entrenched inside the union."

It's like saying, "The cavalry has arrived."

Apparently Wilentz really believes that the government is impartial and only wants to see "democracy firmly entrenched" in the unions.

(Incidentally, historian Wilentz has the facts wrong. The 1989 consent decree did not authorize federal supervision of Teamster elections to continue indefinitely. It only provided for such supervision of elections in 1991 and 1996 — the 1998 rerun being an extension of the 1996 elections.)

What actually did the federal overseers do? They turned a blind eye to the employers' money and the Mob money behind the Hoffa campaign. They made no objection to the inordinate attention given to Hoffa in the corporate media. But when Carey and the reform slate won the election anyhow and then trounced UPS by leading the Teamsters in a model strike, the federal overseers decided to move against him.

Continued on page 11

Who Will Fight for Ron Carey?

by Charles Walker

The author has been active in TDU for many years.

Carey gave us back our dignity, our self-respect, our union.

— *Teamster rank and filer, TDU Convention, Cleveland, Ohio (November 21–23)*

When Teamsters President Ron Carey in late November stood up to speak to 600 delegates and guests at the 22nd annual Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) convention, the crowd was already on its feet, roaring out its welcome. Their applause was relentless and profoundly heartfelt. Men and women fought back their tears and sobs, as their encouraging shouts and chants rocked the large ballroom, filled to capacity. Many of the mostly rank and file Teamsters were expressing their fervent support for Ron Carey and their unconditional opposition to the government's November 17 order barring Carey from the court-ordered rerun of the 1996 Teamsters election. Carey won the 1996 election with an absolute majority, beating back James Hoffa, Jr., the champion of the union's reactionary old guard.

Undoubtedly, the assembled Teamsters also had in mind Carey's militant leadership of 185,000 strikers during last year's inspirational battle with United Parcel Service (UPS), corporate America's eighth largest financial giant. And no doubt, the Teamsters were voicing their deep appreciation of Carey's victories since 1991 over the union's long-entrenched old-guard bureaucracy.

Delegates to Carey: "Fight! Fight! Fight!"

Carey's speech to the delegates was repeatedly interrupted by stormy ovasions and chants that called on him to "Fight! Fight! Fight!" Carey started by thanking his allies for their support.

Every step of the way you have been there — every step of the way. You have been the conscience of the Teamsters in the difficult fight to reform this union. You have been the heart and

soul. I want to thank each and every one of you for all that you have done.

But now we face a new challenge. You all know about the decision barring me from running...I want to look around this room and look in everyone's eyes and say [the government's] decision was dead wrong...If I'd have known that anything was improper, I would have stopped it dead in its tracks...But the outcome of my appeal will be in the hands of judges and lawyers, and no one in this room can predict what will happen.

Carey related that the authorities were slated to examine Hoffa's campaign finances. "The biggest Teamster employer, UPS," Carey said, "has been caught making illegal contributions directly to Hoffa Jr. There is no doubt that they will find corruption in the Hoffa camp, and Hoffa is history."

Carey directed his supporters to look to the future and held up the UPS contract campaign and strike as a model for the union's future. He asserted that the fight with UPS resulted in "the biggest victory in our lifetime. A victory, by the way, that has inspired working people all around the world."

Carey urged the audience to continue "our fight to build a strong, democratic union....Now, today, tomorrow, we must redouble our efforts, because what is at stake is the future of our families, our union, and a strong labor movement that works in the interests of working people in this country."

In short, Carey thanked his TDU supporters for their help, laid out an action program for the Teamsters union, and asked the delegates to prepare themselves for the eventuality that he would not be their candidate in the 1998 rerun election.

Only a Legal Battle?

Carey stated that he would fight the federal decision that bars him from the rerun election, but he didn't say how he intends to carry out his fight. Carey left

the impression that he will wage only a legal battle, defending himself with only a lawyer while some well-wishers helplessly look on from behind the courtroom's railing.

Given the delegates' passionate reception of Carey and his speech, there can be no doubt that if Carey had asked them to militantly oppose the federal authorities, the delegates enthusiastically would have enlisted in the fight until its conclusion. For clearly the TDU delegates have a huge stake in the Teamsters' right to elect their own leaders, free of government or big business interference. It's far from clear why Carey didn't put forth a strategy based on the delegates' proven ability to mobilize tens of thousands of other Teamsters, as they did in 1991 and 1996, ensuring Carey's election victories.

Perhaps Carey is simply not familiar with American labor's rich legacy of mass action in defense of militant union leaders. After all, the last time the ranks of a union mobilized to defend its leadership was in the 1940s and '50s, when Harry Bridges, then head of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, was under siege by the equally hostile Truman and Eisenhower administrations. On that occasion, the government was defeated in its effort to deport Bridges.

No Mass Action Plan

Carey did not present the delegates with a mass action plan to resist the government, and neither did the central TDU leadership. Those leaders of the militant reform caucus did not press Carey to adopt a strategy of relying on the same rank-and-file power that won the UPS strike, took on the freight bosses on a national picket line in 1994 for the first time since 1979, and toppled dozens of regional old-guard bureaucrats from gold-plated seats of baronial power and privilege.

Most of the central TDU leadership seemed to have decided that a battle to

defend Carey could not be won, and that the chief task at hand was to prepare for the rerun election behind a new candidate leading a reform slate. Indeed, three potential candidates, presumably acceptable to TDU, were on hand. Although each voiced strong support for Carey and support for his appeal of the government's rulings, clearly the three were present to cement their ties with TDU activists.

Just hours before Carey arrived at the convention, TDU's central leadership body presented a motion to the delegates:

TDU stands in solidarity with Ron Carey and in full support of the direction that he has led our union over the past six years. In the event that Ron Carey steps aside as the reform candidate for General President, this TDU Convention directs the TDU leadership to work with other Ron Carey supporters in support of a strong reform candidate. The TDU ISC (TDU's highest elected body) is directed to determine any TDU endorsement. This Convention goes on record in favor of a candidate and slate that are committed to build upon and continue the direction of the past five years, in line with the resolution adopted here today and TDU's principles. We do not support the creation of a so-called reconciliation slate with the old guard forces, which would amount to a reversal of the course that Ron Carey has set.

Carey Not a "Lost Cause"

The motion was adopted unanimously, but not all TDU leaders and delegates agreed that Carey was a lost cause. Many argued that Carey should resist the government's overseers and that TDU should back Carey to the hilt. They said that the government was not only attacking Carey; it was also after organized labor, at large. They said that the government was not just barring Carey, it was barring the Teamsters' ranks from freely choosing any of their members as leaders, not just those candidates presented by the government, and the busi-

ness interests behind the politicians. They said that the government's action was fundamentally undemocratic, and that TDU together with Carey should fight to claim the right of the union's ranks to fully democratic elections in the Teamsters Union.

On the eve of the convention, the election officer, Benetta Mansfield, postponed the rerun election for 45 days to enable Mansfield's staff to investigate the sources of nearly \$2 million of the \$4 million Hoffa spent during the 1996 election.

This additional time should provide breathing space for Carey and for TDU to rethink their options and seek support from the Teamsters membership for mass action to back up the legal fight that Carey can't, in any case, avoid. However, the Cleveland convention was Carey's best opportunity to discuss with the core of the union's reform militants any and all proposals to blunt, if not defeat, the government's attack. Regrettably, that discussion did not take place, and the activists will not meet again until next fall.

Petition in Support of Carey

However, a determined UPS driver at the convention drew up a petition to Carey stating:

"Our rights as Teamster members are what are really under attack by the government's decisions to void the election and to rule you off the ballot. We call on you, Brother Carey, as our General President, to continue to lead us in defending our rights as Teamster members to nominate and elect the leaders of our choice. This petition is to let you know that we are ready to join with you in a fight to overturn the government's unjust decisions."

Well over a hundred delegates signed the petition during the convention's final hours. Hundreds of the petitions were taken back home to circulate in local unions. The petition is posted on the Internet, so by now it is likely that several thousand signatures have been

forwarded to Carey at the Teamsters' Washington headquarters or the offices of New York Teamsters Local 804, where in 1967 Carey was first elected the principal officer.

The Attack on Carey — An Attack on All of Labor

The AFL-CIO's spending of \$35 million dollars in the 1996 general elections has triggered what political columnist Alexander Cockburn in the *Nation* calls an "old-fashioned witch hunt...The witch hunt is against organized labor. Its prime target is the Teamsters president, Ron Carey. Beyond Carey, targets include Richard Trumka, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, and John Sweeney, president. Also under assault is Arthur Coia of the Laborers Union. Beyond these labor chieftains, the target is any progressive leader or radical organizer in the entire union movement...Get them in front of a grand jury. Get everyone frightened and persuaded that trying to build a radical, combative labor movement is against the law...."

Labor leaders and union organizers who agree with Cockburn should get at the head of the line to defend Carey and the Teamsters ranks. For if the attack on Ron Carey isn't a wake-up call for organized labor, then an after-midnight rifle-butt against the front door might be. Maybe some will find Cockburn an alarmist. If so, then what's wrong with organized labor just acting as if *an injury to one is truly an injury to all?*

Two days after the convention, Carey announced that he was

taking a temporary, unpaid leave of absence, effective immediately, from all IBT positions pending the outcome of my appeal...It's a sad day when the word of a convicted criminal prevails over the word of a man who has stood for integrity all his life, and has not yet had his day in court — where all the facts can be aired openly and I am afforded the right to confront my accusers like any other American citizen. □

November 26, 1997

Which Way for Carey's Supporters?

by Charles Walker

It is not by accident that everyone is bashing our General President. He is the guy who honestly believes that the membership should have the right to decide their own destiny.

— Bill Slater, retired Teamster

In 1989, when Ron Carey asked a Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) convention for its endorsement, most delegates knew little or nothing about him. But weeks before the convention, the top TDU leadership asked Carey to run for the Teamsters' most powerful post, in the wake of the government-imposed Consent Decree.

Carey had never shown any particular support for TDU. In fact, he told the 1989 TDU convention before it voted to endorse him that he had never seen the need for TDU in his local union. Nevertheless, Carey was attractive to the TDU leaders because *he was a militant unionist*; he bucked the bureaucracy four times when he led local strikes against United Parcel Service (UPS), and he had won the affection and loyalty of the 7,000 members of New York Teamsters Local 804.

During Carey's almost six years as general president of the Teamsters union, he continued to be a militant trade unionist, and very often, a sharp burr under the Teamster bureaucracy's backside. So much so that even before Carey gained widespread recognition for his leadership of the 1997 UPS strike, he stood out from all other American international union leaders for the same reasons he stood out as a local union leader.

On November 17, "Black Monday," a government election officer ruled that Carey could not be a candidate in the court-ordered rerun of the union's 1996 election. Carey challenged the disqualification order, but also took a leave of absence from the presidency. Carey's disqualification revealed, or triggered, serious differences among Carey's allies and supporters, inside and outside of the Teamsters union.

Jane Slaughter: An Unexpected Carey Critic

One unexpected Carey critic is Jane Slaughter, a founder of *Labor Notes*, a progressive periodical that has consistently backed the efforts of TDU, including its alliance with Carey. Recently, Slaughter wrote an article, published in the December 3 *Boston Globe*, that certainly acknowledged Carey's accomplishments since he took office in 1992. But at the same time, she left the impression that she believes that Carey is guilty as charged by the government's so-called Independent Review Board (IRB), and by the court-appointed election officer, and therefore is not entitled to support during this critical time. Not surprisingly, that view of Carey's guilt is also the view of the Hoffa camp, not to mention the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*.

Given that the case against Carey rests primarily upon the uncorroborated, or weakly corroborated, testimony of a tainted witness, one would think that Slaughter would at least withhold her judgment. For Slaughter must know that the witness lined his own pockets with Carey campaign donations, faces ten years in prison, and is now seeking leniency in return for his "cooperation." And surely Slaughter knows that the IRB charges are only charges and not a finding of guilt. And it's no secret that Kenneth Conboy, the former federal judge and present corporation lawyer who ran the hearings and disqualified Carey, labeled his own proceedings "inquisitorial." That means, in part, that Carey was barred from facing his accusers and directly challenging the allegations against him.

Slaughter wrote, "Carey's mistake, the mistake that brought him down, was not to put his faith in the rank and file." In other words, Ron Carey, not the government, is primarily responsible for the overturn of the 1996 election and the barring of the Teamster ranks from electing any Teamster member to any union office.

Rather than challenge the government's right to restrict the members in

their choice of leaders, Slaughter chooses this critical time to argue with Carey over what she believes is Carey's lack of understanding of the "notion of bottom-up, rank-and-file control...[and his] appointing more conservative types to important positions...[and his hiring of]...slick consultants with no union background to run his 1996 reelection campaign."

Whatever the merits of her arguments with Carey about his policies of the past six years, isn't this the time to set aside the debate of what Carey should have done yesterday and focus on what Carey and all partisans of rank-and-file power and democracy ought to be doing today? Isn't the government's new level of intervention in the Teamsters Union and its threats against other labor leaders the paramount issue at this time? Should not the partisans of workers' democracy utilize whatever power they have, including whatever access they have to the popular media, to counterattack the government's undermining of union power?

That's what partisans of union power did when Harry Bridges was under attack by the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, and what they did when the Roosevelt administration attacked and then jailed the militant Minneapolis Teamsters, and what they did when President Wilson jailed Eugene V. Debs.

To my mind, Slaughter is turning her back on a proud tradition of American labor, and it's not clear why.

Other Carey Critics Among "Progressives"

Slaughter is not the only Carey critic from the ranks of the progressives. An unsigned editorial in the *Nation* (December 8) rightly attacks the court-appointed election officer's ruling as denying "rank-and-file Teamsters the right to decide their own leadership," but the writer undermines the force of his argument by accepting at face value the government's case against Carey. "But on the evidence," the writer tells us, "it's difficult to believe Carey is the hapless victim of others' designs."

Resolution by AFSCME Local 444

Against Government Interference in the Teamsters Union

The following resolution was adopted on December 4, 1997, by the Executive Board of Local 444 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). The text of the resolution was posted on the Internet by Richard Mellor, 2nd Vice President, AFSCME Local 444, Oakland, California.

Whereas the invalidation of the Teamsters 1996 election and the barring of Teamster President Ron Carey from running again has been followed by increased interfering in the affairs and finances of this union by the U.S. government; and

Whereas while decent trade unionists oppose any form of corruption or criminal activity within the trade union movement, Organized Labor should not support the interference in a union's affairs by representatives of political institutions [bankrolled by] big business, which are themselves mired in corruption, scandal and vice; and

Whereas this intervention into the affairs of a trade union has nothing to do with corruption but is a response to the recent UPS strike led by Ron Carey and the effect that this victory had on the trade union movement and working people in general; and

Whereas other trade union leaders, including AFSCME President Gerald McEntee, have been named in the big business press as possible victims of this witch hunt, which clearly indicates the intention of big business to attack the entire union movement; and

Whereas the decision whether or not a candidate for union office is eligible is a decision that should be made by members of that union, as should be the expenditures and other decisions that are necessary to run a union; and

Whereas the support Ron Carey has among rank and file Teamsters and the cheers of "fight, fight, fight" that he received at the recent TDU convention indicate the willingness of workers to wage a real fight against this attack on the trade union movement; therefore be it

Resolved that AFSCME oppose the U.S. government's intervention in the affairs of the Teamsters union and the trade union movement in general; and be it further

Resolved that AFSCME President and AFL-CIO Executive member, Gerald McEntee, William Lucy, AFSCME Secretary Treasurer and AFL-CIO Executive member, and Linda Chavez-Thompson, AFSCME member and AFL-CIO Executive Vice President, use the power of their offices to call on the AFL-CIO Executive to initiate public protests across the country against the attack on the Teamsters; and be it further

Resolved that this be done through the Central Labor Councils in conjunction with affiliated Locals and their regional councils; and be it finally

Resolved that organized labor explain to all workers and members of the communities in which we live and work that this attack on the Teamsters union is a response to that union's defense of working people and its victory against UPS, the eighth largest corporation in America, and that on this basis all workers and community organizations be encouraged to join with organized labor in this protest.

Moberg also asserts, "The scandal poses risks to the reform movement, if Carey persists in trying to save his candidacy." That proposition was not discussed at TDU's recent convention, but probably is shared by some TDU delegates, as well as some of TDU's central leaders. In any event, the top TDU leadership seemed to think that the Carey era is over, and so did not take action to encourage Carey to hold out against the government's assault. There were no votes that clearly indicated a majority sentiment, but it appeared a small majority of the delegates backed the TDU leadership's view that Carey was not going to win his fight to run in the rerun election. Therefore the immediate practical task was to consolidate TDU's strength behind another candidate who would build on the reform achievements of the Carey period.

But judging from the tumultuous reception that the delegates gave Carey, they were prepared to do more than just settle for a contingency game plan for the rerun election. It seems more than likely that a large majority also would have endorsed a plan to rally the union's ranks against the government's edict that the members did not have the right to freely elect any Teamster member to any Teamster office. But such a proposal would have needed the authoritative backing of key TDU leaders, or, failing that, of Carey himself.

Why Carey and the TDU leadership failed to present such a proposal is not entirely clear. Perhaps Carey has confidence in the legal system. Perhaps he truly believes that the courts are impartial arbiters of fact and that, since he's innocent, he ultimately must prevail in the courts.

"Make Sure You Are Not Vulnerable"

One point was stressed by Ken Paff, the principal TDU leader, who told the TDU delegates, "Brothers and sisters, if you are going to take on Corporate America, if you are going to win major strikes, if you are going to start turning the labor movement around, you better make sure you are not vulnerable."

The truth is that this statement is historically inaccurate — more precisely, the statement is historically silly. No American labor leader who takes on

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At the time the *Nation* piece was written, Carey's formal appeal of the disqualification order was being prepared, but Carey had declared his innocence and said that his chief accuser was a convicted felon trying to gain leniency from a New York court. Clearly, the *Nation* did a disservice to Carey and the fight to build a powerful union movement by its unnecessary and unseemly reliance on tainted evidence and a no less tainted "judicial" proceeding.

A third progressive, labor analyst David Moberg, wrote an update in the *Nation* (December 15) on the current Teamsters crisis and the reform movement. Like the others already cited, he, too, makes an unnecessary rush to judge Carey's alleged complicity in the fundraising schemes. Presumably Moberg's judgment is solely based on the so-called evidence against Carey contained in the election officer's written opinion.

Teamsters Notebook

- Teamsters President Ron Carey and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) were dealt severe blows in quick succession in late November. On November 17, Kenneth Conboy, a court-appointed election referee, ruled that Carey knew that his campaign manager schemed to divert union funds to a Carey fundraising group, and therefore Carey was disqualified to be a candidate in the union's rerun of the 1996 election, now slated for 1998. On November 25, Carey took an unpaid leave of absence from all IBT positions to pursue his appeal of Conboy's ruling. Carey denied all allegations and said, "It is a sad day when the word of a convicted criminal prevails over the word of a man who has stood for integrity all his life and has not yet had his day in court." On the same day, a government body created by the 1989 Consent Decree, the Independent Review Board (IRB), charged Carey with financial improprieties related to Carey's 1996 election campaign. The IBT's General Executive Board by a split vote on December 2 sent the IRB's charges back to the IRB, which will now conduct adversarial hearings on the allegations against Carey.
- On November 24, the IBT agreed to allow the feds to install a temporary financial monitor with the power to veto so-called improper expenditures. The agreement gives the auditor "unrestricted access to all IBT books, records, and offices" as well as the right to veto any "proposed expenditure of IBT funds or transfer of IBT property."
- On December 3, Carey filed his appeal of Conboy's ruling with Federal Judge David M. Edelstein. "At bottom," Mr. Carey's lawyers wrote, "the election officer accepts the uncorroborated, untested, and unreliable statement of a convicted felon who hopes to reduce his sentence, and uses it as the basis to disqualify a union president and disenfranchise his supporters" (*New York Times*). On the same day, Edelstein appointed Michael G. Cherkasky, formerly of the Manhattan District Attorney's office, as the new Election Officer to replace Barbara Zack Quindel.
- More than 600 delegates and guests made TDU's 22nd annual convention, in Cleveland Ohio, the largest ever. Teamsters President Ron Carey was the main attraction, even though he was there for only an hour. Carey received a passionate reception and vowed to fight the government's attacks. Three possible candidates to head a reform slate against the Hoffa Junior forces addressed the body, and each received a warm response.
- The *Wall Street Journal* reported that Teamsters Freight Director Richard Nelson doesn't agree that the upcoming freight negotiations will be affected by the union's troubles. Reportedly, Carey told Nelson to "ignore the union's internal problems and proceed full speed with the freight talks." A spokesman for the freight companies said, "I'm very confident that we can reach a new agreement before the expiration of our current contract and without a work stoppage." The national freight contract expires March 31 and covers 120,000 workers. In 1994, the Teamsters struck for 24 days, the first industry shutdown since 1979. Nelson is one of three officials thought to be in line to lead a reform slate in the 1998 rerun election, should Carey still be barred from running.
- The *New York Times* reported that Bob Wages, president of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers, says in an affidavit that a Hoffa supporter and business consultant tried to get illegal contributions from him at the AFL-CIO's annual meeting in Bal Harbour, Florida. The *Times* reported that a Hoffa spokesperson said that Hoffa didn't recall ever meeting Wages, who claimed that Hoffa was sitting nearby and seemed to be listening. "Mr. Wages said he had given no money to the Hoffa campaign."
- *Business Week* reported that a Carey supporter who heads a Chicago Teamsters local said he could provide statements from workers who claim that agents for American Income Life Insurance Company funneled kickbacks to James P. Hoffa's campaign as a payback for access to members in Detroit, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Edison, New Jersey.
- *Newsday* reported that UPS was ordered by a court-appointed union overseer to stop trying to influence the race between Carey and Hoffa Jr. The order followed UPS's distribution of an "article critical of Carey, contending that he staged the 15-day strike...to further his political ambitions." The Teamsters for a Democratic Union said that UPS posted the article on "bulletin boards all over the country to undermine Carey, whom the company would like to see ousted from the presidency."
- Four well-known labor figures and the Teamsters for a Democratic Union submitted a legal brief to the government-appointed "IBT Election Appeals Master" (filed with Conboy before his decision), arguing that Carey should not be disqualified from running against Hoffa in the court-ordered rerun of the 1996 Teamsters election. Harry L. Patrick, a founding member of Miners for Democracy; Joseph Yablonski, whose father, mother, and sister were slain at the direction of Tony Boyle, the United Mine Workers Union president; Edward Sadlowski, leader of the United Steel Workers fightback movement that flourished in the 1970s; and Jerry Tucker, of the United Auto Workers New Directions reform movement, wrote, "Disqualification of Mr. Carey...would reduce the rerun election to an idle exercise and effect the election of Mr. Hoffa by judicial edict. Such a sanction is unwarranted and would run counter to the fundamental tenet of union democracy that union members should be allowed to choose their own officers."
- The good news that 10,000 U.S. Airways workers were organized in September by the Communications Workers of America has overshadowed the Teamsters' organization of 5,000 mechanics at Continental Airlines. The mechanics' union was busted in 1983 by the notorious Frank Lorenzo. "People supported the union," said one of the new Team-

sters, "because we're fed up with executives making millions of dollars while regular hard-working people just hope to win the lottery." The organizing drive was helped by volunteer member-to-member organizers who work at Southwest Airlines.

- Carey's supporters in Chicago Local 705 on December 6 defeated a bid by Hoffa backers to take over the 18,000-member union. Gerald Zero, who headed the winning slate, is a prominent Labor Party leader.

- A New York City Teamsters local appropriately headquartered on swanky Park Avenue was placed in trusteeship by Teamsters President Ron Carey after learning that the union's officials entered "into apparently sham collective bargaining agreements in which owners and employers [but not employees] were allowed to be Local 1034 members with full rights to IBT membership."
- On December 10, Michael Cherkasky, the new federal election officer, asked Judge Edelstein "for

power to subpoena the records of companies with which the campaign of James P. Hoffa...did business...an inquiry that could lead to Mr. Hoffa's disqualification" (*New York Times*, December 11). Cherkasky has said that he may have to lay off some of his staff, because his office is running out of money. If so, the rerun election could be delayed again. Federal prosecutors have asked that the Teamsters be ordered to pay the entire costs of the rerun election. The union argues that the government must pay the feds' share, as provided by the Consent Decree.

— C.W.
December 12, 1997

NY Times and Others Join the Attack on Carey, Trumka

Continued from page 5

The *Wall Street Journal* of December 5 reports a three-volume set of government documents against Carey, depositions and records which supposedly support the Independent Review Board's charges against him. It seems that the government is now taking a fine tooth comb to his record, hunting for every possible means of discrediting him. It has dug up a case of an employee of his home local in Queens, New York, who was accused of double dipping. It seems that Carey — crime of crimes! — attended this person's retirement dinner and didn't publicize the case.

The December 5 story in the *Wall Street Journal* also suggested that the government is now "investigating many previously unquestioned areas of the union's finances," including *organizing funds*. As the union gears up for the fight against the big freight corporations, with the nationwide Master Freight Agreement expiring March 31, the government may try to hog-tie the union by challenging the way it uses its funds to fight the bosses.

Even some commentators on the left display a pathetic trust — as David Moberg does in a December 15 *Nation* editorial — that "government watchdogs" will keep a jealous eye out for Teamster members' interests, even if Hoffa and the old guard retake the top posts in the international union.

Similarly, Jane Slaughter, on the editorial pages of the *Boston Globe* December 3 ("The hubris that brought Carey down"), seems to accept the impartiality of the charges made by "the government's Independent Review Board" that Carey used "union funds for his reelection campaign — in effect, stealing members' money," as Slaughter puts it.

She fails to mention that Carey denies the charges, that he is appealing and fighting this government ruling. Slaughter seems to accept the action of the Review Board. She doesn't defend Carey or call on others to stand behind him against the government attack. She says "the mistake that brought [Carey] down, was not to put his faith in the rank and file." "Don't count on leaders who don't count on you," she concludes.

But we would caution Slaughter, Don't count on government bodies that are out to get you.

Make no mistake. Teamsters for a Democratic Union (which Slaughter counterposes to Carey, when in fact they are a team, each contributing to the other's strength) is also slated for attack. TDU strengthens itself by defending Carey. It did the right thing by filing a friend of the court brief in his behalf, as reported by Charles Walker in "Teamster Notebook," elsewhere in this issue.

The right-wing *Washington Times* of November 21 reported that the FBI and the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee both "believe" that Teamsters for

a Democratic Union "may be the missing link in an illegal money-laundering scheme between the reelection campaigns of President Clinton and Teamsters President Ron Carey."

TDU, reports the *Washington Times*, "was asked by Senate investigators Wednesday to turn over documents on campaign contributions," and FBI agents "have also begun inquiries in recent days." The TDU link "is important to investigators because it would shatter the defense that Democrats have invoked for months — that they never went through with the scheme to funnel funds into the Carey campaign."

Authorities "now suspect the Democrats funneled the money to TDU, which passed it along to the Carey campaign." Of course, this is hogwash. But Sacco and Vanzetti were also innocent. When the FBI and "Senate investigators" get involved, anything can happen, including against TDU.

The government is not an impartial agency. It is — as Slaughter has undoubtedly heard — the executive committee of the ruling class. And the ruling class knows how to have its will carried out through the maze of government institutions. All supporters of workers democracy, of the rank and file's right to assert their interests through their own organizations, should demand an end to government intervention in the unions! Stop government complicity in the corporate attack on working people! Defend the union leaders under attack! □

December 9, 1997

Notes on the Attack on Carey and Other Union Leaders

by David Jones

Since the beginning of the anti-labor offensive in the late 1970s, the government, the employers, and the media have systematically gone after every union leader who has emerged as a spokesperson for resistance to the employers' take-backs, especially those who have led actions against concessions — and especially if they threatened a development independent of the union bureaucracy (as in the P-9, Staley, and Caterpillar strikes). In spite of those attacks (and setbacks), workers' resistance has continued to seek channels for expression, with Carey eventually leading strikes of this character for the first time on a national, not just local, level.

The employers have dealt with John Sweeney, Gerald McEntee, and the others for many years. They are under no illusions that Sweeney and McEntee are interested in turning the AFL-CIO over to radicals. But Sweeney et al. have been compelled by the complex and contradictory nature of the union bureaucracy's relationship with the rank and file to respond — on a most modest level — to the continuing decline in the conditions of life of the working class, and therefore that of the membership of the unions, by trying to breathe some life into the moribund structures of the AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions. A few green shoots have appeared in this barren field for the first time in many years.

Any new stirrings in the labor movement are of great concern to the political leaders of the ruling class, who thoroughly understand the class nature of their system — especially when such stirrings are encouraged by significant elements in the top AFL-CIO leadership. The bluster and threats in the media and from the government are a warning shot over the bow of the union bureaucracy and an attempt to intimidate those who are encouraged to press forward with the reforms in the “new” AFL-CIO.

“Taking over the Democratic Party”

Sweeney et al. do not in a million years

harbor any ambition to take over the Democratic Party. In fact, Sweeney, in his speech to the Democrats' national convention in 1996, explicitly rejected such a goal. However, American history is replete with attacks on the union bureaucrats in spite of their sincerely professed desire to collaborate with the employing class — Samuel Gompers himself, the head of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), actually went to jail as a result of the boycott struggle of the AFL in the first decade of this century. But the ruling class, which also thoroughly understands the contradictory dynamics of the union bureaucracy, knows that the bureaucrats can get carried along farther than they want to.

The ruling class reaction to the bureaucracy's modest political mobilization against “fast track” is instructive. They are not prepared to tolerate the slightest political independence of labor. How would they respond to the formation of an actual labor party based on a decisive section of the AFL-CIO? Here again, the ruling class does not suffer from historical or political amnesia. The rulers are well aware of the enormous threat an actual labor party would pose to the two-party system they have maintained for 200 years and more. We can assume that somewhere in this emerging offensive against all representatives of progressive tendencies in the unions, blows are being prepared against the primary advocates of a labor party.

Hands off the Unions and Union Leaders

We should demand that the government keep its hands off the unions, and their leaders. Not that anyone should have any illusions that Sweeney and company are breaking from class collaborationism, or even from their bloated salaries and overprivileged life styles. The point is that all such attacks are ultimately aimed at the ranks and their democratic rights.

Carey of course is not a standard-issue class-collaborationist bureaucrat.

On the other hand, he is not a political innovator or a radical. He is a militant trade unionist. The current government attack is designed to encourage Sweeney and company to abandon their lukewarm alliance with Carey and the New Teamsters, to leave him and the Teamsters union to their fate at the hands of the government inquisition.

Significantly, the AFL-CIO's monthly paper, *America @ Work*, has so far said nothing about the moves against Carey. The “new” AFL-CIO has plainly got the message, and the leaders have communicated both publicly and privately that they do not intend to speak out in defense of Carey, much less challenge the government's prerogative to interfere in the unions.

This should come as no surprise. For one thing, the fund-raising methods which are the pretext for the government's mugging of Ron Carey were directly imported into the Teamsters election from the “new” AFL-CIO. (From Gerald McEntee's AFSCME came William Hamilton, who served as director of the IBT's political affairs department and signed off on all Teamsters contributions to political groups. Hamilton was also a business associate of the Democratic Party-connected consultants and fund raisers who brought illegal money into the Carey campaign.) The “expertise” of these political consultants and fund raisers was, of course, acquired in capitalist politics, in the Democratic Party, and in collaboration with the top AFL-CIO brass.

Virtually no top union officers are elected through membership referendum. Consequently they do not need to raise big campaign war chests outside the channels of their unions' regular finances. Their continued tenure is assured through horse trading, deal making, and arm-twisting among a few hundred, or perhaps a thousand, delegates at union conventions. Most of the money expended on these functions comes out of the union's treasury. But they are all up to their eyeballs in funneling money to the Democrats using the sane methods Hamilton and others imposed on the Carey campaign.

Why did Sweeney, McEntee, et al., get involved in trying to reelect Carey? Because they wanted a more militant and democratic labor movement? To reach that conclusion would be, to put it

charitably, somewhat naive. There is no evidence that they are seeking to transform their own unions based on the model of the New Teamsters. It seems reasonable to conclude that a major part of their interest in keeping Ron Carey in office was to keep the Teamsters union in the Democratic Party camp, hoping that the weight and reputation of this huge organization could be placed on the scales in behalf of the Democrats in future elections. The Teamster old guard with its history of endorsing the Republicans, and its unsavory image, could not be counted on to be a reliable ally for them

The TDU Leadership's Attitude

Elsewhere in this issue, the exceptionally well-informed Charles Walker writes that "the top TDU leadership seems to think the Carey era is over." He describes their failure at the recent TDU convention to propose any struggle against the government assault. The journalist Jane Slaughter, whose views often coincide with those of the TDU leaders, writes in the *Boston Globe* that Carey brought in consultants to "steal the members' dues." The message she ends with is, "Don't count on leaders who don't count on you."

The barely suppressed hostility to Carey in this article is palpable. There is an unmistakable undertone of long-deferred accounts being settled. Whether Slaughter is free to say what the TDU leaders she is closest to think, but are restrained from saying openly, is an obvious question. Is this payback for

Carey's "appointing more conservative types to important positions in the union hierarchy," as she puts it?

In any case, by endorsing the essence of the government's case against Carey in a major capitalist daily newspaper, Slaughter reinforces the impression of a consensus among opinion-makers that Ron Carey is getting what he deserves, however regrettable that may be.

Besides offering a rather unattractive impression of elevating apparently longstanding grievances above the principle of labor solidarity, Slaughter seems totally oblivious to the fact that her tacit endorsement of the government's right to be the ultimate arbiter of how the unions are run, and who their leaders shall be, contradicts her pious admonition that Carey "just didn't grasp the notion of bottom-up, rank and file control." Why doesn't she demand that *the members* of the Teamsters union have the right to decide if Ron Carey is a crook and whether he should continue as president?

Leadership — a Vital Achievement

It is blatantly obvious that the government attack on Carey is retribution for his leadership of the stunning and exhilarating victory in the UPS strike, which reverberated far beyond the Teamsters union, or even the organized labor movement. But, as is documented in this issue, no one (except Alexander Cockburn so far) will say so publicly in the major media, including what passes for the respectable left in this country. Slaughter, Moberg, Wilentz, and even

TDU, are all essentially shrugging their shoulders and saying, "Tough luck, Ron — now let's get on with reforming the Teamsters union," as though Carey was some minor employee of the union caught committing a burglary in his spare time.

Leaders like Carey are not simply interchangeable functionaries who can be replaced in office by others as life flows on uninterrupted. That is a fundamental misconception. Struggles express themselves through leaders, and leadership. Leaders who are an authentic expression of a deepgoing struggle, who have deep roots in it, and who consequently have the confidence of the rank and file, are a vital achievement. It smacks of bureaucratic complacency to think that the removal of Carey is only a minor inconvenience. It is a serious setback. Even worse, the tacit endorsement of the legitimacy of government intervention, even by the reformers, will only make it more likely to be used again.

If Carey made any mistake, it was to accept the government as a neutral arbiter, not the agent of the combined corporate interests of this country, and to accept that his professed friends in the AFL-CIO bureaucracy could be trusted. By not challenging the right of the government to intervene in the unions, by not connecting the government's present moves to Carey's exemplary class struggle leadership in the UPS and Master Freight struggles, by allowing the government to pose as the defender of union democracy, the reformers and the left are making the same mistake. □

December 14, 1997

Which Way for Carey's Supporters?

Continued from page 9

Corporate America is safe. All real labor leaders are vulnerable. That aside, what is most disturbing is that Paff's statement, in the context of the TDU convention, may be read as going along with the other critics' ready acceptance of Carey's guilt, chagrin over Carey's piecemeal acceptance of TDU's advanced view of membership partici-

pation in unions, and frustration over the prospect that the reform momentum may be slowed. More disturbing still is the TDU leadership's failure to propose actions based on Carey's well-established outlook on militant trade unionism — the quality that brought Carey and TDU together in 1989.

The rerun election has been postponed until the spring. Chances are that

it may be postponed again. It is to be hoped that during the interval Carey and the TDU leadership will listen carefully to those who argue that not only is there no contradiction between building a militant reform movement and defending the Teamster members' vital right to choose their own leaders; such a policy is no more than two sides of the same coin. □

December 13, 1997

Threat to the Independence of the Unions

by Farrell Dobbs

Farrell Dobbs was a leader of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strikes and of the over-the-road truck driver organizing campaign in an eleven-state Midwestern region, 1936–38, that effectively transformed the Teamsters from a narrow craft union into the giant industrial union that it still is today.

Dobbs and other leaders of Minneapolis Teamsters Local 574, together with their cothinkers of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), were removed from union office as part of a government witch hunt operation culminating in a trial in 1942. Dobbs and other SWP leaders were tried for "subversion" under the thought-control Smith Act. Daniel Tobin, the corrupt top bureaucrat then heading the Teamsters union, cooperated in the move against Local 574, which in fact opened the door for the reign of corrupt elements, such as Dave Beck and James Hoffa Sr., who flourished in the 1950s and '60s. The following article was originally published in 1967.

Current thinking in Washington about stiffening the Kennedy-Landrum-Griffin Act [K-L-G] has been summed up by A.H. Raskin of the *New York Times* editorial staff, who is in a good position to get the facts. "The federal government, which passed a law less than a decade ago to insure more democracy in unions," he wrote on January 8, "is beginning to worry now about too much democracy in unions."

His estimate of contemplated changes in K-L-G not only suggests the nature of impending government action against labor; it calls to mind the Socialist Workers Party's analysis of the law when it was passed in 1959. When capitalist politicians pretend concern about bureaucratic abuses of democracy within the unions, the SWP said, the real aim is to raise false hopes that the rank and file can rely on the government to uphold their rights. It is a trick designed to get workers to accept government intervention in internal union affairs.

The government's immediate aim is to scare the union bureaucrats and make them even more servile to capitalism than they already are. A more basic objective is to strip the unions of their autonomy and make them state instruments for policing the working class.

Adoption of the Kennedy-Landrum-Griffin law was preceded by an extended period of deliberate preparation that began during Franklin D. Roosevelt's first term in the White House. A myth was fabricated that modern unions owe their existence to the federal government, especially to Roosevelt's "New Deal." The Wagner Act of 1935 was given a phony buildup as "Labor's Magna Carta," and it was falsely credited as the main organizer of industrial unions in basic industry. The object was twofold: to tie the workers to capitalist politics out of unearned gratitude and misplaced trust; and to lay a foundation for justifying government regulation of the unions.

The Wagner Act disapproved certain "unfair practices" by employers: for example, compelling workers to sign individual "yellow dog" contracts or to join company unions; and it disapproved openly firing workers for union activity. All this amounted to nothing more than recognition of labor's right to organize and bargain collectively.

In the actual class struggle, union protests about violations of the Wagner Act were brushed aside by the corporations and usually pigeon-holed by the government. It took the bitterly fought 1936–37 wave of sit-down strikes for the workers to assert their constitutional rights.

The NLRB

The Wagner Act also established the National Labor Relations Board, empowering it to conduct union representation elections and to approve or void the results. With unions filing notice with the NLRB of intentions to call a strike, it joined in government maneuvers to prevent walkouts or wangle a strike settlement on terms favorable to employers. As time went by the NLRB increasingly took on the characteristics of an anti-labor relations body.

This trend was accompanied by a steady drumfire of propaganda calling for a "balancing of the rights" of capital and labor through "equalization" of the law. Roosevelt applied this concept in various ways to keep labor hogtied during World War II. Then, with adoption of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, the government openly instituted proscription of alleged "unfair practices" by labor, doing so for the sole purpose of weakening the union power.

General awareness of provisions in the 1947 law tends to focus on the strikebreaking features, but it also included other vicious aspects. A ban was imposed on the closed shop. Through Section 14(b) the states were given a green light to pass anti-labor laws, centered around prohibition of the union shop. The NLRB was authorized to seek court injunctions against "unfair practices" by labor.

Taft-Hartley required unions to file considerable internal information with the Secretary of Labor. Included were copies of the unions' financial statements, constitutions and by-laws, procedures in electing officers, and schedules of initiation fees and dues.

As a condition for NLRB recognition, unions were required to have their officers sign a "loyalty" oath. This provision became an integral part of the general witch hunt then developing in the country. The attack on civil liberties was later to reach its most extreme form during the McCarthy period, named for the infamous U.S. Senator who played the role of stalking horse for incipient fascism.

In January 1957, McCarthy introduced in the Senate a resolution to set up a "Select Committee" to investigate labor "racketeering," a term applied by reactionaries to all forms of union activity. The committee was quickly formed under the chairmanship of Senator John McClellan, an Arkansas Democrat. McCarthy was put on the committee, but he died soon thereafter and, as the May 13, 1957, *Militant* put it, "The late Senator Joseph McCarthy got a generally bad press on the occasion of his death."

Robert F. Kennedy, who had earlier served as an apprentice witch hunter under McCarthy, was made counsel for the McClellan Committee. Later on, as attorney general during his brother's administration, he was to spearhead a government vendetta against James Hoffa of the Teamsters.

McClellan opened the committee hearings with an announced intention of investigating various charges against union officials. The main charges were goon tactics against the rank and file, looting the union treasury, and taking bribes from employers. As the hearings got under way the capitalist news media had a field day.

Good union men and women, who needed no McClellan to tell them about the wrongs inflicted by union bureaucrats, developed illusions about his intentions as they watched the hearings unfold. They began to entertain a hope that the government would actually do something to protect their rights. Not realizing that a booby trap was being laid for them, they favored what was taking place in Washington.

McClellan made the Teamsters his central target, starting with Dave Beck, who was then president of the union. Throughout the proceedings Beck relied on his rights under the Fifth Amendment. Hoffa, who was a vice president of the Teamsters at the time, got the next major grilling. While this was going on the real purpose was given away by Senator Lausche, an Ohio Democrat who said on TV that the Teamsters were too powerful and should be curbed.

Teamsters Suspended

Meanwhile George Meany had called a session of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, but not to mobilize united labor defense against the government attack. He put through a criminal decision that any union official who invoked his constitutional rights under the Fifth Amendment should automatically lose his post. Beck was suspended from the Executive Council for taking the Fifth. A few weeks later Hoffa — who had not taken the Fifth — was elected president by a Teamsters convention and, simply because he had become one of McClellan's targets, the Teamsters were suspended from the AFL-CIO.

Meany also moved to set up an "Ethical Practices Committee," not to establish union democracy, but to serve as a bureaucratic police mechanism within the AFL-CIO. It initiated steps leading to suspension of five more unions which had been attacked by McClellan. Three were later reinstated after accepting a "monitorship" imposed by the Executive Council. In December 1957, the Teamsters, Bakery Workers, and Laundry Workers unions were expelled from the AFL-CIO.

On the government side, a federal judge used a suit brought by union members to impose a "monitorship" over the Teamsters, and it was maintained for an extended time. During the same period the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a scab can sue in the state courts for damages against a union that keeps him off the job with a picket line.

In November 1958 the union bureaucrats hailed the election of a predominantly Democratic congress. But when the new congress opened, a series of new anti-labor bills went into the hopper and out of it came the Kennedy-Landrum-Griffin "killer law."

Preparation for its passage was the central purpose of the McClellan hearings, and it passed the Democrat-controlled

Congress by votes of 95 to 2 in the Senate and 352 to 52 in the House. Although not a sponsor of record, John F. Kennedy was a principal architect of the measure.

This law tightened the provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act and extended them. Communist Party members were barred from union office, as were people convicted of felony charges, which may well have resulted from capitalist frame-ups during class struggles. (Later on the U.S. Supreme Court voided that part of the law.) Provisions were made for government supervision over election of union officers, stewards, etc. Dissident members were encouraged to sue the union and its officers in the capitalist courts.

Government Agents

The Secretary of Labor was given sweeping powers to investigate internal union affairs. He was empowered to send his agents into union premises and inspect membership lists, financial accounts, files, and other records. These agents were authorized to question whomever they choose.

The law was designed to regulate general union procedures, including strike authorization and contract ratification. International officers were allowed to impose trusteeships over local unions to make sure that the membership abides by contracts with employers. The Secretary of Labor got authority to seek a court injunction when suspicious that a union "has violated or is about to violate" the law.

Under the Kennedy-Landrum-Griffin Act the government can put a political cop in any union hall, committee room, or other working quarters. Such is the monstrous invasion of union autonomy that is palmed off as a "bill of rights" for rank-and-file workers. And now the capitalist politicians are preparing a new attack on workers who are fighting to defend their class interests.

According to Raskin's Jan. 8 article,

The Government's labor trouble-shooters estimate that about one-tenth of all their active cases now involve situations in which the union rank and file spurns agreements its leaders consider good enough to accept....Secretary Wirtz made known in a speech last week his conviction that the frequency of membership rejections is "very, very dangerous for collective bargaining"...Already some experts are talking about the necessity for giving absolute authority to local and international union officers as insurance against the junking of agreements made in good faith.

Union Bureaucrats...

The union bureaucrats, who felt "betrayed" by the McClellan attack, can be expected to leap at the chance to get some government backing for their dictatorial rule over the unions. As for the capitalists, if they show no gratitude toward the labor "statesmen," they also have no fear of the sorry breed. Union bureaucrats are considered usable, or expendable, according to the given tactical needs of the capitalist ruling class. To get at the reasons for this attitude, it is useful to examine the basic characteristics of the class-collaborationist union officials.

They defend the capitalist system: private ownership of productive facilities, profit gouging and all. Inside the unions they echo the aims and imitate the policies of the capitalist overlords. In the name of making capitalism work "equitably," they seek modest concessions to the workers. They

Continued on page 25

Let the Teamsters Decide Their Leaders!

Defend and Support Ron Carey!

by Bill Leumer Local 216

The following statement by Bill Leumer, on the back of a copy of a petition circulated at the TDU convention and signed by over 100 delegates, was in the December 1997 issue of Socialist Action.

As Prosecutor, Jury, and Judge, Corporation Lawyer Kenneth Conboy Has Barred Ron Carey From Running as Teamsters' President...

The court-appointed union monitor, corporation lawyer Kenneth Conboy has taken the word of Jere Nash, who is waiting sentencing for conspiring to embezzle teamster union funds, to bar Ron Carey from running for reelection as President of the Teamsters Union. Without a trial, without Carey being found guilty of any wrongdoing, this corporation lawyer has made his decision as prosecutor, jury, and judge.

All of the corporations in the United States were frightened by the recent UPS strike when Carey and the Teamster rank and file closed the "concession

stand" that most union officials use for bargaining. You can be sure that Carey was threatened (blackmailed) with these actions while he was leading the strike. Carey's real crime, in the eyes of Conboy, was that he stood up for the membership, he opposed concession bargaining and he stood up against government blackmail. Would this corporation lawyer have convicted Carey if he had not stood up for the rank and file workers of this country? Hell no! The corporations and President Clinton would have given him a medal!

Because of the support and respect that he earned from the UPS strike, Carey would have been reelected in spite of all the slanders. The corporations and the government prefer Hoffa or any crook

or racketeer, who plays ball with the employers and negotiates concessions behind the backs of the membership.

Rank and file Teamsters should oppose this act of government control and interference. Remember, it was the government in the 1940s that used the (now unconstitutional) Smith Act to get rid of a genuine democratic rank and file leadership from Minneapolis Local 574 and guaranteed bureaucratic and gangster control of the Teamsters in the first place.

It is also time for the labor movement to stop supporting the Republican and Democratic parties. Both parties are controlled lock stock and barrel by the corporations. They have consistently opposed the rights of unions and supported legislation to weaken unions. The government has never been neutral when it comes to the rights of workers and their unions. In this case a corporate lawyer is denying the Teamster membership the right to choose their own leaders. *Let the Teamsters decide for themselves!*

The Teamsters union should oppose, with all its force, the government's attempt to deny the Teamster rank and file the right to choose its leaders. Labor history proves that unpopular laws, injunctions, and other legal rulings (such as this one) cannot be enforced if the majority of the membership say otherwise.

General President Carey and the G.E.B. [General Executive Board of the Teamsters union] can organize a referendum to let the membership (not the government or a corporate lawyer) decide whose names can appear on the ballot of this or any other Teamster election.

Support Ron Carey! Support the right of all working people to choose the leaders of their own organizations! □

Cleveland Labor Federation Resolution Supports AFL-CIO Leaders

The following resolution was approved by the December 10 meeting of the Cleveland AFL-CIO.

Whereas, there is an escalating corporate, government, media attack against the leadership of the national AFL-CIO, starting with Teamsters President Ron Carey, now threatening AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka, even hinting that President Sweeney may be a target, and,

Whereas, the programs and actions for rebuilding the size and strength of the U.S. Trade Unions, programs initiated and being carried out by the new AFL-CIO leadership, are the real targets, and

Whereas, President Sweeney has declared that union programs will move forward and not be deterred by these attacks, and

Whereas, all working people have benefited from such victories as Issue 2 in Ohio, the UPS and Wheeling-Pitt strikes, and cutting down the stranglehold

extreme right-wing Republicans have on Federal and State legislatures, and

Whereas, millions of workers feel uplifted and inspired by the policies of the new AFL-CIO and are determined to move forward with new and even better programs;

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Cleveland Painters Union Local 867 pledges full and total support to President Sweeney, Secretary-Treasurer Trumka, Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, and the whole of the AFL-CIO leadership, and urges government agencies to stay clear of governmental interference in internal union affairs, and

Be It Further Resolved, that the Cleveland Painters Union Local 867 urges any and all other labor organizations to do likewise and send messages of support to President Sweeney.

“Strange Coincidence: The Man Who Led Labor’s Most Successful Battle in 25 Years Immediately Comes under Government Scrutiny”

by Thomas Shelbly

The following is the text of a commentary broadcast on the National Public Radio program “Morning Edition.” Copyright © 1997 by Thomas Shelbly.

Certain Republican members of Congress and editors at the *Wall Street Journal* find it hard to conceal their glee as they announce that corruption is alive and well in the Teamsters. Pardon me, but they must have forgotten what real union corruption is like.

Older Teamsters who’ve been around since the 1970s know corruption. They remember when former president Jackie Presser rammed through a sweetheart national contract with trucking companies in spite of a 63 percent vote by drivers and dock workers to reject. They remember Teamster retirees with thirty years of service being denied pensions on the basis of technicalities. They remember Teamster goons assaulting organizers from the United Farm Workers, then intimidating migrant workers into joining Teamster locals so that corrupt officers could collect kickbacks from growers in return for “labor peace.”

In the last few years, though, [under Ron Carey] Teamsters have had a taste of something different: a union that goes head to head with giant UPS to win benefits for both full-time and part-time workers. A union that joins forces with other progressive unions to get a moribund labor movement back into the business of organizing and political action. A union whose officers cut their own salaries and terminate their own lucrative supplementary pension plans.

These are enduring achievements, despite the campaign fund-raising scandal that’s thrown the union into turmoil. Yes, incumbent Ron Carey has been declared ineligible to run for reelection, and James Hoffa Junior is facing investigation into the almost two million dollars that his campaign received in unattributed contributions. Other potential candidates are scrambling to position themselves for a race that is subject to constantly changing government-dictated rules and timetables.

But no matter which candidate captures the general presidency, today’s rank-and-file Teamsters have seen too much to go willingly back to the bad old days. We’ve rallied national opinion against the trend toward part-time and contingent work. We’ve lit up the switchboards in Congress to slow down the fast track export of American industries overseas. And we’ve grown accustomed to having democratically elected union officers who can be held accountable for their actions.

The group that’s fought the longest to bring about these changes is Teamsters for a Democratic Union [TDU], which held its annual gathering in Cleveland last weekend. There was in many participants anger and defiance at the strange coincidence that the man who last summer led the most successful labor battle in a quarter century, Ron Carey, had immediately become the

subject of intense scrutiny by three federal agencies, plus a highly partisan congressional subcommittee. There was disappointment and disbelief that the Carey campaign, in its misuse of union funds last year, had jeopardized the gains for which so many people — including Carey himself — had worked so hard.

But incredibly, given the political and legal confusion at the top levels of the union, there was also in this gathering of warehouse workers and car rental agents and reformist local union officers a powerful sense of joy in the continuing struggle for grass-roots power. One non-Teamster on the scene said that he hadn’t observed such a spirit of solidarity and even of family affection at a union event since he’d been at a reunion of the auto workers whose sit-down strike in 1936 forced General Motors to recognize their union.

There seems to be a wellspring of inspiration and strength available to those of us who follow in the tradition of rank-and-file labor activism. Its source, I think, is the understanding that we working people ourselves hold the real power to change the balance of forces in the workplace. It’s from our ranks that new leaders are continually emerging, and it’s our united efforts that provide the leverage for successful bargaining with employers. There’s a certain confidence in knowing that the key to the future of our union lies not with some federal judge or union power broker, but in our own hands. □

November 26, 1997

“The Hubris That Brought Carey Down”

by Jane Slaughter

For the information of our readers, we reprint the following article, which appeared on the Op-Ed page of the *Boston Globe* December 3.

Above the article the *Globe* editors printed a cartoon showing a knight on horseback labeled “Teamster Reform” driving a lance into the back of a helpless figure on the ground. The figure stabbed in the back is “Labor.” Under the cartoon was the caption: “Carey, the knight in shining armor.” We reproduce the cartoon with a label changed to depict the true situation. It is “Government Intervention” (not “Teamster Reform”) that is stabbing Labor in the back.

Slaughter has another article with the same theme as this one, not defending Carey, but holding him responsible, and quoting TDU leader Ken Paff’s warning to labor reformers, “you better make sure you’re not vulnerable.” (See the December 28 *In These Times*.)

The fall of Teamsters President Ron Carey doesn’t prove that it’s impossible to clean up Big Labor. Instead, his undoing shows that the rank and file need to exercise more power.

Carey was charged last week by the government’s Independent Review Board with using union funds for his re-election campaign — in effect, stealing members’ money. Carey’s disgrace is a tragedy, the fall of a good but flawed man. His mistake, the mistake that brought him down, was not to put his faith in the rank and file.

Since the beginning of his union career as a New York City local president in 1967, Carey was a feisty and squeaky-clean opponent of overbearing managers and corrupt union officials alike. He did not hesitate to lead local strikes when necessary, and he expected fellow officials to toe the line.

By any measure, Teamster truck drivers, warehouse workers, cannery operatives, and flight attendants belong to a better union today than they did when Carey took the Teamsters’ top job six years ago. Besides directing the spectacular win at United Parcel Service this summer, which created thousands of new full-time jobs, Carey oversaw the removal of dozens of corrupt officials, some mob-connected; slashed bloated salaries; reorganized headquarters to

improve communication with members; and sent out hundreds of rank and file volunteers to recruit non-union workers.

But Carey did not accomplish the Teamsters’ victories by himself. He won office with the support of a remarkable

battle with UPS, and the Teamster rank and file’s solidarity that won that strike.

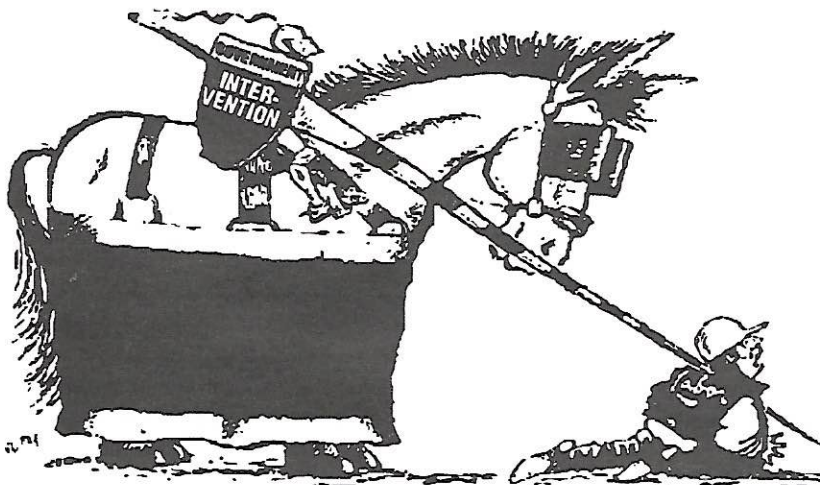
Unlike TDU members, Carey made the mistake of believing in the great man theory of history, rather than understanding that people make their own his-

tory. He never joined TDU, because he just didn’t understand its notion of bottom-up rank-and-file control. He was uncomfortable with the existence of another power base in the union, and he kept TDUsers at arm’s length by appointing other, more conservative types to important positions in the union hierarchy.

The ultimate lack of faith in the ranks was Carey’s decision to bring in slick consultants with no union background to run his 1996 re-election operation. His 1991 campaign, in contrast, had run on a shoestring and relied on member-to-

member campaigning. The consultants’ inside-the-Beltway-type functioning was the opposite of TDU’s rank-and-file approach. Their arrogance led to the scheme to steal members’ dues money for the campaign’s expensive mailings, and to thinking that they could get away with it even though the union was under government supervision.

The downfall of Ron Carey provides a lesson for all union reformers — and there are many of them, in many unions besides the Teamsters. That lesson is: don’t count on leaders who don’t count on you. □



national rank-and-file reform caucus called Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), which had agitated for years for member rights and a firmer stance vis a vis employers, winning, eventually, the right to vote for top officers. This network of shop floor rabble-rousers declined to fold its tents when Carey took office, but instead kept its organization alive and growing all through the Carey years, pushing here and prodding there. It was TDU’s mobilization plan that Carey adopted for the

The Teamster Struggle Is Our Struggle

by Mike Alewitz

The following edited remarks, posted to the Internet on November 16, were given by Mike Alewitz to a spirited rally at the tenth annual Jobs with Justice meeting, held at Teamster City, Chicago. The rally was held to dedicate the mural "Teamster Power." The mural, measuring 20' x 130' was painted during September at Teamster City to commemorate the UPS strike victory.

Mike Alewitz is Artistic Director of the Labor Art & Mural Project (LAMP), whose slogan is "Artists and Workers Unite, You Have Nothing to Lose But Bad Taste." LAMP can be reached by mail at the Labor Education Center, Rutgers University, Ryders Lane & Clifton Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08903. Phone: 732-220-1472; fax: 732-296-1325; e-mail: lamp@igc.apc.org; Website: <http://www.igc.apc.org/laborart>

It would be nice to say that this mural is the work of myself and some assisting artists. But the mural, like all art, is the result of a social process.

The tens of thousands of striking UPS workers who refused to be intimidated any more; who said they would not eat it as they had done in the past; who had the support of tens of thousands of workers behind them, and the entire working class movement of this country who made this a victory...they are the authors of this work.

And those who struck at P-9, and didn't get their jobs back; and those who struck in Detroit, and struck at Pittston and a hundred other smaller actions whose names we do not even know, are also the authors. And they are all part of the process of transforming the labor movement from one of consistent defeat to the beginning of one which will have consistent victories.

What happened during the UPS strike was not an accident or a freak of nature; it was part of the collective knowledge of what working people have learned over the last two decades. We've learned it by losing. You lose for a while and eventually you figure out how to win. We won this one, and we'll win the next one.

Art Must Be Challenging

I would like to explain what is in this mural. Most of the murals I paint, you really cannot tell what they are about. I don't paint murals that are easily understood. I don't want to paint murals that are easily understood. Art must be challenging. And the labor movement must be challenged. And we must be challenged.

This mural began as part of a cross-border project. I originally came to Chicago to participate in a cross-border

project that the United Electrical workers union was sponsoring to paint a mural in Mexico City and one in Chicago, to symbolize international solidarity. When the UPS strike took place, we realized we had to change our plans. The UPS strike, and what it symbolized about fighting for the most oppressed sections of the workforce, for those who had the least work and lowest wages, was part and parcel of the same struggle as in Mexico. And so the imagery that exists on that wall relates directly to that which was painted in Mexico.

When I went to Mexico City, to the offices of the FAT [Frente Autentico de los Trabajadores], and said I was going to paint Albert Parsons and Lucy Parsons into the mural, the workers there were very happy about this, because Lucy and Albert Parsons are heroes in Mexico. These workers understood that there is a great and militant tradition to the working class movement in this country.

We Must Relearn Our History

When I came up to Chicago, we had a meeting in this room. It was packed — a stewards meeting of hundreds of Teamsters, very militant. People were psyched. It was a great meeting of militant, mobilized workers in this local, and I asked for everyone who knew of Albert and Lucy Parsons to raise their hands. A couple of hands went up. Here in Chicago, the home of Haymarket, we don't even know our own history. We have to relearn our history. And so we need pieces of art and literature and edu-



Detail of the mural "Teamster Power" by Mike Alewitz shows Chicago labor leader Lucy Parsons.

cation that make us grapple with and relearn our own history.

The Haymarket martyrs were anarchists and socialists who went willingly to their deaths because they felt that the working class movement was worth it. Their names will live when all of the employers and those who ran are forgotten. What we put on the wall of this building is part of the process of relearning this history, and re-educating ourselves, and understanding that what motivates and mobilizes people in strike-after-strike and action-after-action is not a buck-an-hour more; it's the idea that you are building a movement that speaks for your children, that speaks to the future and is going to transform society.

Lucy Parsons lived and died in poverty. She was of Mexican and African descent, she was a free-thinker, she was a feminist, she was uncompromising. During the bleakest periods of our movement, when no one was in the streets, Lucy Parsons was. She went on

the streets by herself to sell pamphlets to tell the truth about Haymarket and the labor movement. She was fearless, as

this country to its foundations. The Minneapolis strikes, along with San Francisco and the Toledo Auto-Lite strikes,

...when the government goes after Ron Carey, it's not because they are concerned about illegal payments. It's not because they are concerned about corruption. They are going after the Teamsters union because they understand that it has the potential to be a tremendous force in the labor movement.

they were all fearless, because they realized that their lives were small in comparison to the future of the working class movement.

We Are a New Movement

Albert Parsons, one of the Haymarket martyrs that we painted on the wall, fought in the Confederate Army for the slavocracy. After the Civil War, in response to the militant struggles of African Americans in Texas, he was won to Radical Reconstruction. He fell in love with Lucy, and they went off to organize in Chicago.

We are only a couple of generations removed from Albert and Lucy. That's how new the working-class movement is. We haven't exhausted our possibilities; we're not at the end of our movement. We are in our infancy...and organizations like the Teamsters Union and Jobs with Justice are just beginning to think out how we can build a labor movement that can win.

The Teamsters Were Led by Revolutionaries

When I was a campus activist at Kent State in the late 1960s, I had a chance to meet and learn from Farrell Dobbs and Vincent Raymond Dunne. They were leaders of the general strike led by the Teamsters union in the Twin Cities. All of these Midwest Teamster locals exist because of the massive movement that was built out of the general strike in Minneapolis in 1934. This union did not come into being as a gradual process. It was built as a modern industrial union, as a powerful force for working people, through a massive struggle that shook

laid the basis for the formation of the CIO. That's where our industrial unions come from.

What motivated Farrell Dobbs, and Marvel Scholl, who led the women's auxiliary, was not a buck-an-hour more, or that they would have a period of relative peace with the boss. They weren't interested in quality circles. What motivated them was the idea of building an organization that could change society from the top to the bottom. And that is what they did.

They were ordinary workers like you and I. They were no smarter or more talented than us. What characterized them was their tremendous confidence in the ability of working people to change the world. They never doubted that. And so they were able to make historic changes. There are going to be fights in this country and we are going to have the opportunity to do the same thing.

Gangsterism Is a Tool of the Employers

It's a very special thing to be a Teamster in the United States, because this union has a tremendous history of struggle. And when the government goes after Ron Carey, it's not because they are concerned about illegal payments. It's not because they are concerned about corruption. They are going after the Teamsters union because they understand that it has the potential to be a tremendous force in the labor movement.

It would be inappropriate for me to comment here on the internal affairs of a union of which I am not a member. But I will say this: some of my fellow artists have helped to create a myth, primarily

through Hollywood, that somehow gangsterism was a tool that workers turned to, to be stronger in their struggles. Gangsterism has never been, and never will be, a tool of workers.

Gangsterism has always been, and always will be, a tool of the bosses to keep workers in line. And anybody who romanticizes gangsterism is a fool or aspiring to be one themselves. Gangsterism is a product of attempting to work with the employers. It is the grease that keeps labor peace rolling.

There was more corruption in the [unions in the] 1950s for the same reason there was more racism and chauvinism against workers in other countries. The so-called high wages of the 1950s are nothing to romanticize, because they were paid for at the price of our children. That's who will pay for it. Through two-tiers, through concession contracts and the disappearance of large sections of the labor movement. It isn't just the Teamsters, but the labor movement as a whole...we are not going to go back to those days.

The Teamster Struggle Is Our Struggle

The struggle to maintain the Teamsters as a democratic union, where the rank and file can participate, is of concern to every worker. Because if the government is successful in going after the Teamsters, it will go after every union that attempts to fight back against concessions, against two-tier contracts, against being under-employed or against scapegoating immigrant workers.

And so we dedicate this mural to those who, during the 1930s, built it as an industrial union, and to those who are giving it a rebirth through this strike and the struggles which will emerge from it. This is just the beginning. If you don't believe that, just ask a Fedex worker. I was in a Fedex office two days ago and asked the workers there. And they said, "Where's the Teamsters?...If somebody'd come in here, we'd all sign up." This is how you organize workers. Win, and workers will organize themselves.

We dedicate this mural to those workers who are rebuilding this union, for those who are yet to come into it, who will help to transform this union, and the AFL-CIO, and make the labor movement what it was supposed to be: a social movement for social justice. □

The Teamsters Union and the Labor Party

by Eddie Kornegay

Eddie Kornegay is a trustee of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) and a member of its National Black Caucus. He is also a member of the Interim National Council of the Labor Party. The following are excerpts from his talk and the discussion period at a forum sponsored by the Detroit Metro Chapter of the Labor Party on November 13, 1997. The text was transcribed for BIDOM by Lee Denoyer.

I wanted to come speak here tonight because, in talking to Bob [Kasen] and Tony [Mazzocchi, LP national organizers] and some of the other folks in Washington, we agreed that any time I get an opportunity to talk about where we are in the labor movement in general, how we can do something in particular, how all of us can fit into it, I should welcome and take advantage of that opportunity.

I think that it is probably not since the early days of labor that we have had such an exciting and opportune time as exists right now. Not since right after World War II — when there was a great industrial upsurge in this country — has there been this feeling that unions are really going to have an opportunity to do something.

Really Become International Unions

And change won't come because folks want it for us, it won't come out of some philosophical understanding that treating working men and women is the right thing to do. I think it will come because of this global economic thing.

It's not that the world is going to rise up to get us, but it will start compressing us, and we will truly become men and women and individuals of labor and we will truly become brothers and sisters. Not only with those that look like us or with those that work next door to us, that are in the same union as us, but we're going to have to become brothers and sisters to those that don't look like us, those that don't speak the same language as us, and in a lot of cases those folks will not be found in the same homeland as us. I think we're going to truly have to become international unions.

Now if that is the scenario and the arena in which we're going to be operating — and truly, brothers and sisters, I

believe it is — this global economy is going to force us to do that. So that all of a sudden you find out about a garment worker in Taipei, Taiwan — that you have an interest in how much that person is being paid, that you have an interest in the working conditions of those folks. Why? Because the job that they are doing in Taipei, Taiwan, just left out of Houston, Texas, or one of the other states. So you find out as they start moving these jobs on a global basis that we are truly going to have a tie to those folks.

Now, how does all that fit in to us and a labor party? As this starts happening, there's a need for working men and women to have an organization that we can start to fit into, so we will have some input when these trade policies are made, or that we will have representatives there at the table when all of this maze is put together.

Two-Party System Leaves Workers Out

I don't think it is ever going to happen with the two-party system that we have. In other words, you can talk about the Democratic and the Republican Party, and we have done as well as could be expected in trying to exert some pressure on the Democratic Party and to a certain extent on the Republican Party. But it's amazing that when you get into the real issues that affect us — in other words, if you look at last week, it was amazing: when they talk about fast-track and the ability of the president to further this Free Trade Agreement, that all of a sudden Jesse Helms, Newt Gingrich, and Bill Clinton are all in the same basket.

So when they start talking about those issues that really affect us, it goes right across party lines, and we are not represented there. And I think that is not

going to change until we are able to assert our power in a real way.

We never had the strength to outspend these folks, and it's crazy for us to think that we can. Last time around they say that we pumped in more than a \$150 million into Bill Clinton's campaign. Out of that what we got is, we got a promise that, uh — oh yeah, the Striker Replacement Bill promise.

What we got is a commitment from a president that wears a baseball hat out of Arkansas that told us that, "If it gets to my desk, I'll sign it." It hasn't a chance in hell of getting to his desk if he isn't going to use the power of the presidency to try to push for that piece of legislation. But that's all we got out of him for that \$150 million plus last time around.

And when I say \$150 million dollars, that's the hard money. That's the money that they can count. That is not that "soft money." There's a lot of that soft money that went under the table there. So, in order for us to do this, it's going to take us coming to the realization that the two-party system is not going to represent us. That we do not have the wherewithal to influence in a real way the programmatic changes that have to take place in that two-party system.

So therefore we've got to start thinking about alternatives. And real alternatives. And I know that a lot of folks have said, "Hey, look, this won't work. You're never going to be able to build a real third party in this country." But I think the time is right, the opportunities are right, because I think the suppression of working men and women is going to force us to start looking for some real alternatives.

How are those alternatives going to come about? They're going to come about out of necessity, because right now the jobs that we are developing in this country are all service industry jobs. That's where the big move is — it's in

government or service industry. We are now having our standard of living suppressed. And so I think out of the real problem of maintaining our standard of living there's going to come this need to have real influence. The only way I think that we are going to be able to do that is by us uniting, forming a party that's truly a people's party. A party that will have our representatives at the table with real elected delegates, sending them to Washington, and that will become the truly representative party of the people.

Why Unions Must Be the Backbone

Now that's not going to be easy to do. How do we do that? I think it's got to start with labor unions. Why labor unions? Because we have the organizational structure, we have in place the financial structure, we have the methodology to reach out to people. And so I think that the existing unions in this country are going to have to play an integral part in how we advance the real needs of the people. That has been a problem up until this point.

You know we had not gotten the support of the AFL-CIO as a national body. We had not gotten the support of them for a labor party because they were still convinced that they could influence the Democratic Party or the Republican Party, and all they had to do is throw around \$150 million on these elections.

Our international union, my international union, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, has not formally endorsed the Labor Party, not as of yet. But I'm a believer that these folks that sit around the table are all very astute politicians, and politicians normally kind of test the winds. And if we can ever build up the winds, we can convince them, because they are politicians and they get elected every four or five years. And if they can see a real movement of the folks out there, then we can start convincing them.

But I am encouraged that they are coming on board and they are coming on board in rapid succession. The Electrical Workers union just endorsed, and put in \$10,000.00 to affiliate with the Labor Party — the IUE. And AFGE has just put down its \$10,000 affiliation fee. You know, that's the real test — when you put down the money. So we got

these unions now, these international unions. And we've gotten some money from AFSCME. So these unions now are beginning to affiliate.

Prospects for Teamsters Affiliation

We've tested the waters of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. And as soon as we can get through these distractions that we've got right now — and I don't have to tell you about the distractions we got in the house of the Teamsters; we've got a lot of them — as soon as we can get past these distractions we can get folks focused again on doing something real and representing people.

At that point I intend to raise this again with the Teamsters union, internationally. We do have locals from across the country that are affiliated with the Labor Party. And they are affiliated with the Labor Party because I think we are coming into the realization that this is the only way that we are going to bring about real change. Real change meaning a real organization, a real political party that is really controlled by the people, that is not influenced by all of this money that is influencing these elections now.

We need to have real representatives in Washington setting legislation, so that we can start talking about really representing and protecting the interests of working men and women. And that's not going to be done — I'm convinced — not by this two-party system that we have now. It just won't work. It never has worked for us. Neither major party has ever been our party.

How to Win More Unions

So for that reason I'm a strong believer in the labor party. I believe it's the right thing to do, the time is right, and we just got to catch on fire. How do we do that? At any opportunity that you get — in your local union, in your international union, you can talk to your union reps. You need to just start raising some questions. You know, uh, "What did we get for our \$150 million?" Just stuff like that. Like, "I heard we put in \$150 million. And what did we get?" You know what I mean? How many pieces of real legislation? They start talking about striker replacement.

A ban on striker replacement [scabs] goes to the guts of our union organizations. When you can no longer sit down and say, Hey look, we have an inherent legal and moral right to withhold our labor unless there is a fair market price paid for it, and that you, the boss, cannot determine that. This is a collective bargaining process. If you can't do that without them saying that legally they can go out and replace you tomorrow, they're talking about utterly destroying us.

And you've got to look at those folks who say they're our "friends," who when they see us coming and we want to talk about that issue, they turn and go the other way. If you really want to see a maze of folks do a turnabout on you, you go into those halls of Congress over there when these issues are hot and you walk down the hallway and try and talk to your "friend." It's a bad feeling when your friend turns his back on you; got to run to the bathroom when he sees you coming.

We have not been able to get any of that major legislation that affects us, really affects us. We have not been able to do that. We are still participating in the two-party system. When you talk about these national campaigns, even in the local elections for your local representatives right out of Michigan here, you still have not been able to influence that in a real way. Look at what's happening around you — over in Illinois they elected right-wing Republicans.

So, how do you get involved? You start raising those issues everywhere you go. In your union halls, in your local unions, you start raising it. "How do we get there? What did we get? How are we going to advance our issues in Congress? Do we really have a mechanism to do that?" I think not. I think that we never have, and the only way to do it is with the formation of the Labor Party in this country.

And it's going to have to come from us. Nobody's going to do this one for us but us. And I think that's the real issue that's facing us, and it's a real opportunity for us to really do that at this time.

Question Period

Question: What are the prospects for the Teamsters affiliating?

Answer: I think there's a very real probability of us being able to extract a commitment out of the Teamsters union for

an endorsement of the Labor Party. Simply because I think that for the first time we will be able to raise it inside of the national board [the IBT General Executive Board].

Here before I have not wanted to put an issue before the national board that might be embarrassing to Carey when I knew that we didn't have the votes. However once we can get elected — once we are there for the term — I have no problems in putting an issue before that board, because I do think we have some folks around that table. In other words, if you count right now, we're not far from being able to pass this over some strenuous objections. We do have board members there. So I think we have a real possibility of doing it. And when I tell you we're not far from having the votes inside of the boardroom in order to pass this, that wouldn't have happened without TDU [Teamsters for a Democratic Union].

Just as important, in the Teamsters union, because we are a very large union, we do have some excellent opportunities. For example, there's Local 705 out of Chicago, which is one of our biggest locals in the country, which has already affiliated and has already put down their money. So we have locals in the Teamsters that are able to affiliate with the same kind of financial commitment as some national unions.

Q.: What could Tony Mazzocchi and the national office do if the Labor Party had some of the \$150 million the labor movement spent in the elections?

A.: If we had just a fraction of that \$150 million, we could do a lot.

By the way, my hat's off to Tony Mazzocchi. This [Labor Party] was a vision of Tony's. He has worked at it day and night. He has crisscrossed the country. This would have never gotten off the ground had it not been for Tony's international union [the OCAW]. That union and its president, Bob Wages, have been committed to this whole concept. Without them, we would never have had Tony and Bob Kasen and the one other staff person in that office on a full-time basis.

If other unions did the same thing, we could do a lot more. For example, if the Teamsters were to loan to the Labor Party a field rep for twelve months, that would be worth much more than \$10,000. Jesse Jackson in the Rainbow Coalition got the international unions to send him, not just money, but field workers.

We can do this — build the Labor Party. By having meetings just like this. Around the country. This isn't going to burst onto the scene tomorrow. It's going to be built. And that's going to be out of necessity. The standard of living that you inherited, and that you want to pass on to your children, that is under attack.

Stock Market Troubles Spell Troubles for Us

Take a look at what happened a couple of weeks ago, when the stock market dropped 500 points, because the stock market in Hong Kong dropped the night before. An adjustment of 7 percent over one day. We are involved in that whether we like it or not. Don't say, Why are you talking to me about what happened on Wall Street? Your pension monies, if you had them in a portfolio, your pension money is involved. These actuaries will tell you you've got to get 6 percent growth in order to retire 30 years down the road. If Hong Kong takes a hit, your pension plan is going to take a hit too.

So we are all affected by what happens out there. There's no way of getting around it.

If we had fought NAFTA right, it would have been about doing something about the labor laws in Mexico. If we could go into Mexico and organize, it would be a great opportunity to expand the labor movement as we know it. It would eliminate the need for those folks to slip across the river in the dead of the night because it would raise the standard of living down there.

Q.: What's it going to take to get the government, the Labor Department and the Justice Department, out of the Teamsters union?

A.: It would help if we'd stop screwing up.

What we're going through right now is really a travesty. Because I don't know of an individual who has worked harder in trying to genuinely clean up our organization than Ron Carey. Whatever happens here — and I hope and pray that he's ruled eligible to run — but even if he's not, I think history will record that as far as cleaning up the organization and making a real contribution to the institution of labor in general and to the Teamsters in particular, history will record that this guy was a giant among men.

If given another chance to run, this second election will be a blessing for us in disguise, because I think that the old guard who has been nipping at our heels over these first six years in office, has really not let Carey chart a course for putting through programmatic changes in this union. Because all he has so far been doing is fighting wars, putting out brush fires the whole time.

I think this next election will allow us to run the 2001 elections in 1998. I think we can bury Hoffa in this election. I think we can destroy the old guard apparatus that is out there. Simply because I think the membership genuinely understands what has taken place in this union.

Do I want to run another election? No. Do we have the money to run another election? No. It takes a lot of money to run a national election. I've already spent my retirement money on the last one. (I told my aunt I'm going to spend hers on the next election.) It takes a lot to do that. But I'm prepared to do that because I genuinely believe that we have an excellent opportunity now to move this whole process of history forward about four years and destroy the apparatus of Hoffa. Because I think if we can win this election overwhelmingly, some of those folks will take their millions and go off in the sunset, because they will not want to wait around another five years. So I think we have an excellent opportunity to do that.

The real answer to your question is — if we're able to do that, then we can mount the kind of campaign to show to Congress and to everybody else that the Labor Department and the Justice Department should get out of our union. □

Ohio Labor Beats Back a Corporate Attack

Workers Vote NO! on Issue 2

by Jean Tussey

This is Part One of a two-part series. Part Two will be in our next issue.

Labor won an important political battle against corporate capital in Ohio with the defeat of Issue 2 (Senate Bill No. 45) in the November 4, 1997, election.

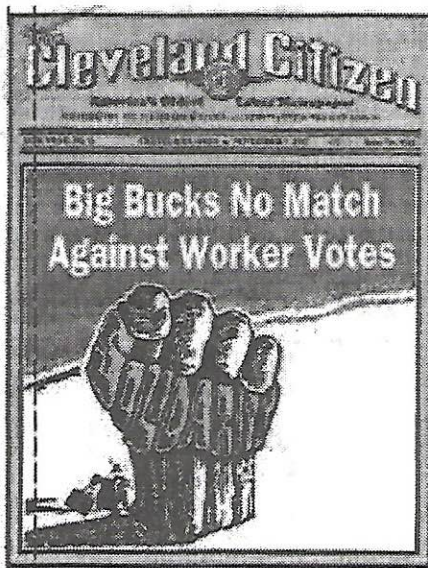
The "Vote NO on Issue 2" campaign brought 3,128,446 registered voters to the polls, although no state candidates were to be elected this year. Of these, 1,711,701 voted NO, and 1,286,188 voted YES, according to the Ohio Secretary of State's office. The healthy 425,513 margin of victory for labor against a major corporate attack on the state insurance system for workplace injuries left union people celebrating and big business licking its wounds. The November 7 issue of the *Cleveland Citizen*, "America's Oldest Labor Newspaper," captured the mood in the unions with a front-page banner headline: "Big Bucks No Match Against Worker Votes."

Labor Solidarity Wins

The cartoon below the headline shows a monumental stone fist labeled "SOLIDARITY." An angry, frustrated little cigar-smoking man in a business suit grips a briefcase marked "Issue 2" in one hand as he apparently stubs his toe against the hard base of the powerful fist.

The November 12 delegates' meeting of the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation heard a special report on the State Issue 2 campaign by Executive Secretary John Ryan. According to the minutes, he said:

It is important that we are able here tonight to celebrate two victories. Our win on Issue 2 was very special because of the majority we won throughout the state. The state vote was 57%. Locally we won by 81%. The main point was that people turned down this legislation, and we won it the only way we could — and that was by voting. Our second major victory was the winning of the vote against the Fast



Track in Washington. All four of our Congressmen were pledged to vote our way. So we have every right to celebrate. However, we know that we have to work even harder next year. There is a lot at stake. We have a race for Governor, for Senator, and the state offices. Our work for 1998 is cut out for us.

After hearing a report on plans for mass picketing against an anti-union employer, the delegates voted to dispense with the regular order of business and celebrate the two victories.

Cleveland AFL-CIO Celebrates

The December 10 Cleveland Federation meeting also celebrated, but not before dealing with a full agenda of regular business and several items of special interest, such as:

- Distribution of the officers' 1997 Annual Report: "Cleveland AFL-CIO on the road to becoming a Union City!" It highlighted a statement by Cleveland Federation of Labor (CFL) President John A. Lyall: "Prevailing on Issue 2 — against big money — showed that we win when we fight alongside all working people."

- Adoption of a Cleveland Painters Union resolution (see sidebar, p. 16) citing "escalating corporate, government, and media attacks against the national AFL-CIO leadership," including Ron Carey, Richard Trumka, and John Sweeney, because of the positive effects of their new policies on millions of workers, and resolving to pledge full support to the officers and "the whole of the AFL-CIO leadership, and urge government agencies to stay clear of government interference in internal union affairs."
- An announcement by George Klepacz, legislative chair of Cleveland Teachers Union Local 279, that he has registered with the Board of Elections as a candidate for Representative to the Ohio General Assembly from the 15th District. He aims to unseat incumbent Michael Wise of the so-called "caveman caucus," who supported the bills to have Mayor Michael White take over the Cleveland school system, for private school vouchers, and for Issue 2; and who is against affirmative action programs and prevailing wage legislation in construction.
- A report that the Cleveland Federation had renewed its Labor Party affiliation in November.

Big Business Regroups

Crain's Cleveland Business, in its November 10 issue, carried a five-column headline: "Voters send workers' comp back to burner." Author Tom Ford, reported that it "likely will be quite a while before the Legislature takes up reform of the workers' compensation system again."

"Business leaders who led an unsuccessful \$6 million campaign to sustain last summer's legislative overhaul of the state's workers' comp system say the Issue 2 defeat doesn't alter the need to change the system," Ford wrote, citing the opinions of Ohio Chamber of Commerce president Andrew Doehrel. But,

Roger Geiger, director for the National Federation of Independent Business's 60-member Ohio chapter, favors a cautious approach to the workers' comp issue.

"I think we have to sit back and evaluate what happened," Mr. Geiger said. "Whether voters did not like the actual provisions of the legislation, or whether they were just confused and

uncertain in general, you can't ignore what the voters said."

Mr. Geiger indicated that state representatives also aren't likely to revisit workers' comp any time soon.

"With congressional and gubernatorial elections coming next year, I doubt many legislators are going to want to take on too many controversial issues," Geiger said.

Gov. Voinovich, who campaigned hard for passage of Issue 2, proposed a conciliatory approach....He asked Bureau of Workers' Compensation Administrator James Conrad to review the legislation...to find any provisions on which both sides could agree.

However, buoyed by the success of their \$3 million grass-roots campaign against Issue 2 that painted the legislation as anti-worker and a significant windfall for employers, labor leaders are in no mood to compromise.

"They [Issue 2 supporters] are not capable of being fair," said Esther Weissman, statewide counsel to the United Auto Workers on workers' compensation issues. "They have no intention of

doing anything for injured workers. They are only interested in profits."

Ms. Weissman said business leaders make much of the cost of abuse of the system by relatively few workers, but pay no attention to the cost and abuse by employers and health care providers.

Ford also reported that John Ryan, secretary of the Cleveland AFL-CIO,

a group of unions representing 100,000 workers in Northeast Ohio, said the unions' success in the Issue 2 campaign has buoyed labor leaders enough to push for more say on other crucial state issues such as privatization of government jobs and school financing.

Labor Considering Political Options

Bill Obbagy, editor of the *Cleveland Citizen*, published monthly by the Cleveland Building and Construction Trades Council, reported:

In the aftermath of Issue #2's defeat by a statewide coalition of labor and com-

munity groups, thoughts are quickly turning to those who passed the ill-conceived Workers Comp Takeaway Measure in the first place, which made the referendum necessary.

If Labor was able to trounce Senate Bill 45 at the ballot box — after being outspent by 3 to 1 — it should be able to dump a number of the State Representatives and Senators who turned their backs on working families to begin with.

Issue 2 went down in 73 of Ohio's 88 counties — many of which have historically been Republican strongholds. The weakness of the GOP in generating the confidence of political moderates and conservatives in the workforce — more plentiful in the state's rural areas — can mean trouble for Republican incumbents [the majority in the state government] in next year's legislative races.

[Note: Part Two will describe how united independent labor political action won — after lobbying of the bosses' parties, Democrats and Republicans, lost.] □

December 13, 1997

Threat to the Independence of the Unions

Continued from page 15

relate themselves primarily to workers who are relatively better off under capitalism, relying in turn on support from that quarter to help maintain their dictatorial rule over the unions.

In keeping with that outlook, the union bureaucrats seek to discourage strikes, often acting as strikebreakers against their own rank and file. When they do feel compelled to identify themselves with a walkout, their main object is to get it settled quickly, no matter what harm is done to the union membership. For these reasons they gladly acquiesce in capitalist propaganda that strikes "endanger the national health and safety."

Growing increasingly employer-minded as they accumulate big union treasuries and gain in personal affluence, the bureaucrats look upon themselves as social "stabilizers." At all times — and doubly so in time of war — they strive to prove their devotion and use-value to the capitalist government.

In return for this servility they entertain vain hopes of winning the government over to their side in collective bargaining disputes with the corporations. That in turn leads to acceptance of government regulation over union-

employer relations. And in this way the door is opened for direct government intervention inside the unions. Bureaucratic rule within the unions thus leads to the subverting of labor's inherent power to alien class interests at increasing cost to the working class.

...Will Police Workers

Willing though the bureaucrats are to serve the capitalist government, the ruling class is losing confidence that, acting on their own, they can continue to restrain the union rank and file. Hence the talk about giving the bureaucrats quasi-governmental powers to police the workers. This changing outlook stems from the deepening crisis of U.S. capitalism which, already dangerous abroad, is growing more severe here at home. That is why the capitalist politicians are preparing new repressive laws which can be expected to impose increasingly harsh government regulation of union activity and internal affairs. The basic trend is toward stripping the unions of any semblance of independence and converting them into company unions at the government level, that is to say, a direct police arm of the capitalist state.

The long period of relative prosperity cushioned the impact of previous government attacks on the unions, but now things are changing. Lately the workers have shown a growing inclination to fight the employers, resist government intervention in strikes, and criticize the union bureaucrats. The sharpening class struggle implied in this trend forecasts stiffening workers opposition to anti-labor laws. As the process intensifies, the total bankruptcy of the union bureaucrats will become more apparent to the membership, and a change in leadership will become the order of the day.

Militant workers preparing for that development need both a clear program and a sound strategy. Bureaucratic rule over the unions must be broken — and rank-and-file control established — without yielding an inch to the capitalist government. Defense of workers' democracy must also include a fight for unconditional independence of the unions from government control. Central to that fight must be a complete break with the Democratic Party of big business, and the political arming of workers to carry the class struggle onto the governmental plane through their own independent party. □

Politics as Usual

by Tom Barrett

In spite of her protestations to the contrary, Attorney General Janet Reno's decision not to appoint a special prosecutor to look into fund-raising "irregularities" in the Clinton-Gore 1996 presidential campaign most likely puts an end to a scandal that never was. In spite of massive press hype and a lot of righteously indignant bluster from the Republican majority in Congress, American working people simply never have become excited over allegations that the Democratic National Committee and Clinton-Gore presidential campaign traded access to the White House for millions of dollars. Their reaction caused some in the press to name the affair "Snooze-gate."

Right-wing columnists have accused the media of a "liberal bias" that prevented the Democrats' fund-raising to elicit the public indignation that brought down Richard Nixon in 1974. The facts, however, speak for themselves: the print and broadcast media have bent over backwards to publish every detail of the Democrats' 1996 campaign fund-

raising practices. The Senate hearings chaired by Tennessee Republican Fred Thompson have been lead stories in newspapers and television for months. No effort has been spared to make the American working public aware of White House "Coffees," to which fat-cat contributors were invited to talk over issues of public policy with the President, of contributions from Asian conglomerate corporations (such as the Indonesian Lippo Group) relayed through shady intermediaries such as John Huang, and of overnight stays in the White House's Lincoln Bedroom given in exchange for six-digit donations. The phrase "soft money," referring to contributions given to the party national committee (and thus exempt from campaign finance limitations and disclosure requirements), has entered the national language. And yet, the general reaction has been, "Yeah, so what else is new?"

It is common knowledge that big money controls the American political system, and that both the Democratic

and Republican parties are equally indebted to the high-roller political contributors. This is the main reason why people have not gotten upset with the Clinton campaign's financial irregularities. The assumption is that the Republicans are equally guilty (especially since they raise and spend considerably more than do the Democrats), and in any case the American business cycle is at a crest. Unemployment is down; crime rates are down; the stock market continues to rise, lifting with it the retirement assets of millions of working-class families in union pension funds and 401(k) plans. So people are in a forgiving mood.

In addition, the Clinton administration has handled the situation rather skillfully. Clinton acknowledged fund-raising irregularities in his and his opponent Robert Dole's campaign, showed proof that the Democratic National Committee and his own campaign committee had returned questionable contributions, and called for campaign finance reform legislation. The Republican majority in Congress (with the notable exception of the right-wing maverick John McCain of Arizona) has refused to consider any legislation which would choke off the flow of cash into Republican bank accounts. Clinton thus finessed the Republicans into exposing their own hypocrisy.

So while it is a good thing that the Republicans have been unable to generate any hysteria about political "corruption," it deserves more attention than people have been giving it. The Republicans have an ulterior motive, and they make no secret of it. The Lippo Group, the Buddhist temples, even the Chinese government, are all cover for their *real* target — organized labor. The only campaign finance reform they are interested in is legislation which would cripple the labor movement's ability to engage in political action of any kind. This threat to the unions' basic democratic rights is in dead earnest, and must be taken completely seriously and fought head on.

Political Corruption Is a Time-Honored American Tradition

Corruption in American politics is at least as old as the republic and in fact goes back to colonial times. It is something of a peculiarity of American history, becoming almost an integral part of



the political system after the institution of universal white-male suffrage in 1828, arising from the need of the ruling classes — the bankers and businessmen and, before 1865, the slave-owning planter aristocrats — to appeal to the voters through political spokesmen drawn from the “common people.”

The parties, ancestors of today’s Democratic and Republican parties, existed, then as now, for one purpose only: to win elective office, and those who were elected rewarded those who worked in their campaigns with jobs in the government bureaucracy. This “spoils system” (“to the victor belongs the spoils”) at first glance seems like a poor way to provide the people to carry out the government’s work; however, it did serve to give the voters a measure of democratic control over the civil service. But the meagerly paid elected officials and the even more meagerly paid civil servants were easily tempted by generous businessmen looking for favors, especially when the government workers were required to kick back part of their pay to the party treasuries to help defray campaign expenses.

Corruption reached the breaking point during the administration of Republican President Ulysses S. Grant (1869–1877). Railroad barons lined politicians’ pockets and in exchange acquired land from the government for ridiculously low prices. The scandals of the Grant administration provoked a public outcry which led to the establishment of the Civil Service. James A. Garfield, the president who presided over the Civil Service reform, was assassinated by a disappointed office-seeker, and in the next election, a rejuvenated Democratic Party captured the White House under the banner of “Clean Government.” Among the new laws passed during this period was the Pendleton Act, which made it illegal for campaign funds to be solicited on government property, thus outlawing the practice of requiring government workers to contribute to their party’s campaign. It was this same Pendleton Act that Al Gore was alleged to have violated by soliciting money by telephone from his office.

Bribery and influence peddling in government did not end or even come close to ending. With every attempt to “clean up” the political process, money

found new pathways to go from businessmen to politicians. Patronage-based politics continued to flourish at state and local levels, which were not subject to the federal civil service laws, and of course it is at the local and state level that nearly all politicians must begin their careers. Periodically, egregious cases of bribery and graft would find their way into the headlines and the courts, and on more than one occasion, politicians found their way into jail. And there were calls for “clean government,” usually from politicians seeking to put their own patronage networks in the place of the one currently in power. Not much changed then, and not much will change now.

Over the past two decades, journalists have been in the habit of adding the suffix “-gate” to the name of any government scandal — a reference to the Watergate affair of 1972–74. Even though some campaign finance regulation was enacted in the aftermath of Watergate, the Nixon presidency was not brought down by financial misconduct. If it had been about greed, Nixon would have served out his eight years. Rather, the Watergate scandal was about abuse of power and a fundamental threat to the civil liberties of every American citizen as guaranteed in the Constitution’s first ten amendments. That was why the American working people were outraged, and rightly so. Those Republicans seeking to sink the Clinton presidency with a new Watergate affair just don’t get it. Watergate was different. What went on in 1996 — that was the same old thing.

Campaign Finance and Class Rule

The cost of election campaigns today defies rational belief. Instead of shaking hands and kissing babies at county fairs, politicians today rely on television to reach the voters. Even thirty seconds of television time costs thousands of dollars, and print, radio, and outdoor advertising are not cheap. Many elected officials have expressed sincere discouragement at the time they are required to spend on the “rubber chicken circuit,” mingling with party donors at \$1,000-a-plate dinners. The amount of time a politician must devote to fund-raising indeed detracts from the

time he or she can spend actually governing. Readers may make up their own minds whether that is a bad thing or a good thing!

Independent and alternative party candidates for elective office have found it nearly impossible to get their message out to the people because of their inability to raise the huge amounts of money required to get media exposure. Even more discouraging is the spectacle of the eccentric billionaire H. Ross Perot being taken seriously as a contender for the presidency in 1992 only because he had the money to present himself as an alternative to candidates — George Bush and Bill Clinton — who generated little enthusiasm among working Americans.

Anyone who is serious about getting elected to office, whether to the town council or to the presidency of the United States, is going to be serious about raising money. That means shmoozing with the fat cats on the rubber chicken circuit; it may mean compromising on political issues in order not to scare potential donors away; more than anything, it means being *perceived* as someone whose election to office will be beneficial to those in a position to give large amounts of money. And of course in American politics today, “image is everything.”

Both the Democratic and Republican parties play by these rules. It is logical to conclude that because of the astronomical sums of money required to run successful election campaigns, the two parties have become dominated by the rich. The Democratic and Republican parties are indeed dominated by the rich, but campaign financing is not the reason why. Limiting the amount of money politicians may spend or providing public financing of election campaigns will not make the Democratic and Republican parties more responsive to the needs of working people, let alone change the twin parties’ class character.

As we explained before, the Democratic and Republican parties exist for one purpose only — to contend for elective office within the existing governmental structures in the United States, whether federal, state, or local. Those governmental structures are set up to serve the interests of the financial elite who own and control the great wealth of

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Clinton Threatens War Against Iraq

by Tom Barrett

Saddam Hussein is a bad man. There is no reason to pretend he is not. He has made war on his neighbors — against Iran from 1980 to 1989 and against Kuwait in 1990. Worse, he has made war against the people within Iraq's own borders, against the Kurdish minority in the north, against the Shi'ite majority in the south, and against the entire population with his regime based on corruption and violence. Against both the Iranians and Kurds he has ordered the use of deadly chemical weapons, one variety of the so-called "weapons of mass destruction," whose dismantling is required by the terms ending the 1991 Gulf war.

Earlier this fall, Saddam had refused to allow the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), charged with verifying the dismantling of the "weapons of mass destruction," to continue with its work as long as it included Americans. Many breathed a sigh of relief when Saddam backed down. It had looked like *American* weapons of mass destruction were about to rain down on the Iraqi civilian population again, as in 1991.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's aggressive rhetoric has been combined with a massive increase in U.S. military presence in the Arab-Persian Gulf region. The possibility that a new Gulf war would break out was real and serious, with no guarantee that it would be as short and as successful for the U.S. as the 1991 war was.

Since Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the United States and its allies have imposed severe economic sanctions on Iraq. These sanctions have caused massive suffering for the Iraqi people, without inconveniencing Saddam Hussein one iota. Explicitly, the sanctions are to remain in effect until Iraq has complied with all the terms ending the 1991 war. However, the U.S. has made no secret that it will not allow them to be lifted so long as Saddam Hussein remains in power. There is a

general consensus among all informed observers of the Iraqi situation that prospects for Saddam's overthrow are slim to nonexistent at this stage.

Now there is no sense in denying that a lot of us feel nervous at the prospect of Saddam Hussein in possession of nuclear weapons. The thought of this supposed "madman" being able to unleash a plague of anthrax or a poisonous mist is a scary one. It would be better for all of us if the Iraqi dictator were out of power. That is why a big majority of American working people are not opposed either to the continuation of sanctions against Iraq or to the U.S. military buildup in the Arab-Persian Gulf.

The truth, however, is that Clinton's policies are not making the world safer for anyone, including us. Clinton, like Bush before him, is continuing the campaign of provocation, daring Saddam to give Washington an excuse for another Gulf war. Neither Bush nor Clinton has succeeded in driving Saddam from power, if indeed that was ever their intention. Neither Bush nor Clinton has forced Saddam to dismantle any "weapons of mass destruction." Neither Bush nor Clinton has altered Saddam Hussein's repressive dictatorial ways, never mind that it is hardly the U.S. president's business how another country is governed. It has, in fact, been Bill Clinton who has brought the world closer to war, increasing the danger that chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons might actually be used. When working people are acquainted with the facts of the situation, when the truth is widely disseminated, working-class support for Clinton's war policies in the Gulf will evaporate.

Not a New Face in World Politics

Saddam Hussein became a household name in the U.S. only after he invaded Kuwait in 1990. Immediately, the Bush administration began its campaign of demonizing Saddam and inflicting real suffering on the Iraqi people through brutal economic sanctions. One would

have thought that the U.S. government had never heard of this man before, or that he had just come to power and immediately started making trouble. The truth is, Saddam Hussein has held absolute power in Iraq for nearly thirty years. He came to power through violence, and he has held it the same way. And during that thirty years he has not changed much. About the only thing that has changed is that during the Gulf War he got religion, or at least made a more public show of it, using Friday prayers as a photo-op and putting the phrase "God Is Most Great" (which begins the prayers that devout Muslims repeat five times a day) on the Iraqi flag.

One frequently hears the word "madman" used to describe Saddam Hussein. Actually, he is little different from other dictators who have held power in developing countries during the post-World War II period. He has done what he has needed to do to hold on to power and to enrich himself and his family. The one thing he has not done during nearly all of his twenty-nine years in power is collaborate with the United States.

Iraq's oil resources had been plundered by Western European countries throughout the twentieth century. Between the World Wars, it was under the control of the British Empire, which granted "independence" under a non-Iraqi king from the pro-British Hashemite family of Mecca. During the 1950s and 1960s a wave of anti-European and anti-American nationalism swept through the Arab countries, as young intellectuals and military officers led their people in demanding political independence and control of their natural resources.

The most prominent of these was Gamal Abdel Nasser, a colonel in the Egyptian army, who overthrew the corrupt British puppet, King Farouk, in 1952. Iraq overthrew its pro-British king in 1958, provoking a massive U.S. military buildup in Lebanon, which at that time was allied with the United States. One of Saddam's first political

acts was to attempt to assassinate the new president, Colonel Abdul Karim Qassem, from the back of a motorcycle. Ten years later, Saddam himself came to power.

Having dared to defy the United States and Britain on the issue of control of Iraq's oil resources, Saddam, like Qassem before him, turned to the Soviet Union for economic and military aid. The Soviets did not demand exorbitant profits for Iraqi oil. For one thing, the Soviet Union had sufficient domestic oil resources for its own, and for another, the Soviet economy was not controlled by profit-driven corporations. Consequently, for its own geopolitical purposes, the Soviet government was willing to make alliances with Arab nationalist regimes, like the ones in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.

The Nixon administration in Washington made no secret of its enmity toward the Iraqi government. Washington's complaint, however, was not with Saddam's domestic tyranny, but with his alliance with the Soviet Union. However, Nixon did not have to commit U.S. military forces against Iraq. His good friend, the Shah of Iran, was more than willing to do that for him. From the time of Saddam's accession to power in 1968 until the Shah and Saddam signed a cynical peace agreement in 1978, a state of undeclared war existed along the Iran-Iraq border. Artillery exchanges were frequent. Iraq gave asylum to anti-Shah Shi'ite clerics, including Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Iran gave money and weapons to Kurdish rebels in Iraq's northern provinces.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government provided Iran with the most up-to-date military hardware, including the most sophisticated jet fighters, air-to-air and surface-to-air missiles, the most advanced radar, and whatever else the Shah picked out from the Pentagon's catalog. And within the Nixon administration, as well as the corporations doing business in Iran, more than one person referred to the Shah in private conversations as a "madman."

So the U.S. government has been acquainted with Saddam Hussein for a long time. And while it has never liked him much, he was never considered to be out of the ordinary for a Third World dictator, which indeed he is not. His brutality and ruthlessness are survival skills in a political structure imposed on his

country by the colonial empires and by their successors, the multinational corporations. The well-groomed men who rule this country and this world do not like gangsters much, but sometimes they find it necessary to do business with them, whether on the New York waterfront or in a Middle Eastern oil-producing country. One can negotiate and do business with them and come to an agreement profitable for both parties — at the expense of the people who actually do the work.

In 1979 the Shah of Iran was overthrown by forces led by the Ayatollah Khomeini; approximately one year later, Iraq attacked on a broad front all along the Iran-Iraq border. However little the U.S. liked Saddam Hussein, they encouraged him in his war against Iran. And in spite of the fact that the Iraqi forces used chemical weapons against the Iranians, the U.S. did not raise any protest about Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction." That only happened after Iraq, believing that the United States would raise no objection, invaded Kuwait in 1990. The U.S. would probably have raised no objection were it not for the oil resources which in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are controlled by governments friendly to Washington.

So the truth is that if Saddam Hussein were the madman who is going to blow up the world, he would probably have done so already. He has certainly been in power long enough. The Soviets armed Iraq for over twenty years, and Saddam actually used chemical weapons — against Kurds in northern Iraq and against Iranians — with no outcry from Washington or any other Western capital. The whole thing is an exercise in hypocrisy.

The Devastating Effect of Economic Sanctions

The *threats* of military action made by Clinton and Albright, dangerous as they are, pale next to the *very real acts of war* which have been carried out against Iraq throughout the 1990s — that is, the severe economic embargo imposed, in theory by the United Nations Security Council, in reality by the United States. And whatever crimes Saddam Hussein may have committed, it is not he who is suffering the punishment. The Iraqi people, with whom George Bush said he "had no quarrel," are the ones enduring malnutrition, disease, and death because

of the sanctions. Working men and women, little different from ourselves, are watching their children die of starvation or curable illnesses because vital food and medicine is not available.

On March 1, 1996, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark reported on the sanctions' impact to the United Nations Security Council. His report calls them an act of *genocide*.

While February statistics are not yet available, more than 6,000 children under age five and 6,000 persons five years or older died in January 1996 as a direct result of the sanctions....

...I visited ten hospitals...which have nearly 15 percent of all hospital beds in the country. Conditions are tragic. Lighting is dim, even in operating theaters, for lack of bulbs. Wards are cold. Pharmacies are nearly empty with only a minor fraction of needed medicines and medical supplies.... Death is omnipresent. A young mother weeping in her bed whose infant had just died, an elderly diabetic — his feet bloated with open sores, without adequate insulin for years, kwashiorkor and marasmus victims living only a few days after admission.

In the emergency unit in Nasiriya we saw typhoid fever, dehydration, victims wasting away because of the lack of simple medicines.... Doctors, nurses, and staff struggle courageously and creatively against all odds to save life and resist despair and fury....

Polluted water is a threat everywhere. Chlorine and other chemicals to make water safe for drinking are in short supply....

In Baghdad, garbage disposal is severely limited because trucks which carried garbage away from the city are largely inoperable. Huge dumps are located within the city in or near residential areas so garbage can be carried there by the people. Often, however, garbage is simply dumped in the street where goats and little children scavenge together. Areas where sewage pipes were broken by bombing or have deteriorated have raw sewage percolating to the surface in huge pools, often flooding land surrounding housing projects and commercial and residential streets. The entire operating sewage system west of the Tigris, serving one and a half million people, dumps all the raw sewage gathered directly into the river untreated. The rest of the city does little better....

The lawlessness and cruelty of such death-dealing sanctions, which are a

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Brothers and Sisters: Why? How Many More? Until When?

The murder of 45 Tzotzil Indian people, children, women, and men, and the maiming of dozens more by “paramilitary” Pri-istas (supporters of the ruling party in Mexico) was not a surprise. For months Zapatistas and their supporters have called attention to the violence by Pri-ista armed groups. Especially in Chenalho, their violent attacks had driven many members of the Mayan-speaking base communities that support the EZLN (Spanish initials for Zapatista Army of National Liberation) to flee into the nearby mountains as refugees, living with hardly any shelter or food.

The following communique, signed by Subcommandante Marcos, was translated and posted on the Internet by Cecilia Rodriguez of the El Paso-based National Commission for Democracy in Mexico. The NCDC's e-mail address is moonlight@igc.apc.org.

To National and International Civil Society

To the people of Mexico

To the peoples and governments of the world

To the national and international press

In relation to the massacre of indigenous people in the community of Acteal, municipality of San Pedro de Chenalho, Chiapas, which was carried out yesterday, December 22, 1997, the EZLN points out: **FIRST.** According to information compiled as of today, about 60 paramilitaries of the Institutional Revolutionary Party [PRI] (sponsored by the federal and state governments) were the ones who attacked the indigenous people with high-caliber weapons. Among them were refugees of Acteal.

SECOND. As a result of this attack, which lasted up to four hours, at least 45 indigenous people were assassinated, among them 9 men, 21 women, and 15 children (one of them an infant less than a year old). In addition to the dead, the wounded counted among them at least 7 males (4 of them little boys) and 10 females (4 of them little girls).

THIRD. According to radio transmissions of the government of Chiapas (intercepted by the EZLN) in the immediate surrounding of Acteal at the time at which the massacre was being carried out, public security police of the state of Chiapas backed up the attack and during the afternoon and evening dedicated themselves to picking up cadavers in order to hide the magnitude of the massacre. Mister Homero Tovilla Cristinani and Uriel Jarquín (secretary and subsecretary of the government of Chiapas respectively) commissioned the police to back up this crime. Mister Julio

César Ruiz Ferro [the PRI governor of Chiapas] was constantly informed of the development of the “operation” (at least since noon of the 22nd day of December, when the massacre was an hour old).

Approved by the federal and state governments, preparations for the attack were fine-tuned on the 21st of December in a meeting of paramilitaries (led by Mister Jacinto Arias, PRI municipal president) from the communities of Los Chorros, Puebla, Esperanza, and Quexitic, all of them villages in the municipality of Chenalho.

FOURTH. The direct responsibility for these bloody events falls upon Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León and the Justice Ministry. Two days ago, they gave a green light to the counterinsurgency project presented by the Federal Army.

The aim of the counterinsurgency project is to displace the government’s war against the Zapatistas and make it appear to be a war among the indigenous themselves, motivated by religious, political, and ethnic differences.

In order to carry this out, they have dedicated themselves to financing equipment and weaponry (through funds of the Social Development Ministry) and giving military training (led by officials of the federal army) to indigenous “paramilitaries” recruited by the PRI.

In order to allow time for these death squads to get ready, the Mexican Federal Government designed a parallel strategy of simulated dialogue, which consists of conducting negotiations without any intention of implementing what had already been agreed to, and by increasing the military presence in the Zapatista zones.

The government of the state of Chiapas was put in charge of guaranteeing the impunity of paramilitary groups and

facilitating their operation in the principal rebel zones of the North, the jungle, and the highlands of Chiapas.

FIFTH. In this way the federal and state governments, the PRI, and the Federal Army joined forces. Their objective is synthesized by the “war cry” of the paramilitaries who use the name “Red Mask” — “We are going to put an end to the Zapatista seed.” In other words, “We are going to wipe out the indigenous communities.”

SIXTH. As part of his style of government and demonstration, through diverse channels, of his “will for peace,” Mister Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León has sent threats to the general command of the EZLN with the following message, “I prefer to go down in history as a repressor before implementing the agreements with the EZLN.”

He has carried out his word.

Zedillo will go down in history as an assassin of the indigenous and has the blood of Acteal on his hands.

SEVENTH. The prompt attention of the media in Chiapas, and the just indignation of national and international public opinion in response to these events, has made the masterminds of the crime scramble to the forefront in order to wash their hands of it and promise “in depth” investigations.

They will not punish those who are responsible. Impunity is guaranteed because those who investigate the crime are the same ones who planned it. For these reasons, the declarations of Mister Zedillo and his subordinates are nothing more than demagogy.

EIGHTH. Using the motive of the massacre of Acteal, the government and its spokespeople call once again for dialogue without mentioning the fact they have no intention of fulfilling any agree-

ments but rather advancing their counterinsurgency strategy. This is the meaning of the recent and ridiculous declaration of the COCOPA [group of legislators] (which decided to go on vacation instead of working for peace) in regards to Acteal.

The legislators forget that it is the government which is assassinating children, women, and men, that it is the government which is using weapons, that it is the government which refuses a serious dialogue. It is to the government that

they should direct themselves when they talk about not resorting to violence, and about the necessity for dialogue.

NINTH. Once again the EZLN calls upon national and international civil society and upon independent organizations not to be deceived, to demand true justice and not pretences.

TENTH. The Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee — General Command of the EZLN is at these moments completing its investigation and analyzing what has occurred in

order to make the pertinent necessary decisions.

Democracy!

Liberty!

Justice!

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast.

Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee — General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation

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December 23, 1997

Clinton Threatens War Against Iraq

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crime against humanity and genocide, must be recognized. Their use against whole populations, killing first infants, children, elderly, and chronically ill, must be prohibited. Until then no poor people on the planet are safe from the UN, or the superpower whose will it enforces.

An ironic and surely unintended result of the sanctions has been a diplomatic and domestic *strengthening* of Saddam Hussein's support. The original Gulf war coalition has collapsed, leaving only Britain supporting the U.S. government's uncompromising hostility to Iraq. Even Kuwait, the victim of Saddam's aggression in 1990, has called for an easing of the sanctions.

A combined uprising against Saddam Hussein by Kurds and Shi'ite Muslims in 1991 was crushed when the Bush administration denied it weapons, air support, and diplomatic recognition. Since then there has been no viable opposition to Saddam's dictatorship within Iraq. Saddam Hussein succeeded in splitting the Kurdish opposition, signing a treaty with the Kurdish Democratic Party, led by the third-generation leader of *peshmerga* guerrillas, Mas'oud Barzani, whose forces have driven those of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan across the border into Iran. And the economic blockade and war threats have only served to unify the Iraqi people behind their leaders, a

tragic consequence indeed. The Iraqi people blame Bill Clinton, not Saddam Hussein, for their current suffering. And they are right.

It /s the Labor Movement's Business

A fundamental principle of the labor movement, which is being revived now after a long period of neglect, is that working-class solidarity must transcend the artificial lines that divide country from country. They are no different from the lines which divide craft from craft, trade from trade, or employees of one company from those of another. And when workers anywhere are treated unfairly, we are all treated unfairly.

This is not just empty rhetoric. The "right-to-work" laws in effect in almost every Southern state not only drive the wages down in *those* states; they drive *all* wages down. Union officials in northern states accept concessions under the threat that if the concessions aren't given, that plant will close and move to the more "pro-business" South. The unfair wages paid to workers in Latin American and Asian countries — clothing and textiles in Taiwan, El Salvador, and Honduras, electronics in Indonesia, Malaysia, and South Korea, book printing in the Philippines, to cite just a few examples — have virtually eliminated jobs in those trades in this country, driving thousands to find other jobs if they can. And when workers and

other poor people in those countries rise up in resistance, our fellow workers in uniform may be sent to confront them in battle. They are not sent to die "for their country"; they are sent to die for profits, pure and simple. The young people who opposed the Gulf war in 1991 got it right when they chanted, "Hell, no, we won't go! We won't die for Texaco!"

Workers have no interest in keeping Iraq's oil out of the world market. Since the Gulf War gasoline prices have risen significantly; however, since they have risen gradually, without the contrived shortages — and since people feel that there is little they can do about it — it has not generated the anger that the 1973 and 1979 price increases did. But allowing Iraq to sell its oil freely, as every other oil-producing country does, would put downward pressure on the prices of gasoline and heating oil, benefiting the working consumer.

It does working people in the United States no good to inflict suffering on our fellow workers in Iraq. It has not made the world safer; in fact, it has made war an even more immediate threat. And while I am not comfortable with the idea of Saddam Hussein with nuclear weapons, I am even less comfortable with nuclear weapons in the hands of military officers living in that fantasy world called the Pentagon. If we are going to demand the dismantling of "weapons of mass destruction," Washington is where we should start. □

Struggle Continues at Hyundai Feeder Plant in Tijuana

The following information was posted on the Internet December 23 by Labor Alerts, a service of Campaign for Labor Rights (CLR). To receive the CLR e-mail labor alerts, send a message to CLR@igc.apc.org; or phone (541) 344-5410. CLR's Web site is: <http://www.compugraph.com/clr>

For CLR membership and/or newsletter, send \$35.00 to Campaign for Labor Rights, 1247 "E" Street SE, Washington, DC 20003. Sample newsletter available on request. The information in this report was provided by staff of the San Diego-based Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers, who ask that local activists seeking updates contact Campaign for Labor Rights.

Background: In recent months, Han Young workers have twice voted to be represented by STIMAHCS, a branch of the independent labor federation FAT (Frente Autentico de los Trabajadores). Until recently, the government-controlled CROC federation "represented" the workers. Now, Han Young management and the Mexican government want the government-controlled CTM federation to represent the workers. Han Young, located near Tijuana, produces exclusively for Hyundai Precision America, also located near Tijuana but with headquarters in San Diego. Hyundai Precision manufactures tractor trailers. It is one part of the Korean conglomerate, The Hyundai Group. The San Diego-based Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers stays in close touch with the Han Young workers and directs international solidarity efforts on their behalf.

Han Young a No-Show: Yesterday (Monday, December 22), Han Young was supposed to come to the Tijuana labor board to sign the contract agreement, but Han Young management didn't show up. The labor board then wouldn't do anything to pressure Han Young to appear. This amounts to a de facto overturning of the union certification election.

Explanation of What Didn't Happen: Under Mexican law, when a union certification election results in the replacement of one union by another, the new union inherits the previous contract. Instead of bargaining over a new contract from scratch, management and the new union bargain over changes in the old contract. The signing ceremony scheduled for yesterday was to have transferred the ownership of the old contract to STIMAHCS. Without the signing-over, STIMAHCS has no legal

standing to participate in new negotiations over the contract.

What Han Young Is Seeking: When Han Young management showed up at the labor board last Friday (December 19) with a busload of CTM thugs, management claimed that CTM was actually the legal bargaining agent for the workers. Technically, there would have to be an election before management or the labor board could recognize the CTM. However, in real practice, who knows what illegalities we will see from Han Young management and the Mexican government?

Hyundai President Vanishes: When Hyundai Precision America's President Ted Chung asked for a moratorium on letters to him, he promised Mary Tong of the Support Committee that she could call him "10 times a day" if she wanted to, and he promised that he would check his e-mail every day when he was out of town. Since the events on Friday morning (when Han Young management showed up at the labor board with the CTM thugs), Mary has repeatedly been trying by every way possible to reach Chung, whose office reports that he is "out of town." Chung's failure to respond to multiple messages becomes more suspect by the hour.

Pressing Forward With NAO: The Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers is seeking to have a hearing date as soon as possible for the NAO complaint (NAFTA labor side agreement structure). There is mounting evidence that the Mexican state and federal government are illegally colluding with Han Young (and quite possibly with Hyundai Precision America) to overturn the certification of the STIMAHCS election.

Hyundai's Financial Troubles: Hyundai Precision America is but one part of

the huge Korea-based Hyundai Group. In addition to manufacturing tractor trailers, the conglomerate has other divisions for shipping, electronics, cars, and more. On several fronts, the company is having financial problems due to the Asian currency crisis. According to news stories today, Hyundai Motor Company said that it has halted a \$400-million joint venture in Indonesia because of funding problems and the anticipated withdrawal of tax favors. News stories on December 20 stated that Hyundai Electronics is mothballing a \$1.6 billion chip plant in Scotland, which already is hundreds of millions of dollars into construction. Clearly, this is a company which is now vulnerable to pressure.

Government Misrepresentation: According to the Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers, the Mexican federal government is trying to take credit for the STIMAHCS election victory one week ago (on December 16), because the government had insisted on a new election taking place. However, the government in fact played an underhanded role in forcing the new election. Government representatives knew full well that Han Young management had for two days been offering 1,000-peso bribes to workers who would vote for CTM. The government laid a trap which did not work because, against all odds, a majority of the workers still voted for STIMAHCS.

The government's misrepresentation of its role could be important as each side seeks to frame the public debate which will surround new developments.

Timing: The forces seeking to overturn the STIMAHCS election victory are taking advantage of holiday closures. The timing of recent Han Young actions and labor board inaction does not allow for much response until early January.

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Build the “Jericho ’98” March on Washington: Amnesty for U.S. Political Prisoners!

by Paul Lefrak

In a solidarity message of January 31, 1997, sent to the families of those killed in Northern Ireland’s Bloody Sunday massacre twenty-five years ago, revolutionary Black journalist, former Black Panther, and death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal wrote:

We salute you on this occasion of the 25th anniversary of Bloody Sunday. Your struggle is our struggle. You are not alone in confronting a system that oppresses an indigenous people. In unity with communities of resistance throughout the world, we demand respect and dignity for all, not just the few.

In connecting the Black liberation struggle in this hemisphere with the Irish freedom struggle across the ocean, Mumia’s statement resonates with oppressed people everywhere fighting for justice and self-determination. It’s easy to see why powerful ruling class forces in this country prefer to see him dead rather than allow his revolutionary internationalist voice to gain authority with the increasing numbers of Black youth who understand quite well that they have no future in the social decay of Clinton’s America.

Movements to put a stop to racist police terror and the criminalization of youth are growing in size, scope, and anger within Black and Latino communities all across the U.S. But as a new generation of fighters is drawn into the struggle today, a growing number are starting to learn the truth about the police state terror used against social movements of the 1960s and ’70s by the FBI with the help of local police agencies.

Aimed at radical organizations such as the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement, this domestic campaign of naked repression was called the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) and resulted in the murder, surveillance, and frame-up

of many members of these and other organizations. Facing conditions in the present period similar to those back then, growing numbers of youth of all colors are undergoing a process of political education and radicalization similar to that of the previous generation. Now, as then, those rising up are facing attack at the hands of a brutal enemy determined to hold on to power.

But as a new generation learns of the struggles of the past, many are also beginning to learn about the plight of those activists and radical leaders who continue to be held captive to this day in the hellholes of control units and maximum security prisons in the U.S. Drawing a link between the struggles of yesterday and today, many of today’s militants are coming to the conclusion that in order to advance these emerging struggles, it is necessary to fight for the freedom of leaders who — like Mumia Abu-Jamal — are among the best fighters and most eloquent revolutionary voices of the previous generation. More and more of the current generation are beginning to see the truth succinctly expressed by self-described New Afrikan anarchist political prisoner Ojore N. Lutalo: “any movement that does not support its political internees is a sham movement.”

Over 150 Political Prisoners in U.S.

Currently, there are over 150 political prisoners in U.S. jails who were imprisoned for their political activities. They are Black, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Native American, and progressive white people who have committed their lives to the pursuit of a world free from racism, imperialism, and exploitation. Many of these political prisoners were victims of COINTELPRO. Others, like the fifteen Puerto Rican independentistas arrested between 1980 and 1985, who were jailed for “seditious conspir-

acy” for fighting to win Puerto Rican self-determination — or those like the MOVE 9 framed in Philadelphia in 1978 — were unjustly imprisoned after the “official” end of COINTELPRO. But all have received excessively long sentences and viciously harsh treatment in jail because of their political activities.

Officially, the U.S. government denies the existence of any political prisoners in this country. But it can’t hide the truth forever, and as these outrages become known, a movement is growing demanding freedom for these prisoners. Activists in political prisoner solidarity movements have focused on cases such as those of Mumia Abu-Jamal, or American Indian Movement leader Leonard Peltier, or former Black Panther Geronimo ji Jaga Pratt (who, after intense public pressure, was freed on June 10, 1997). Because of the blatant lies and misconduct of the prosecution and judges in these cases, they have served as a springboard to bring attention to many lesser-known political prisoners and have also drawn attention to the crisis of a society that refuses to build day care centers, decent schools, or affordable housing for working class people — but is more than willing to build more prisons to supply an ever-available supply of slave labor.

In order to build on these connections, a call for a mass mobilization to demand amnesty for U.S. political prisoners has been issued. Originating from Jalil Muntaqim (Jalil Bottom), a leader of the New Afrikan Liberation Front and himself a political prisoner and former member of the Black Liberation Army, plans are under way for a march on Washington, D.C., on Friday, March 27, 1998. This march is being called “Jericho ’98” and has gotten support from a wide variety of groups who see the need to unify around a tactical demand for amnesty for these prisoners. As with the Biblical story of Jericho, it

is hoped that when voices are raised in collective opposition, the walls will come tumbling down.

Planning for the March

On May 3, 1997, a planning meeting was held in Philadelphia to help solidify plans for the march. While it is not clear that all of these groups have officially endorsed Jericho '98, those in attendance at the meeting included International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal; the MOVE Organization; the National Campaign to Stop Control Unit Prisons; American Friends Service Committee; New Afrikan Liberation Front; Republic of New Afrika Provisional Government; African Peoples' Socialist Party/National Peoples' Democratic Uhuru Movement; Black Panther Collective; Leonard Peltier Defense Committee; the Justice for Jonny Gammage Coalition; the National Campaign to Free Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and POWs; Anarchist Black Cross Federation; Black Autonomy; Workers World Party; Solidarity; Socialist Workers Party; Revolutionary Communist Party; Trotskyist League/US; Refuse & Resist! and various local support committees around particular political prisoners, as well as several

chapters of Anti-Racist Action (ARA). Since that time, organizing has begun on many college campuses, and many other organizations — including in Canada, Europe, and Australia — have responded positively to the call for the march.

In many ways, the organizing for Jericho '98 represents a new level of coalition-building in that many of the organizations supporting the call have had little history of working together. Many have even had histories of mutually destructive sectarianism or internecine fighting dating back to the 1960s. Some of the bad blood dated back to COINTELPRO divide-and-conquer dirty tricks aimed (often quite successfully) at causing splits within targeted organizations. A single-focus approach of unity in support of a demand for *amnesty* can be seen as an approach capable of uniting widely divergent stripes of radicals together with those forces which could be described as "liberal" or "progressive" and might generally approach this issue more from a stance of supporting "principles of human rights." Whatever political differences those of us on the Left have regarding issues of tactics and strategy, it is imperative that we come together to

defend all those on the Left imprisoned for their political activities or organizational affiliations. The question becomes: "Do we allow the capitalist government the right to pass judgment on *any* of our liberation fighters?"

The call for Jericho '98 answers this by affirming that an attack on one is an attack on all. The capitalist government with its bloody hands has no right to hold any of these fighters a single day longer! In the spirit of the united front, organizations of the Left have a significant opportunity to come together with forces emerging from Black, Latino, and Native communities — particularly young people — to build the Jericho '98 march as a major mobilization. In doing so, we launch a fight not only for the freedom of our long unjustly imprisoned militants and community leaders, but to build the kind of principled unity needed to strengthen the movements of working people and the oppressed — one which can put an end to the system that breeds these injustices in the first place.

For more information about the March 27 "Jericho '98" march and rally in Washington, D.C., contact Jericho '98 Organizing Committee, c/o FMAJC, P.O. Box 650, New York, NY 10009; phone at (212) 330-8362 or e-mail at jericho98@usa.net. □

December 16, 1997

Struggle Continues at Hyundai Feeder Plant in Tijuana

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Worker Update: The illegally fired workers have received a written statement promising reinstatement and back pay from the dates of their firing. However, as of this morning, none of the workers had received any back pay.

"Boycott Hyundai" Bumper Stickers: Printed in a union shop. \$1.00 each or \$6.00 for 10. Add \$2.50 per order for shipping and handling. Labor/Community Alliance, P.O. Box 5077, Fresno, CA 93755, (209) 226-0477, CLR2@igc.apc.org.

Action Requests. (1) Local activists who live in or near port cities are urged to contact their local longshoremen's unions to discuss solidarity actions.

(2) If you have not already sent the letter to Han Young (posted in our previous alert and updated here), please send it now. Some people are reporting that they cannot get through to this number,

which we know to be correct. This probably indicates that Han Young took their fax off the hook in response to letters from solidarity activists. Please keep trying.

Sample letter:

Pablo Kang, Manager
Han Young de Mexico
Tijuana, Mexico
Fax: 011-526-680-4481

Dear Mr. Kang:

I am outraged at the blatantly illegal behavior of your company at the offices of the Tijuana labor board on December 19, in collusion with thugs acting on behalf of government-controlled unions and falsely representing themselves as Han Young workers. Then, on December 22 (when you should have signed over the contract to STIMAHCS), you failed to appear.

A majority of Han Young workers have twice voted to be represented by

the STIMAHCS union. In your attempts to undermine two official union certification elections, you are acting as an outlaw company. No matter what clandestine deals are being made and no matter what payments are being passed in secret, you need to be aware that your actions are taking place on the open stage of international public opinion. International supporters of the rights of the Han Young workers intend to hold your company to account.

I demand that you fulfill your commitments and your legal obligations by recognizing STIMAHCS as the only representative of your employees and by bargaining in good faith with STIMAHCS. Justice for the Han Young workers! I will be watching your actions.

Sincerely,

Send copies to: Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers (619) 295-5879 □

The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal

by John Kirkland

On December 6, more than fifteen hundred activists gathered in Philadelphia to witness the People's International Tribunal for Justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal. At the same time, thousands of people marched in the streets of San Francisco demanding Mumia's freedom. The Tribunal should help breathe new life into the campaign at a time when there is new reason to hope. There may be hope for relief at the Federal level and Amnesty International may be taking Mumia's case up.

Mumia, a former Black Panther Party member, is the victim of a racist police frame-up for the 1981 murder of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. On the night of December 9 of that year, at 3:55 a.m., at the corner of 13th and Locust Streets, Officer Faulkner was shot, having just stopped a car that may have been driven by Mumia Abu-Jamal's brother. Mumia, who was working in the area as a cabby, happened on the scene. When it was all over, Faulkner was dead and Mumia was critically wounded. Several eyewitnesses reported seeing the shooter running away. When police arrived they proceeded to beat and kick Mumia, on the assumption that he was the killer.

The panel of 23 political activists, human rights advocates, and jurists heard evidence of a trial characterized by judicial and police misconduct. The judge in the case, Albert Sabo, a member of the Fraternal Order of Police, allowed only \$250 for Mumia to mount a defense (Mississippi allows \$1000). Mumia was barred from the courtroom for much of the trial. Police coerced witnesses and manufactured a confession.

According to Garry Bell, Faulkner's former partner, Mumia confessed in the hospital, screaming, "I shot the motherfucker and I hope the motherfucker dies!" However, according to the police report filed by officer Gary Wakshul, who was assigned to watch Mumia in the hospital, "during this time the Negro made no statements." It was only weeks

later that the officers "remembered" the confession.

Forensic evidence indicates that the gun used to kill Faulkner was a .44 caliber, but the gun Mumia carried in his taxicab was a .38. Mumia's hands were not tested to see if he had actually fired a gun that night. The prosecution used quotes from Mumia's days in the Black Panthers to secure the death penalty from the all-white jury.

Mumia's Life

Mumia's life as a political activist began in 1968, when he was 14. He and some friends attempted to protest a rally for racist presidential candidate, George Wallace. They were beaten by Wallace supporters and the police. Mumia joined the Black Panther Party (BPP) a few months later, and at the age of 16, was named the Minister of Information for the Philadelphia Chapter. It was in the BPP that he developed the skills of an organizer and journalist.

After he left the BPP, Mumia was a print and radio journalist, particularly concerned with the plight of Philadelphia's most oppressed citizens. His advocacy for victims of police brutality, including members of the MOVE organization, made him a target of then-Mayor Frank Rizzo's police.

Police brutality was particularly bad during former Mayor Rizzo's tenure as police commissioner. In 1967, he ordered police to savagely attack a protest by Black public school students demanding courses in Black history. By 1970, he had declared "open season" on Black radicals, launching a series of raids on the local offices of the Black Panther Party. In the raids, police forced captured Panthers to strip naked and posed them for news photographers.

Police Brutality and COINTELPRO

During the 5-year period 1970-74 Philadelphia police shot over 200 persons, killing 81. In 1977, Mayor Rizzo ordered police to blockade the house of

the MOVE organization in the Powelton Village section of the city. It took action by the federal courts to force the city to lift the siege. On August 8, 1978, police attacked the MOVE house. Afterward, 9 members of the MOVE organization were indicted for the killing of a police officer who was very likely shot by police during the attack. Police attacks on MOVE finally culminated in the firebombing of the MOVE house on Osage Avenue in May of 1983.

The Tribunal also heard extensive evidence on the U.S. Government's Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) activities against dissident groups, particularly the BPP. In fact Geronimo Ji Jaga and other former Panthers spoke eloquently of the government's drive to neutralize the Black liberation movement. COINTELPRO used dirty tricks, forgeries, frame-ups, and assassination to destroy the Panthers and other organizations that the FBI considered effective. Geronimo Ji Jaga (Pratt) was released earlier this year after spending 27 years in a federal prison on a trumped-up homicide conviction.

Conclusions of Tribunal

The Tribunal was constituted in accordance with accepted principles of international law as set forth in Article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice. The Tribunal found the existence of a "criminal conspiracy to deny Mumia Abu-Jamal's human rights." It called for his immediate release, exoneration, and compensation. It stated that "the constitutional and human rights of Mumia Abu-Jamal were blatantly violated in numerous and systematic ways, resulting in his unjust conviction, unlawful incarceration and illegal death sentence."

The Tribunal further recommended that a "thorough, independent, international, and impartial judicial investigation, with full subpoena powers, should be conducted into: the historical and current operations of the Philadelphia Police Department, particularly in rela-

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Ontario Teacher Leaders Snatch Defeat From Jaws of Victory

by Barry Weisleder

The following article was scheduled for publication in the December issue of the Canadian newspaper Socialist Action. Barry Weisleder is president of Local 595, Ontario Public Service Employees Union, representing over 1200 substitute teachers at the Toronto Board of Education, and he is editor of Socialist Action newspaper.

Leaders of Ontario's teacher unions halted one of the biggest political strikes in North American history, despite rising public support for the teachers and growing signs of government desperation.

On October 27, 126,000 teachers from public elementary and public secondary schools, as well as French-language and Catholic boards of education, set up picket lines at some 3000 schools to oppose the Ontario Conservative government's Bill 160, the "Education Quality Improvement Act." It was the first-ever "illegal" general work stoppage by teachers in Canada's largest province.

Bill 160 centralizes power in the provincial Ministry of Education, and strips elected school boards of their tax and policy-making authority. The legislation reduces teacher preparation time and professional development days, and forever removes these issues, along with class size, from collective bargaining.

The bill gives the provincial government the power to close schools, dismiss school boards, their elected trustees, even their teachers, for disagreeing with government budgets and policies in education. It bans court challenges to future change in education, strips principals and vice-principals of their contracts and seniority, and permits giving local parent groups unlimited powers to manage schools (which is seen as a step towards competitive "charter schools").

In budget terms, it paves the way for a \$1-billion cut in education expenditures, largely by eliminating up to 10,000 teaching positions.

Part of Global Attack on Public Education

Such a ferocious attack on public education in Ontario is not the exception. It

forms a pattern with moves in Alberta and other provinces, and across the United States, to defund public schooling, promote privatization through "vouchers" and tuition tax credits, and to actually reduce the student population by imposing standardized testing, "core curriculum," and a lower school leaving age.

The truth is that public education is under attack worldwide precisely because it has succeeded in educating people — which is a crime in the eyes of capitalism, a system that cannot provide decent jobs and wages for all, and which fears an educated, critically-minded working class.

But the walkout by Ontario's teachers signaled the beginning of a fightback against the rulers' assault on public education. The strikers were joined by countless supporters.

Thousands of substitute teachers, secretaries, caretakers, adult and night school educators, and other support staff belonging to different unions respected pickets and stayed off the job for two weeks. Over two million students were out of the classroom for the duration.

Many students, joined by parents, other union members, and community residents rallied to the teachers' cause, to fight against government cutbacks and the loss of local democracy and of collective bargaining rights.

Attack on Substitute Teachers
Substitute teachers, members of OPSEU, have an additional objection to Bill 160: union busting. The legislation rips 1600 substitute teachers out of the union we voted to join. Without any consultation, it splits our membership and sends us off into different teacher federations where we will not control our fate, nor be able to keep our issues

and goals at the top of the bargaining agenda.

So we proudly joined the two-week walkout, and continued the struggle one week later with a two-day sit-in at the Minister of Education's office, demanding the right to vote on union affiliation.

The teachers' mass political strike that began on October 27 was unprecedented in its nature, its scope, and its depth of participation. In vain the big business media scoured the province in search of any significant breach in the ranks. Instead, journalists found neighborhood parents making alternative childcare arrangements, and serving soup and sandwiches to picketers. Today, in the wake of the strike, hundreds of thousands of parents and supporters are wearing, and decorating homes and schools, with "apple green" ribbons — as symbols of life, hope, and defiance of the government.

Over 60% Public Support for Strikers

But as the teachers' protest got under way, an utterly amazing scenario took shape. Day after day, public support for the strike grew! Some opinion polls showed over 60% support for the teachers at the end of the first week.

Huge rallies were held in cities across the province, the biggest being 32,000 on October 27 in front of the Ontario Legislature in Toronto. Over 22,000 rallied there again on November 8, despite clear signs then that leaders were preparing a return to work, with Bill 160 still intact.

An important factor in the battle for public support was the media exposure of Education Deputy Minister Veronica Lacey's personal performance contract with the government, which specified her mandate to cut another \$700 million

from education expenditures. Over \$400 million had already been cut by a Tory regime that promised “not to reduce education spending.” This left the Emperor (right-wing Tory Premier Mike Harris) naked in front of the cameras. Support for the Conservatives plummeted to below 30%.

For the job protest, it was still early days, but the Tory government showed signs of increasing frustration and crisis. Quickly they sought a court injunction against the strike. But after two days of hearings, the judge rejected the government’s bid, saying that the teachers acted in good faith and with considerable restraint, no irreparable harm had been done to students or the school program, and that the move to quash the job action was “premature.”

Many teachers, naive and full of faith in the fairness of the capitalist judicial system, would have obeyed a court order—but now they were emboldened to step up the fight against Bill 160. The popular slogan heard at all the rallies, “We Won’t Back Down,” took on new meaning for its participants.

Teachers’ Leaders Wanted Limited Strike

However, denial of the court injunction really caught the teachers’ leaders off guard. They launched the strike very reluctantly. They had to do something to avoid the appearance of capitulation, without a fight. A “limited” strike would make the point, they reasoned, with fingers crossed, hoping for an early exit opportunity. Obedience to a court order could have neatly wrapped up the exercise. Perplexed, they had to regroup.

More and more, the talk on the picket lines, and beyond, was of the need for a province-wide general strike. Teacher leaders discreetly put out disinformation that the Ontario Federation of Labour would not deliver a general shutdown. The OFL leadership then let it be known that the teacher leaders were “not officially asking” for OFL affiliate unions to take job action. Both sets of bureaucrats were happy to lean on each other for excuses to abandon the most successful protest campaign in Ontario history.

Teacher leaders clearly wanted to keep a distance from “Big Labor.” Deep-seated teacher elitism, along with political backwardness in general, was a

large factor here. But leaders always have a choice: to play on such prejudices, or to challenge and try to transcend them.

Initially, the umbrella body, the Ontario Teachers’ Federation, declined even to hold a news conference to announce multi-million dollar donations from various unions. The donor unions leaked the news. Picketers cheered when they heard about it, but still they received no strike pay. Teacher Federation heads argued that since this was not a legal, collective bargaining-type strike, there could be no strike pay. Some said the money should be saved to bail leaders out of jail or pay anticipated heavy fines. Nonetheless, the leaders’ approach looked more like trying to run a strike on the cheap, with no intention of strengthening the membership to fight on for a victory over Bill 160 and the detested Tory government.

Amidst the daily rallies, parent support actions, and favorable media editorials, teacher leaders continued to search and hope for a convenient exit. They knew that there was only one way to take the fight forward, and that would be to generalize and to escalate the struggle—to turn the fight against Bill 160 into a political fight to bring down the Tory government. This they were, and still remain, opposed to doing. Thus, the only alternative for them was to retreat—to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.”

Some teacher unions were more eager than others to quit the fight. Undoubtedly, the elementary teacher unions were the weakest at the start. The secondary school teachers, and the Catholic teachers’ union, were prepared to hold out longer, although the leaders of neither group had the aim of outlasting the government.

Most tellingly, nothing was done to overcome the weaknesses inherited from the different union traditions, membership circumstances, and organizational history. Only the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation held a province-wide membership vote before taking strike action; no top leaders saw the need for a vote before calling off the strike.

Coalition of Teacher Unions Splits

The coalition of five teacher federations split—just hours after a giant rally, replete with militant speeches offering no hint of retreat, in front of the Legislature on November 6.

At a news conference that night, the Federation of Women Teachers of Ontario, the Ontario Public School Teachers Federation (mostly male elementary school principals and vice-principals), and the AEFO French teachers’ organization announced a return to work effective November 10.

In a burst of cynicism, they declared a “moral victory,” stating that the political victory would come at the next election (in two years), and through a court challenge to Bill 160. No vote of members was mentioned.

Education Minister Dave Johnson was visibly relieved, shown grinning from ear to ear on the evening TV newscasts. His opponents had saved him and his government from a deepening chasm.

On the morning of November 7, at a meeting of over 1,000 City of Toronto elementary school teachers, rebellion erupted. Provincial leaders were booed off the stage. Teachers demanded another mass meeting and a vote on the “advice” to return to work. Strikers instantly collected money to rent a hall, when leaders said there was no budget for another meeting.

Similar rebellions occurred in at least four other cities. There were even local moves to disaffiliate from the elementary federations. But by Sunday noon all the federations’ leaders had pulled the plug on the protest, and in the few places where local votes occurred, teachers bitterly approved ending the strike.

“Fear of a Trickle Back”

On November 11, in a speech to the Toronto-based Citizens For Local Democracy, OTF President Eileen Lennon said that the job protest was ended for fear of a “trickle back” of striking members. Given the lack of evidence to this effect, it is probably closer to the truth to say that she was trickling in her boots at the prospect of the escalation of the strike. Public support was still growing, and had the teacher organizations loosened their purse strings a bit to help members, and openly appealed for solidarity strikes by the rest of the labor

movement, there can be little doubt the fight could have proceeded with growing strength.

Going back without a vote was bad; but worse was four out of five unions not holding a vote in the first place. The ranks were not prepared politically for the battle, for its necessary goals and duration. They felt used as cannon fodder in a set-piece, conventional, controlled skirmish — with no result except heightened public awareness of the government's anti-public education agenda, and a palpable demoralization amongst returning teachers.

At this writing, the Tory government is proceeding with passage of Bill 160, despite almost daily mass protest rallies, hostile pickets at Conservative meetings and fund-raising dinners, frequent ejection of hecklers from the Legislature galleries, and a flurry of petitions demanding an immediate election. The movement against Bill 160, like its green ribbon emblem, is active everywhere and still potent. What it lacks, however, is an effective strategy.

Miserable Role of NDP

In this connection, the role of the Ontario New Democratic Party bears some scrutiny. As the party of the labor movement in English Canada, the NDP might be expected (perhaps by those unfamiliar with its recent record) to play a leading part in the fightback. The truth is that the ONDP Leader Howard Hampton advised teachers against going on strike. Hampton urged further conciliation talks, even as the Tories pushed ahead with Bill 160. Once the teachers' strike was under way, Hampton tailed the Liberals throughout, weakly echoing Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty's promise to repeal Bill 160.

The NDP is further hampered by the fact that the Tories are implementing many of the education "reforms" started by the previous NDP government of Bob Rae. The Tories even put in charge of the amalgamation of school boards, and the slashing of school budgets and staff, the former NDP Education Minister Dave Cooke (now co-chair of the government's Education Improvement

Commission). Is it any wonder the NDP remains mired at 16% in the polls in the midst of the biggest labor upsurge and broadest social turmoil seen in Ontario in decades?

Still, the question of defeating Bill 160 and the government is posed. It is hard to separate the two, either from the government's perspective, or that of the working class. Bill 136, which originally would have banned the right to strike for over 400,000 provincial public employees, was gutted after a general strike was threatened by the entire labor movement. But Bill 160 is not just a "tool of extraction." It is the actual cutbacks program of big capital; it is the content, and not just the framework, of a major component of the bosses' offensive. The government will not part with Bill 160 short of a threat to its continued rule. So, to take on Bill 160 is to take on the Harris government — and this is increasingly apparent to many people.

Call for General Strike to Bring Down Tories

Within two days of the end of the teachers' strike, the Ontario Federation of Labor received petitions with the names of 13,000 people demanding a province-wide general strike. The OFL executive agreed to present an Emergency Resolution to the November 24–28 OFL Convention calling for a two-day strike in December. But this is little more than a prescription for letting off steam, as 126,000 teachers discovered after their powerful strike was cut short. A two-day job protest is not a formula for defeating Bill 160, much less bringing down the Tory government. Only an *unlimited general strike*, with the clear demand of removing Bill 160 and forcing an early election, can satisfy the needs and aspirations of the vast majority who want to maintain public education and local democracy.

But there is a further problem: the political vacuum on the left. No mass socialist party exists. Should the Liberals replace the Tories in a provincial election, sooner or later, it can be no better than a replay of the substitution of Jean Chrétien's Liberals for Brian Mul-

rony's Tories in 1993, and the ensuing escalation of the cutbacks at the federal government level.

For teachers, for all workers, for students, seniors, women and oppressed minorities, there must be an alternative. We have no choice but to abstain politically, or fight for an NDP government *committed to a Workers' Agenda*. By this we mean a program that rejects the cuts, that taxes profits and wealth, that restores public services and social rights, an anti-capitalist program that relies on mass action, including support for "illegal" political strikes.

Need for a Vanguard Political Organization

The historic Ontario teachers' strike also demonstrates some other crucial needs. We need to build a political organization that unites the best working class fighters who together are capable of the following:

- raising political class consciousness, combating elitism and division within the working class, and uniting intellectual and manual labor;
- promoting mass action and a socialist alternative to the neo-liberal agenda and its labor collaborators.
- building a class struggle leadership to replace the union bureaucracy and prepare the rank and file to take on Capital and their governments.
- building a mass socialist party by intervening in the broad workers' organizations, and winning over those socialist militants who remain inside the NDP, and those who are the very backbone of the unions all across the country.

To accomplish all that, we need more than a militant rank-and-file caucus, more than a militant trade union — although these would be big advances. We need a revolutionary political organization based on a program of action and an analysis that stands for fundamental change, that stands in opposition to global capitalism and its assault on education and other public institutions, and for a cooperative commonwealth based on democratic workers' control. □

November 23, 1997

The Labor Party, the Trade Union Movement, and Revolutionary Socialists

by Paul Le Blanc

In what follows, I want to offer some critical thoughts about recent experiences in the Labor Party. I do this from the standpoint of a Marxist who has been an active supporter of the general direction that the party has taken. Until the very recent past, I have been immersed in local Labor Party work in Pittsburgh — with things turning out somewhat differently than I had hoped. Here I try to make some sense of the experience, seeking to understand the meaning this has for what people like me should do next.

The impressive founding conference of the Labor Party greatly encouraged many of us who believed that a mass working-class shift toward militant struggle and political independence were the only hope for the reconstitution of a serious revolutionary Left and the eventual cohering of an organized vanguard current that would not simply be a sect. There were some who commented: “Now Tony Mazzocchi has a Labor Party, but the question is what he’s going to do with it.” Others of us strongly believed that the right formulation was: “Now we have a Labor Party. What are we going to do with it?” Instead of building small left-wing groups among whose several dozen or several hundred members an internal universe would flourish in which doctrinal mole hills could be conjured into revolutionary mountains, those of us who were serious about our Marxism could at last throw ourselves into the building of a working-class party with the potential of involving thousands and communicating with millions.

The Orientation of the Labor Party

I think a balance must be struck between those inclined simply to accept whatever its central founder Tony Mazzocchi and those around him say, and those who see their task as “exposing” and defeating these so-called “reformist bureaucrats.” Mazzocchi is by no means an enemy, and he deserves respect for

his courage, his vision, and his insights based on decades of dedicated involvement in the labor movement. But he and those around him have no monopoly on truth and virtue. This was certainly obvious in the original draft of the Labor Party’s political program, which was weak in many areas — especially on questions of race and gender. It seemed to many of us that if the Labor Party was to be real, if it was to have the capacity to survive and grow, then it was necessary for the membership to be able to disagree and to debate differences, with some members able to challenge a weak or mistaken position that might be advanced by Mazzocchi or other party leaders — and able to win majority support to change such a position. The fact that this did, in fact, happen in the pre-convention and convention period deepened our confidence in the future of this Labor Party.

The flawed criticism that the Labor Party must immediately launch an electoral orientation was itself, we felt, a recipe for disaster. The progressive and leftward-moving sectors of the labor movement to which the Labor Party appealed are far from having broken definitively with the Democratic Party, so that a premature electoral orientation would generate divisions among those forces and/or pull the Labor Party into the campaigns of “pro-labor” Democrats. Nor is there yet a sufficient program, an adequate infrastructure, a common resource and experience pool, or a sizable enough base of support for a coherent electoral strategy capable of yielding meaningful victories.

More than this, it is necessary to build the Labor Party in such a way that “political activity” is not defined exclusively or primarily as electoral activity. A period of developing the Labor Party as a vehicle for political activism that does not run candidates would make it a far more muscular, effective, militant and durable force — more capable of mobilizing masses of workers and the oppressed, more capable of keeping our

own candidates “honest” and principled, more capable of challenging the power of our political enemies — than would otherwise be the case. (I will come back to the question of elections near the end of this contribution.)

After the Labor Party convention, the question was nonetheless posed: if not running candidates, specifically what will this new political party do?

Some of us believed that if several dozen labor and radical activists formed Labor Party chapters in at least several cities, working closely with endorsing unions and the party leadership, but also operating creatively and dynamically, it would become possible to begin building a significant organization that would in a few years provide the basis for a genuine Labor Party — one that could engage in non-electoral political work that would have impact on local and national politics while at the same time beginning to elect locally-run Labor Party candidates. Such early Labor Party efforts would blend educational work (forums, conferences, presentations to unions and community groups, leafleting and petitioning) with vigorous labor solidarity work (the local Labor Party would be a vital force in organizing strike support, assistance in union organizing campaigns, etc.), plus research and consultations on how the Labor Party program could be applied to local realities.

To sustain this, it would be necessary to draw people together and get them used to working with each other, at the same time building up a local financial base and organizational infrastructure. This could be accomplished by defining and engaging in a modest number of “do-able” projects: relatively short-term projects with a beginning, a middle, and an end, with relatively visible indicators of “success.”

Practical Problems of the Metro Pittsburgh Labor Party

In Pittsburgh, on the basis of a special half-day membership meeting (which took place after extensive consultation

among a core group), the Labor Party members more or less guided by this perspective agreed on several efforts as a focus for the period December 1996 to June 1997:

1. development of a democratic, participatory structure based on regular monthly membership meetings (to be built and also followed up by informative mailings to members and supporters) and an active committee structure;
2. ongoing efforts to support Health Care Workers District 1199-P in its struggle with Beverley Enterprises (turning to other labor solidarity efforts once this struggle was won);
3. the organization of several monthly public Labor Party meetings with an educational and outreach component;
4. sending Labor Party spokespeople to address meetings of several community organizations and local unions about the nature of and need for the Labor Party;
5. the securing, setting up, and volunteer staffing of a local Labor Party office (which would be done on a short-term "trial" basis as a device to help centralize resources and increase visibility of the Labor Party);
6. organizing a local, or perhaps even a regional, Labor Party educational conference with national and local speakers plus workshops that would attract local progressive activists and trade unionists;
7. participating in whatever central campaign might be developed by the national Labor Party (which turned out to be the 28th Amendment campaign);
8. working systematically to secure regular monthly financial sustainers (ranging from about \$5 to \$50 per month) among a growing percentage of local Labor Party members;
9. working seriously to increase the number of Labor Party members;
10. participating at least on a modest level in certain local political activities (such as an anti-racism conference, a petition and referendum campaign for a police civilian review board, etc.).

Any balanced evaluation, while raising a number of critical points, would have to acknowledge that significant

accomplishments resulted from each of these efforts. But this was accompanied by a fundamental and ongoing questioning of the feasibility or value of many of these efforts. The goal of enhancing the cohesion and morale of the local Labor Party was seriously undermined. Rather than projecting a confident and unified party-building orientation, valuing and building upon the accomplishments, and utilizing them to draw an increased membership into a forward-moving momentum, members of the chapter's core group (roughly speaking, steering committee members and those most active in other committees) found themselves at odds with each other. Consequently, certain of the more active individuals drew back, at least somewhat, and others mapped out a reorientation for the post-June 1997 period that, in practical terms, had the effect of drastically reducing the level of the chapter's activity.

As of late October there seems to be a general consensus that the stick has bent too far back away from regularized activities necessary to maintain serious membership involvement in the Labor Party. Discussions are under way to establish a new balance. Still, it is unlikely that the earlier relatively ambitious orientation will animate the Metro Pittsburgh Labor Party in this period.

What accounts for this development? It would, of course, be possible to construct an explanation based on an analysis of individual mistakes, various personality flaws, etc. (Naturally, each person might feel that his or her own were less severe than those of others.) But such things are always present, regardless of whether an organization is doing poorly or well, so that in the end focusing on such stuff does not tell us much. In reaching for a more serious explanation, it is not possible for me to do more than offer some impressionistic notes, educated guesses, and unfinished analytical reflections. For what they are worth, here they are.

There were no clear political-ideological differences between members of the chapter's core group. There were no differences on the Labor Party program, on the question of deferring electoral activity, on the central importance of unions to the Labor Party, the importance of race and gender issues, etc. Rather, there was a conflict between

a specific practical orientation (outlined above) and an often unclearly expressed dissatisfaction with that orientation (vaguely defined tactical differences mixed with divergences in mood, minor abrasions in style, fairly small-scale personality clashes). But what did this mean?

In the half-day membership meeting that mapped out the December-to-June orientation, a challenge was put forward that went something like this: "In order to do what needs to be done to make the Labor Party real, a number of us are going to have to change our lives. Not wreck our lives — which is the effect of some left-wing groups, demanding overly intense and almost inhuman commitments from their members — not wreck our lives, but change our lives. We will have to restructure our time commitments — not with meetings every night, but some of us certainly with one or two commitments every week (in some cases even more), and for others two or three times a month. To do what needs to be done, we must change our lives."

It seems to me that many were not willing (were not inspired) to change their lives. There was an underlying and increasingly conscious skepticism, agnosticism, and irritation in regard to some of the activist projects (and perhaps toward those associated with them). But the question remains — why was there this lack of inspiration, this lack of confidence in the group's projects, the inspiration and confidence that would be necessary to change one's life? This is by no means a moral judgment. It suggests that there may have been a lack of realism in the initial appeal against which some were reacting.

One reason could be found in the absence of a clear, persuasive, energetic national Labor Party orientation. (The 28th Amendment campaign involves making long-term educational points — unlikely to generate immediate struggles.) Related to this — and a fundamental reason which will be discussed at length — is the absence of a national surge toward independent politics by the bulk of the labor movement. Before discussing this further, an additional point should be taken up.

A Note on Vanguard Organizations

It could be argued that one important missing ingredient in Pittsburgh, which could have significantly altered the chemistry of the situation, was a left-wing vanguard organization to supply disciplined members organized around a coherent and collectively developed political orientation. Functioning intelligently and sensitively, such a disciplined current could perhaps ensure a consistency and purposefulness that might have positively affected the Metro Pittsburgh chapter as a whole. While organizations such as Solidarity and Committees of Correspondence (which have members in our chapter) have failed even to aspire toward playing such a role, others such as the Communist Party in some chapters, the Labor Militant group in other chapters, and a myriad of competing groups in yet others have sought to do so, with results that are sometimes problematical.

It has seemed to some of us that a healthy (as opposed to sectarian) revolutionary vanguard organization can only come into being as part of a mass working-class movement, such as the Labor Party may some day (but does not yet) represent. This would seem to mean, almost by definition, that it is unlikely that such a healthy vanguard group could exist to play such a positive role in the Labor Party now. In any event, such a group has not existed to help the Metro Pittsburgh chapter overcome the dilemma discussed here.

The Role of Trade Unions in the Labor Party

We are brought back to the impact of the absence of a clear sense of direction coming from the national Labor Party. There was some contact with Tony Mazzocchi, with Ed Bruno, and with others some of it positive and helpful, but none of it giving a clear sense of direction. There is a sense, instead, similar to that of treading water. Perhaps this is because the bulk of the unions the only self-conscious mass organizations of the working class in the U.S., representing an essential concentration of resources and potential energy are not ready to commit themselves to the idea (let alone the work and risks) of building a Labor Party. It may be that

this is unlikely to happen until a massive labor upsurge comes into unambiguous collision with the capitalist political parties.

There is an additional complexity in this intricate equation. The deepening of the present radicalization of the unions may contribute decisively to the creation of a Labor Party, but some of the most perceptive revolutionary theorists (Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky) have warned against allowing a working-class political party to be simply the electoral tail of the trade unions. A conservative dynamic is necessarily inherent in even the best of radicalized unions which if they are to be durable in our present form of society must accept capitalism and, within that context of acceptance, have as their central concern what Rosa Luxemburg called the labor of Sisyphus: rolling up a mountain the boulder of better wages, shorter hours, and improved working conditions which, sooner or later and inevitably, will be pushed back down by the capitalist law of gravity. She would have agreed with Lenin's distinction between trade union consciousness and revolutionary working-class consciousness, as well as his insistence that those representing a working-class party should function not in the manner of a trade union secretary but as a tribune of the people. She would have agreed with Trotsky's 1940 observations about the immense, all-pervasive pressures in the 20th century to integrate the trade unions into governmental policies and a state apparatus designed to perpetuate the capitalist system. (See the pamphlet *Leon Trotsky on the Trade Unions*, New York: Pathfinder, 1969)

Of course, there are other aspects essential to trade unionism, such as that reflected in the comment by V.R. Dunne, leader of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strike: Our policy was to organize and build strong unions so workers could have something to say about their lives and assist in changing the present order into a socialist society. Yet even radicalizing sectors of the union movement of the 1930s were often inclined to be backward on vital matters: often reflecting and reinforcing traditional biases and discrimination against women, against African Americans and other oppressed groups; sometimes inattentive to the needs of the unemployed; etc. It was necessary for

struggles and ideas to develop outside of the trade union context through an independent Black liberation movement, through an independent feminist movement, through an independent unemployed movement, and through a left-wing political movement (of which Dunne and many others were part) in order to influence and revitalize (radicalize) the trade union movement itself. In the absence of these outside influences and pressures, the conservative dynamics necessarily tend to become predominant.

While there cannot be a genuine Labor Party which has no base of support in the unions, any notion that this party should be simply the electoral expression of the trade unions is a recipe for a relatively conservative institution. We need a mass working-class party that has a vibrant and democratic internal life, in which a broad and diverse range of working-class members (non-unionized as well as unionized) discuss, debate, decide on, and carry out their party's policies and activities. Past experience of working-class parties such as the Social Democratic Party in Germany and the Labor Party in Britain suggests the danger of doing things otherwise. In both cases, the fact that union members enrolled in the party through their unions naturally gave the unions (representing a huge bloc of votes inside the party) immense authority in party councils. Often the bulk of the unionized party members did not actively participate in the internal debates of the party (over whether more radical or more conservative policies should be pursued) but when the voting came the union leaders would often weigh in decisively to cast their bloc of votes for conservatism. This contributed to both parties moving in the direction of a debilitating class collaborationism and in 1914, for example, to a pragmatic and disastrous embrace of imperialist war.

Fortunately, there is much more to the nature of unions than this. They are organic and elemental expressions of significant working-class layers organized for their own self-defense, constituting an absolutely necessary element in the development of working-class consciousness and struggle. In our own embryonic Labor Party there have been many examples of self-appointed revo-

lutionary “spokespeople” with little understanding of how to communicate with most workers and with even less understanding of the practical realities of serious political organizing. The predominant influence of progressive trade unionists, intimately connected with masses of organized workers, has been essential in preventing the Labor Party from being turned into a marginalized exercise in “leftist” futility. More than this, it has sometimes been unions — in Canada, in Britain, in Germany, in France, in Italy — that have been bulwarks of class-struggle resistance to technocratic “modernizers” and disoriented opportunists infesting the leaderships of working-class parties in one or another country.

The point is that we cannot afford to have a simplistic conception of trade unions. They are absolutely essential for the self-defense and the political development of the working class, and they are a necessary component of any serious working-class political party. They by no means constitute the dragon of “reformist bureaucracy,” but neither are they necessarily a St. George of proletarian virtue. They must be supplemented, but not just supplemented: they must be balanced in dynamic interaction, within a healthy labor party, by other working-class components that will help the party be inclusive, internally democratic and forward-moving.

While recognizing that trade unions are not a panacea for all Labor Party problems, we are left with this fundamental problem: not enough unions are prepared to become part of the Labor Party at the present time, and this severely limits what the Labor Party will be able to do and what it will be able to be.

What To Do Next As Labor Party Activists

While it is not the case that revolutionary socialists should abandon or minimize the Labor Party, it is also not the case that the Labor Party can or should be the primary practical focus of our energies and attention. In fact, purely Labor Party activity should not be the primary focus of Labor Party members in general. There isn’t “enough of it” for that — it isn’t able, at this time, to be broad enough or strong enough to carry the load of leading the class struggle for-

ward. Its ability to do that will be dependent on broader struggles and working-class experience developing outside of the Labor Party — deepening class-struggle experience and class consciousness, creating the preconditions for further Labor Party growth. We must involve ourselves in such struggles and experiences in order to help our class move forward and also to advance the conditions which will be necessary for the political independence, hegemony, and coming-to-power of the working class (which is what the Labor Party is all about).

Dramatic changes are taking place within the unions and within the AFL-CIO as a whole which create exciting new opportunities. One major focus of our activity in this period should be to help advance the “Union Cities” campaign of the AFL-CIO, helping to revitalize and strengthen central labor councils in cities throughout the country. In conjunction with this, we should be especially active in building support for strikes and union organizing, as well as in projects and activities that help to build bridges between the labor movement, other progressive social movements, and the larger community. There is also work to do (and fun to be had) in the educational, cultural, and social activity that will be part of this revitalization.

Open Labor Party members should be in the thick of such efforts, and Labor Party chapters should be seen as vehicles for helping mobilize activists to enhance the success of such activity. With hard work and luck, this will create conditions in which the Labor Party can grow into the vital political force that we want to see.

A Final Thought on the Question of Elections

The primary question that has been the focus of much left-wing discussion of the Labor Party seems to be that of elections. I have already addressed this, but I have one final thought to share. For comrades to make this a focal point of their “intervention” in the Labor Party will not — I am convinced — be fruitful for the Labor Party or for those who want to see that party develop as an electoral force. More than this, given the realities of the present-day Labor Party discussed above, such an approach

would betray a lack of seriousness about the proposed electoral action.

If there are comrades who believe that an independent labor candidate could win or at least could make an impressive enough showing to positively affect political realities where they live, they can and should work to bring about such independent labor victories. Such victories do not have to be won under the official banner of the Labor Party, even if they are fully supported by all or most Labor Party members in one or another locale. Such victories will do far, far more to win the Labor Party to an electoral strategy than either super-militant or super-friendly polemics on the question with Tony Mazzocchi and other national Labor Party leaders.

To concentrate on the polemics rather than on actually building the independent labor electoral alternative means that you don’t take the electoral work (or the Labor Party) seriously enough. This will mean that you will probably not be taken that seriously among many of the more substantial currents in the Labor Party.

Concluding Comments on Revolutionary Socialist Organization

Those of us who are revolutionary socialists face a dilemma already mentioned. It is important to involve ourselves in such work as outlined here, and also in developing and sharing with others a Marxist analysis of problems of society and paths forward. But how do we best organize ourselves to do such activist, analytical, and educational work?

The problem with existing socialist organizations (whether explicitly “vanguardist” or not) is their tendency to draw their members’ attention, energies, and sensibilities into creating and sustaining competing little organizational universes that are more or less separate and apart from the life, experience and real struggles of the working class. We should seek vehicles that will encourage collaboration (regardless of organizational boundaries or past affiliations) in practical work and political discussion as we engage in the collective project of understanding and changing the world. At the present time, in addition to working together on the kinds of activities

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Comments on the Labor Party, the Unions, and the Present Situation: In Response to Paul Le Blanc

by Frank Lovell

Note: This article was written before "Black Monday" (November 17), the day of the government's disqualification of Ron Carey as a candidate in his own union, and the accompanying intensification of the corporate-government-media offensive against Carey and other AFL-CIO leaders, which has significantly altered the situation, requiring attention to the question of defending the union leaders—a question not addressed in the exchange between Paul Le Blanc and Frank Lovell, because events had not yet posed that problem in all its present urgency.

Paul Le Blanc's article "Labor Party, the Trade Union Movement, and Revolutionary Socialists" raises most of the questions that today cry out for answers. I think he is on the right track. My purpose here is to follow along and add my own observations. I have used subheads parallel to those in his article.

"The Orientation of the Labor Party"

I suppose many LP members (probably a rather small minority of those who have joined and pay the annual \$20 membership fee) have more or less clear ideas about what they would like the Labor Party to become. The majority (I assume without poll results to show) is content to hope that the labor party will eventually evolve into a third party (something like the Republican and Democratic parties, but different in that this party will represent workers and poor people, as promised) that will challenge the present two-party political system and bring about some long-overdue changes.

I think this is an accurate description of the present political consciousness of the working class in this country. This is why the voter turnout has steadily declined most of this decade. And I think this trend is likely to continue until what appears to be a viable alternative shows up in the electoral arena. (Ross Perot's organization was an attempt to fill this electoral vacuum.)

The question here is the perennial one: what is needed to speed up the growth of the labor party? Will a more clearly defined orientation help? Should the Labor Party orient more to the Black community and other minorities? Should it direct more attention to (and try to identify more with) the special

needs of working women? Does such specific orientation necessarily conflict with the more general orientation to the union movement?

Earlier this year *Monthly Review* (No. 9, February 1997) carried an article on the future of the union movement by Michael D. Yates.

He wrote that "there is a deep-seated anger burning in the hearts of millions of people," and he thought at the time that this pent-up anger, which finds expression in conflicting ideologies, can be satisfied and redirected if the labor movement will "once again" provide a refuge for those angry millions who seek to strike out against the system.

Yates had an idea about how this will (or can) happen. He said, "there must be a labor *movement*, one prepared to challenge capital on the level of emotions. Such a movement *must* embrace all elements of the working class, including the unemployed and those outside of the wage labor force. And it *must* be concerned with the totality of life, from the family to the schools to the workplace to the culture. It *must* be unabashedly egalitarian and democratic. It *must* be prepared to give people a way to think, that is, it *must* have and agitate for an ideology, and this ideology *must* be anti-capitalist and willing to support not just militant union actions but also new ways of organizing production."

Revolutionary socialists have long advocated such an approach. But how will such a labor movement (an ideal labor movement) come into being? Who will create it? I don't want to disparage or discourage Professor Yates. I am happy to see such a vision of the future in print. But our task is to find ways and seek allies to help bring about these

desirable changes in the union movement.

I know there is, at this moment, a social process at work which is transforming the union movement. I saw the open manifestation and tangible results of this process at the 1995 AFL-CIO convention in New York. At that time the union movement chose a new leadership and embarked on a new course which challenged the anti-labor campaign of the employing class. At the AFL-CIO convention in Pittsburgh this year I had an opportunity to witness some changes that resulted, in part, from the activities of the new leadership during the past two years. (Some of this is reviewed in my report in *BIDOM*, November-December 1997.) I believe the class struggle is now beginning, once again, to find expression in open battles.

Unlike the recent past period (1976–1995) the union movement now has some experienced combat generals and is recruiting and mobilizing troops. I don't think what happens next can be predicted. The UPS strike was an example of solidarity and militancy on the part of ill-treated UPS workers. But the strike also received solid support from union allies, Blacks and other minorities; and from broad sectors of the middle class, professionals and small business people.

The next big test will come, I think, with the Teamster freight contract and the challenge of the trucking industry. Each side is marshalling its forces. (The sustained attack on Carey is part of the industry preparation for the coming showdown, and the Teamsters union is limited to what can be done to educate and mobilize the membership through the union apparatus, which is sluggish

and contains corrupt and disruptive remnants of the old guard.)

This brief reference to changes in the union movement may seem like a diversion from our discussion about “the orientation of the labor party.” But I believe the transformation of the union movement and the evolution of the labor party are closely related, part of the same social process that is drastically changing the material conditions of our lives, and the composition as well as the consciousness of the working class.

The Labor Party Leaders’ Approach

I have been a Mazzocchi partisan from the beginning — not only because he had the good sense to find out what the members of his union thought about the need for a labor party; but because he was the first to begin thinking in a practical way about how to organize a labor party. At the time it appeared to be an insuperable task. Nonetheless, Mazzocchi and his associates in OCAW proceeded step by step to explore the ground and gather whatever supporters they could. And in the course of this activity they succeeded in educating new people and managed to construct a skeletal organization (Labor Party Advocates).

The central task (as they saw it) was to win official union endorsement of the idea. It is true, they proceeded cautiously (not complicating their task by introducing a long list of goals to be achieved) and they proceeded methodically. That is, they kept probing (looking for opportunities to meet with local union officials and appearing whenever and wherever they could get invited to public meetings to explain the need for a labor party based on the union movement), and after five years they managed to get enough resources together to hold the founding convention in Cleveland last year.

That was a very big accomplishment, exceeding all expectations. And out of this came the very fragile organizational structure that exists today. But they continue to try to expand. The state conventions in Ohio and New York are examples of this expansion effort. I don’t know to what extent Mazzocchi took the initiative in calling these conventions, but I do know that he has not put obstacles in the way. It would have been very

easy for him to block the New York convention if he had chosen to do so.

Likewise at the founding convention. When some delegations proposed language in support of the special needs of minorities and women this was readily agreed to by Mazzocchi and other convention organizers. So I took this as a sign of their caution, being careful to concentrate their main attention on the need to ensure a firm union base.

But it also demonstrated that they are not locked into a schematic approach as to what *ought* to be. They have stated repeatedly that their organizational approach is to feel their way, try and discover at each step what the membership is prepared to accept and to what extent it is prepared to act. In the current case of state organizations in Ohio and New York, these structures will prove useful in so far as they succeed in attracting broader union support (more local union endorsements) and greater participation by secondary union officials and individual union members.

It seemed to me that the “program” that came out of the Ohio convention (a ten-point propaganda plan as I remember; see Jean Tussey for copies) is a realistic set of proposals that can be implemented if there is (or can be generated) the necessary will and personnel. (I made several copies of the Ohio document and distributed them among delegates to the New York State convention. We will see what happens.)

This Ohio document is not *essentially* different from the very modest and practical steps adopted by the Pittsburgh metro chapter for the period December 1996 to June 1997, as outlined in Le Blanc’s article. This approach to building the labor party seems to me entirely correct in both instances. Any different approach is unrealistic, but frequently advocated by self-styled radicals and other inexperienced people.

It is to Mazzocchi’s credit that all manner of schemes to build the Labor Party are entertained at leadership conferences, membership meetings, and conventions. I don’t think this is a cynical “show of democracy” (as some say). It is a necessary learning process, part of the education of a labor party leadership. A capable leadership can develop only by learning how to handle all kinds of complex situations and being able to

explain what needs to be done. (I think we ought to remind ourselves when we think or talk about “what needs to be done” that the problem is what needs to be done *now*, not some time in the future.)

Use What We Can

I have to take time out here for a story that is meant to illustrate what this means. It is about a couple of hobos. The hobos before World War I and into the 1920s were a subculture of migrant workers (tinkers, day laborers, craftsmen, philosophers, and poets). They were homeless, always on the move, traveling by rail (“riding the rods”) from one “jungle” to another, usually near a railroad division point where fresh water was available and fuel (coal and wood) for bathing and cooking. These two hobos woke up early one morning with the coals of the jungle fire smoldering, nearly burned out. One said, “If we had some eggs we could stir up this fire, throw on some wood chips, and have fried eggs.” And the other said, “Yeah. And if we had some ham, we could have ham and eggs.”

They decided that to satisfy their appetites, each would go his separate way into the nearby town to scrounge for handouts, maybe to return to the jungle. But they weren’t particular about what they could get. Ham and eggs would be good, but so would potatoes and turnips and some beets. They were looking for something to eat, if not ham and eggs, then something, anything, for the jungle stew.

And so it is with trying to build the labor party, anything that adds materially to the party’s resources (organizational, financial, human, and ideological) is good. But wishing for it is no good. What must be done is go out and scrounge. It seems to me that this is what Mazzocchi and his supporters have been doing as best they could from the beginning.

What Are the Roots of Current Malaise?

Le Blanc writes that on the Pittsburgh metro LP chapter, “It seemed to me that many were not willing (were not inspired) to change their lives. There was an underlying and increasingly conscious skepticism, agnosticism, and irritation in regard to some of the activist

projects (and perhaps toward those associated with them)." This happens in all organizations, especially small voluntary organizations, and surmounting such conflicts (trying to understand their causes, finding ways to resolve them) is the challenge (and the art) of leadership. (This is something I have always admired and respected in others, recognizing my own deficiencies.) Others have written to me recently that the same dispirited attitudes and debilitating squabbles plague their LP chapters.

Sometimes it seems as if only a magician can make these discouraging situations disappear and let in light. But there must be rational explanations (not rationalizations). I thought Le Blanc was beginning to dig at the roots of this surface malaise, this growing dissatisfaction and general disgruntlement, when he wrote: "But the question remains — *why* was there this lack of inspiration, this lack of confidence in the group's projects, the inspiration and confidence that would be necessary to change one's life."

We don't know the answer to this question. In some respects the answer is different in each particular situation. But I think that *in general* it is hard for activists in most LP chapters to find ways to get started on their carefully planned projects. They become frustrated. We decided to recruit 10 new members and we haven't yet, after a month (or two months) recruited the first one. What's wrong?

I think what's wrong is the lack of rewarding activity. Different chapters have several kinds of activity (strike support actions, literature sales, fund raiser events, protest meetings and public discussions, an occasional lecture on independent political action, petition drives for the 28th amendment, etc.), but none of this redounds to the immediate benefit of the chapter in the form of new members. We see the same faces (and listen to the same talk) each time the LP has a meeting. The only change we see is fewer people turning up.

We can talk about the urgent need for a revolutionary vanguard organization to spark LP activity, as some do. I agree with your "note on vanguard organization," that a vanguard is essential to the organization and education of the working class and that a "revolutionary van-

guard organization can only come into being as part of a mass working-class movement." But doesn't this beg the question? There is no revolutionary vanguard organization. Neither is there, as yet, a mass working-class movement except in its latent form within the AFL-CIO. The question for us, Is what do revolutionary socialists do at this juncture?

The Role of Trade Unions in the Labor Party

Le Blanc has several paragraphs on "The Role of Trade Unions in the Labor Party," which are interesting and may be useful in future discussions. But I think this is for the future and its usefulness will depend upon how the unions develop and what changes occur in the consciousness of the working class.

I am convinced that very deep changes are going on within the class, but how these will work out and what the effect will be on the unions and the emerging labor party remains unknown, and I don't believe speculation is useful. I doubt that there are many precedents for what is likely to happen. After the event, when the course of development become clearer, we may look back and find precedents.

Unexpected developments are common. "History is full of surprises," as the saying goes. In the early days after the Russian Revolution the Norwegian Labor Party affiliated to the Communist International, but that didn't mean that it was a Bolshevik organization or that its leadership was revolutionary Marxist. Some might say this was an "accident of history." If so, it certainly was not the first — or the last.

I agree with Le Blanc's last paragraph on this subject: "While recognizing that trade unions are not a panacea for all Labor Party problems, we are left with this fundamental problem: *not enough* unions are prepared to become part of the Labor Party at the present time, and that severely limits what the Labor Party will be able to do and what it will be able to be." Is there anything we can to convince more unions to join up?

"What To Do Next As Labor Party Activists"

Le Blanc's section, "What To Do Next As Labor Party Activists," is helpful in

directing attention to changes in the AFL-CIO, especially the "Union Cities" project. This may be something that local Labor Party chapters can participate in, but I doubt that much can be done initially. We may have more luck as individuals in the transformation of the central labor bodies (however that occurs, if indeed it does) than we would have as Labor Party members trying to help out in the transition process.

Our task, it seems to me, in this kind of activity is to become acquainted with secondary union officials and activists whom we can convince to join the Labor Party and get their local unions to officially endorse it. But this is slow work and doesn't quickly change the lethargic character of the LP chapter. The big changes in the character of these chapters that we look for will come about as a result of developments within the unions (strikes and job actions and run-ins with the government and police) that will convince broad sectors of the unions' memberships that changes in the social system are badly needed and that they can bring about these changes. In other words, further working class radicalization.

Comments on Revolutionary Socialist Organization

I don't want to stop on this fatalistic note. Le Blanc's "Concluding Comments on Revolutionary Socialist Organization" are much better. He writes, "We should seek vehicles that will encourage collaboration (regardless of organizational boundaries or past affiliation) in practical work and political discussion as we engage in the collective project of understanding and changing the world." Agreed. How do we start doing this? (Aside from and in addition to our efforts to regularly publish *BIDOM*.)

For the past couple years I have been harping away on the need to establish a Weekly Labor Party Forum here in New York. My problem is I haven't yet been able to find a centrally located union hall for this project, and I haven't found much enthusiasm for the project among members of the New York metro chapter. Among the few academics I have approached there has been ready agreement and promises to participate if and when the project materializes. It remains an idea. (And for me a hope.)

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A Conference on the Russian Revolution: Part One

by Paul Le Blanc

Part Two will appear in our next issue.

In the Communist-controlled Parisian suburb of St-Denis, at the radical campus of the University of Paris VIII, an international colloquium dealing with the Russian Revolution was held on November 14–16, 1997. Entitled “Octobre 17: causes, impacts, prolongements,” it involved about 200 participants mostly from France, but with a substantial contingent from Russia, as well as representatives from Poland, Hungary, Spain, Italy, Britain, Senegal, Argentina, Cuba, Canada and the United States.

The primary organizer of this conference was Espaces Marx (Marx Spaces), a substantial institute that is funded by the French Communist Party (PCF), produces scholarly magazines, and organizes conferences. What is new about the institute is that it has opened its Board of Directors to a broad range of non-CP representatives: various independent Marxists, as well as some who are associated with the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), a substantial Trotskyist group that is the French section of the Fourth International: Gilbert Achcar, Janette Habel, Michael Löwy, Catherine Samary.

Additional sponsors (besides Espaces Marx) included departments of the University of Paris VIII and the University of Bourgogne, the Ernest Mandel Center in Belgium, and the International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam, as well as a number of scholarly and political journals.

Context and Relevance

The conference took place in a larger context in France in which — thanks to a dramatic upsurge in the class struggle — a right-wing government with a “cut social programs” policy has recently been replaced by a reformist-oriented left-wing governmental coalition of the Socialist and Communist parties.

But the right wing is fighting back. They are utilizing a recently-published *Black Book on Communism*, collectively authored by a number of anti-Communist scholars, whose theme is that Leninism rivals Hitlerism. In the words of two of the volume’s authors (in a *Le Monde* column appearing the day the conference opened), “if one scans the history of Communism, one sees a limitless mass crime,” and “Communism in power is everywhere anti-democratic and repressive,” and “on each page [of their book] there is a retrieval of Communism’s bloody essence, one, indivisible and eternal.” Brandishing this new bestseller, conservative newspaper columnists and right-wingers in France’s National Assembly wielded the weapon in an effort to knock apart the coalition of their enemies.

On the day before the conference began, Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin responded by going before the National Assembly to defend the record of his Communist allies. “I never put an equal sign between Nazism and Communism or Marxism,” he declared. Recalling the French Communist Party’s role in the Popular Front of the 1930s and the anti-Nazi Resistance during World War II, he concluded: “The PCF never raised a hand against French liberties. They have condemned Stalinism and learned the lessons of their history. They are represented in my government and I’m proud of it.”

At the same time, another prominent Socialist Party member (a representative in the Chamber of Deputies and ex-Trotskyist Henri Weber) wrote a *Le Monde* column denouncing the Bolshevik Revolution: “An ultra-minority in the country, the Bolsheviks could only, indeed, impose their rule by violence,” and “in place of the ‘withering away of the state’ and ‘direct democracy of workers councils,’ promised by Lenin, the October revolution resulted in an oriental despotism.” Respectfully citing Karl Kautsky, the “pope of Marxism” and anti-Bolshevik theorist of the German Social Democratic party, he explained that “Leninism incarnated a regressive adaptation of Marxism to the backwardness of the Russian proletariat.” Kautsky and Weber saw Lenin as a “Blanquist,” having more to do with Auguste Blanqui, the advocate of a minority coup d’etat, than with Karl Marx, the advocate of popular working-class struggle and socialist democracy.

Such a context suggests that the topic of the conference was not simply of academic interest. The topics of the various sessions seemed designed to address many of the issues that were in the center of recent, current, and probably future political controversies. The first was entitled “The Revolution: Coup d’Etat or Popular Movement?” and the second posed the question: “The System: Was Its Collapse Inevitable?” A third session focused on “The World Impact,” and an evening sessions took up “French Political and Social Forces in the Mirror of October 1917.” The second day of the conferences consisted of two sets of rival workshops that were to focus on the following topics: in the morning, “The Revolution: Political Strategies”; “The System: The Period of the 1920s and the Genesis of Stalinism”; “The Global Impact: Europe” — and in the afternoon, “The Revolution: Emancipation and Cultural Revolution”; “The System: The Model and Its Crisis”; “The Global Impact: In the Countries of the South.”

Difficulties, Conflicts, Achievements

The conference was not able to achieve the level of scholarly breadth or even intellectual coherence to which it obviously aspired. There were many important figures who were not present, and who apparently were not invited. Participants from “third world” countries could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Although a number of women have done important work on the Russian Revolution (from the U.S. among the important social historians of modern Russia are Victoria Bonnell, Diane Koenker, Laura Engelstein, Rose Glickman, Heather Hogan, Wendy Goldman, Sheila Fitzpatrick), the number of women making presentations was barely more than half a dozen — and none of those just named. For that matter, none of the prominent male U.S. social historians of the Russian Revolution (Ronald Suny, Allan Wildman, Rex Wade, Reginald Zelnik, Richard Stites, Alexander Rabinowitch, William Rosenberg, Lewis Siegelbaum, William Chase, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, etc.) were present. Also, due to conceptual limitations and faulty publicity, only a small percentage of people attending the conference were under the age of thirty years old. Nor were these the only problems.

It has been said that a camel is a horse that has been designed by a committee. This conference was obviously designed by a very special committee: consequently it had four humps, a splendid giraffe-like neck, and seven legs (although one of its hoofs had a tendency sometimes to fall off). Apparently the great majority of the many speakers who were invited actually agreed to come — to the surprise of the conference organizers. So there were too many speakers, close to one-fourth of conference participants, with between six and ten panelists in each session. Because there was no direction given to the speakers on specific focuses for their presentations, there was an impossibly diverse range of topics, and some of the topics related only very loosely to the topic of the session into which they were inserted. At the last minute, some of the panelists (most of whom had prepared 20-to-30-minute talks) were told they would have only ten minutes for their presentations, but since this newly established time limit was generally ignored, there was little time for audience discussion.

Yet the quality of some (hardly all) of the contributions was relatively high. And the political diversity of the participants, and fluidity of the larger context, generated interesting confrontations. The Russian “new leftist” Boris Kagarlitsky suggested, in an informal discussion during the conference, that the collapse of the USSR now meant that there was really little difference between those coming from the Trotskyist and Stalinist traditions. But this was not evident in the formal discussion. There was — in fact — some diversity even within these two currents.

Among the “Stalinists,” there were some who sounded like Social Democrats, some who sought to separate the revolutionary character of Lenin from the authoritarian and murderous dynamic of Stalin, some who adhered rather mechanically to stilted old conceptions and jargon, some who were earnestly searching for new answers but with no clear perspectives, and one elderly veteran of the French CP who — bristling with an icy righteousness — offered from the audience a defense of Stalinist practice and a contemptuous dis-

missal of its detractors, to the apparent discomfort of some of his comrades.

More representative was Bernard Frederick (a writer for the Communist daily *l'Humanité*), who argued that the history of the Russian revolution “cannot be reduced to a history simply of mistakes or successes.” He noted that “today we’re living through a criminalization of Communism,” and in the conference discussions some participate in the criminalization, others seek to deny the crimes, and yet others assert that “it doesn’t concern us because we weren’t involved in the crimes.” On the other hand, a focus on mistakes “leads to polemics on who’s responsible.” Similarly, an a priori notion of what socialism or communism are supposed to be “distorts our understanding of what actually happened and leads to debates rather than objective discussion.” He asked earnestly: “Shouldn’t we try to overcome such debates?” Instead of polemics, “we need to go forward with a Marxist analysis, centering in on the contradictions and developments.”

In a somewhat similar vein, Francis Cohen (a prominent figure in *Espaces Marx*) emphasized that what was being discussed were not abstractions but rather the lived experience of people who had struggled creatively to bring about a better world — the realities they experienced blending immense optimism and enthusiasm with terrible repression which crushed initiatives and lives. He urged that in seeking to comprehend the past as well as to deal with the future, “we need to elaborate new concepts to deal with the new realities of our time, and to avoid overused and abused old concepts.”

The Trotskyists also offered a range of styles and perspectives. Some were relatively predictable: Paul Le Blanc of the U.S. defending the Leninist party, or Livio Maitan of Italy insisting that the methodology of Antonio Gramsci was closer to that of Lenin and Trotsky than it was to either that of Stalin or of the Euro-Communists. Some sought to emphasize — with passion and sophistication — what appear to have been previously agreed-upon points: a defense of the revolutionary Marxist tradition associated with October 1917; a rejection of Social Democratic reformism; an insistence that Stalinism represents not a “deviation” but a counter-revolution, a fundamental rupture with Bolshevik tradition; a suggestion — despite relatively minor self-criticisms — that Trotsky’s views continue to have relevance.

Yet some strayed from these points, and in the case of Gilbert Achcar strayed very far indeed. Achcar, to the surprise of some of his comrades, argued that the October Revolution contained elements of both a popular revolution and a coup-d’etat, charging that the Bolsheviks had been manipulative, ultra-centralized, and substitutionist. He argued that both Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg had made the same good Marxist criticisms of the Bolsheviks (when challenged, he insisted that the political positions of these two were basically the same — with Luxemburg being more correct on World War I and Kautsky being more correct on the Russian Revolution), making positive reference to Henri Weber’s *Le Monde* article — although chiding his former comrade that while it is correct to say that Marxism doesn’t inevitably lead to Bolshevism, it is also the case that it doesn’t inevitably lead to Social Democracy.

The panel in which Achcar was involved — one of the most contentious — will be discussed in greater detail in a second

report. But it provided space for the expression of interpretations and the clash of ideas that helped make the conference a stimulating and valuable event, adding to the clarification of political perspectives, despite its limitations. The international character of the colloquium, while not as broad as one might have wished, also contributed an invaluable richness to the discussion (which was carried on, through simultaneous translation provided by people connected with the International Institute of Research and Education, in French, English and Russian).

It should be emphasized here that all presentations and remarks cited in this report are drawn from the author's own extensive notes. While a formulation or name here or there may be garbled, I think this provides a fairly accurate (though by no means complete) account of what transpired at this remarkable gathering.

Anti-Bolshevik, Pro-Bolshevik, or Neither?

The first panel posed the question of whether the October Revolution was a coup d'état or a popular revolution. As we have seen, Gilbert Achcar answered that it was both. Achcar and another panelist (former LCR member Denis Berger, who argued that the Bolsheviks had an elitist conception of the party, but that they led a popular revolution in 1917 and didn't become substitutionist until 1918) represented a more or less centrist position at the first session. They both argued that the Bolsheviks' failure to form a coalition with other left-wing parties, and their overthrow of the Constituent Assembly with the false justification that the direct democracy of the soviets represented something superior, had catastrophic consequences. While both of them obviously felt, as Berger emphasized, that the Bolshevik Revolution and regime did not represent "totalitarianism" and is in fact "part of our heritage," they also felt the need — as Berger put it — to "be very critical."

From an even more critical standpoint, Joseph Boumendil asserted that Lenin's politics were a synthesis of German Marxism and the Russian populist and conspiratorial revolutionary tradition of People's Will. Another point he emphasized was that in earlier years the tsarist state had substituted itself for the country's insufficient bourgeoisie, making the industrial capitalists dependent on the state. The surprising success of what Boumendil called "the Bolshevik coup" in 1917 exacerbated in Lenin the elements of the non-Marxist Russian revolutionary tradition, and the Bolshevik party substituted itself for the bourgeoisie and eliminated all possible rivals for power. The resulting state capitalism created the basis for the later development of Stalinism in the late 1920s.

On the "right" were Henri Minczeles (a Social Democratic historian of the Jewish Bund) and Claudie Weill (an independent scholar, sometimes seen as being close to the Trotskyists, but actually a partisan of the Mensheviks), both of whom perceived a much greater continuity between Leninism and Stalinism. Minczeles asserted that the Bolsheviks — with a rigidly Jacobin [i.e., elitist and centralist] organizational orientation — were able to channel popular enthusiasm in a manner that enabled them to take power through a Blanquist coup, after which their centralizing tendencies inevitably led to political repression, as well as the oppression of minority nationalities (such as the Jews), and later insisted that there was something in Lenin's personality that — despite his

rhetoric — was essentially conspiratorial and anti-democratic, that he would do anything to make someone submit to his will.

Weill insisted that Bolshevism always turned its back on the self-emancipation of the masses, and that it represented a consistent refusal to work with other socialist currents. One can trace a line, she said, from Lenin's intransigence at the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1903 to the Bolsheviks' Blanquist coup and refusal to share power in 1917. Lenin's polemical efforts to discredit his left-wing opponents in the years leading up to 1917 naturally led to the policy of criminalizing the Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries, and others after 1917, and eventually to their political and physical elimination.

An unambiguous defense of the Bolshevik Revolution came from two other panelists: Samuel Farber of the United States and Jacob Moneta of Germany.

Farber is organizationally unaffiliated but has a "third camp" socialist position generally associated with the late Max Shachtman. He is on the Editorial Committee of *Against the Current* and is the author of *Before Stalinism: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Democracy* (published by Verso in 1990), which had expressed sharp criticisms of the early Bolshevik regime. Nonetheless, he unambiguously disagreed with most of the other panelists in their characterization of the October Revolution.

Farber insisted that the existence of secret activity on the level of logistics (for example, certain deliberations of a strike committee) does not necessarily mean that something is elitist or manipulative. The question is: is this an entity unto itself or is it subordinate to a social movement? Copious literature exists documenting that there was a mass revolutionary movement of the Russian working class in 1917 and that the "conspiratorial" activities of the Bolsheviks were subordinate to this movement. For revolutionary socialists, the October Revolution was a necessary and obligatory gamble. A brutalizing and devastating World War was still going on, the soviets — democratic workers' councils — were real and vital, there had just been an attempted coup by the right-wing General Kornilov (with the looming danger of yet another coup attempt), a chaotic situation which the Provisional Government was totally incapable of dealing with, and an upwelling of popular unrest and popular organization. In addition, a revolutionary situation was developing in Western Europe, which the Russian Revolution could help to inspire and further advance, and which in turn — if workers' revolutions were successful in Germany and elsewhere — offered the hope of aid to the Russian Revolution.

By 1921, in Farber's opinion, the Bolshevik gamble had been lost. Soviet democracy was dead, and its social base — a vibrant and militant working class especially concentrated in the industrial workplaces — had disintegrated. Internationally the revolutionary tide had ebbed, resulting in the development of the "united front" policy in the Communist International. In Russia an economic retreat, represented by the New Economic Policy, was seen as necessary — but instead of initiating a New Political Policy that would allow for greater political debate and pluralism that could revitalize soviet democracy, the Bolsheviks tightened the political regime: consolidating a one-party state and its repressive apparatus. When avenues for the self-organization of workers and peas-

ants are closed by the regime, resistance is essential — perhaps at first resistance within the framework represented by the regime, but with the further consolidation of bureaucratic rule and repression, which coincided with the rise of Stalin, eventually resistance against the regime.

Jacob Moneta is an old working-class Trotskyist from Germany, a close comrade of the late Ernest Mandel, prominent in the trade union movement and in the recently-formed Democratic Socialist Party. He is clear, direct, warm, principled, unyielding. The October Revolution took place, he said, not simply — as some historians would have it — because the other political leaders and parties of Russia failed. It happened because Lenin understood reality better than they did. Such a revolution cannot be explained by someone's blind desire to dominate others, by someone's thirst for power. Some historians similarly argue that the French Revolution was an accident, that "everything would have been different if those stupid Jacobins had worked for reform and not been insistent on making a revolution." But reform could no longer provide a solution in 18th-century France or in 20th century Russia. Lenin grasped realities better, which is why his party was able to take power.

The Bolsheviks, Moneta continued, anticipated the desires of the masses of workers and peasants for peace, land, bread. They understood that neither the Provisional Government nor the Constituent Assembly could provide such things, and that they were not based on a real social force. The soviets were forms of socialist democracy — that was Lenin's view of the soviets. They represented the masses of Russia's working people. The Bolsheviks won majorities in these democratic councils, thanks to the experience of Kornilov's attempted coup, which persuaded many people that the Bolsheviks were right. At the same time, the soviets remained pluralist — with a Bolshevik majority, but also with Left Socialist Revolutionaries and left Mensheviks supporting the demand for "all power to the soviets," which was the basis of the October Revolution of 1917. Then from 1918 to 1921 there was a devastating civil war (partly stimulated and made worse by foreign intervention against the Bolsheviks), and while this ended with a Bolshevik victory, there were many casualties and a terrible deformation of the regime which resulted.

But, Moneta insisted, this outcome hardly supports the contention that the October Revolution was a putsch. Even the left Menshevik Sukhanov, highly critical of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, insisted in his memoirs that it was a popular revolution, writing: "Did the Petrograd proletariat sympathize or did it not with the organizers of the October insurrection?... There are no two answers here. Yes, the Bolsheviks acted on the mandate of the Petrograd workers and soldiers."

The Rise of Stalinism and the Global Impact of October

In the following sessions of the conference there was much else of interest. Only fleeting mention of a few contributions is possible here, due to limitations of time and space. But significant insights were offered also by many who are not mentioned.

Georges Gastaud (France) spoke in stark terms of why it was difficult for him to speak in abstractions: "I lived history as a drama." He recounted "the collective massacres of World

War I" and "the disgust that people had with that war encouraged them to search for who was responsible and to make a revolution," Lenin and the Bolsheviks being the "most serious anti-war leaders." Alexander Droban (Russia) emphasized that Lenin and the Bolsheviks were inspired by the radical democracy of the Paris Commune of 1871, and that the Bolshevik demand for "peace, bread, land" won them majority support among the Russian population; after the revolution — in the early 1920s, "preoccupied with the growing bureaucratization and how to fight it" — Lenin demonstrated that he was "one of the greatest theorists of democracy." Morris Slavin (U.S.) provided an illuminating discussion on analogies between the French and Russian revolutions: both were the products of mass upheavals, not palace coups; both were characterized by rapid shifts to the left that swept aside moderate leaders in their movement toward radical democracy; both suffered from military interventions and brutal civil wars; both had radical-centralist regimes that utilized policies of Terror to defend the Revolution; both involved the mobilization and then demobilization of mass support; both had significant left oppositions committed to revolutionary democracy, seeking to move the Revolution forward but encountering defeat; both experienced "Thermidor" — privileged layers of the new "revolutionary" elite overthrowing the more intransigent revolutionaries and establishing a repressive regime to create a stability that would end the forward movement of the Revolution and preserve their own privileges; and — since the collapse of the USSR — both can be seen as being followed by a period of Restoration. Slavin referred his listeners to Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed* as providing a Marxist analysis of the developments he outlined that pertained to the destiny of the Russian Revolution.

Surveying "the impact at the level of the masses" of the October Revolution, the eminent Marxist historian Pierre Broué agreed that "we can't talk about the revolution without talking about World War I" with all its butchery and barbarism. In addition to the hunger for peace, there was the issue of land, and the Bolshevik solution — land to those who work it — spoke not only to the innermost feelings of the Russian peasantry, but to the peasantry throughout Europe and the world. The Russian workers' rising to establish the political rule of their own democratic councils inspired workers in many other countries to put forward soviets of their own — not only in Europe, but on a global scale: the rise of the Communist movement spread through China, Indochina, Indonesia, and beyond. If one wishes to understand the degeneration of all this, "you cannot understand anything about it without understanding the ferocious calumny, the murderous violence coming from the counter-revolutionaries... The Reds also... didn't turn the other cheek... Trotsky later spoke of the murderous violence of the Civil War period as a cruel thing we couldn't overcome... we couldn't avoid it... a terrible thing... not to be glorified." But the difference between this extreme violence and authoritarianism of early Communism is that it was largely spontaneous, confused, unplanned. The violence and authoritarianism of Stalinism in the 1930s, on the contrary, was bureaucratically organized — a slaughterhouse 80 miles from Moscow was later found to contain 20,000 corpses, and this was a minor example. Communists from many countries fleeing right-wing dictatorships and seeking

refuge in the USSR provided such a high percentage of purge victims in this period that Georgi Dimitrov, nominal head of the Communist International who collaborated with those who arrested and killed so many of his comrades, was known by some as “the concierge of death.” This massacre of militants of the International was a parallel development of (and throws into question the meaning of) the reformist Popular Front, in Broué’s opinion.

Carlos Vilas of Argentina — once an adviser to the revolutionary Sandinista regime of Nicaragua — discussed the dual impact of the October Revolution and the Communist International in Latin America. They offered an inspiration and theoretical perspective reinforcing an already-existing anti-imperialist struggle. As time went on, however, the Latin American sections of the Communist International — the local Communist parties of various countries — became subordinated to the needs of Soviet foreign policy, based not on revolutionary ideology but on global power relations. These dynamics, not the realities and rhythms of the class struggle in specific local situations, dictated the policies of the Communist parties in Latin America, as elsewhere, leading to their marginalization, particularly when the USSR ended up supporting unpopular dictatorships rather than popular revolutions. The other side of the coin — that the USSR sometimes provided the only alternative resources (in the face of U.S. imperialist pressure) to revolutionary regimes in Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia, as well as to various Latin American reformist movements — did not resolve the debilitating contradiction.

Hungarian dissident Tamas Krausz probed the nature of Stalinism from a somewhat different angle. Tsarist Russia had been on the periphery of the world capitalist system, a fact which, after the 1917 Revolution, contributed to the isolation of the early Soviet Republic and the USSR under Stalin. Under the tsars as well as under Stalin this relative isolation was not merely economic — isolation became a whole culture related to the nature of the world system at the beginning of the century. Another factor involved peculiarities of Stalinist ideology. One aspect involved a partial, incomplete Marxism that focused on a “catching-up” modernization process (as opposed to the notion of the self-emancipation of the workers and the oppressed). There was also a statist perspective — common in pre-1917 Social Democracy (including very much in its moderate reformist wing) — in which the state predominates over revolutionary activity in bringing about “progressive” change.

Another source of Stalinist ideology, Krausz stressed, was the influence of N.V. Ustryalov, a conservative intellectual who believed that Russian national development required a powerful authoritarian state. Ustryalov had been anti-Bolshevik Admiral Kolchak’s minister of propaganda before switching sides to the victorious Communists (coming over to the regime, but not to Communism). Ustryalov wrote a study of Caesarism as a system of power, which Stalin read and annotated and understood. The rise of Stalinism is rooted, finally, in the New Economic Policy of the 1920s. In Lenin’s view the NEP represented a necessary economic retreat, partial restoration of capitalism that would be necessary to build up the Soviet economy. But it is not possible to partially restore capitalism — the logic of this expansive system requires that one go all the way. Stalin understood this by the

late 1920s and initiated policies that totally destroyed capitalism in Russia. In doing so he also totally destroyed all seeds of genuine socialism. The new system that emerged from Stalin’s policies can be called “state socialism,” and this is the system which collapsed in the late 1980s.

David Mandel — the Canadian scholar whose study of workers in the Russian Revolution is one of the classics of social history on 1917 — focused his substantial comments on a comparative analysis of Russia during the revolutionary period and Russia today. In the early 1900s a young workers’ movement became hegemonic in the democratic revolutionary struggle, going on to lead a socialist revolution in 1917. In the recent struggles for democracy, whose rank-and-file activists are working class, there is little class consciousness and a significant amount of anti-socialist sentiment — and the result of the struggles has been that workers are the losers. The international context has also been different. In 1917 there was a mass workers’ movement in the West which suffered a partial defeat but then a resurgence and radicalization because of World War I. Today — setting aside the rise of fascism in the 1920s and 1930s — this is the most somber period in the 20th century for the workers’ movement.

The years 1912–1914, Mandel pointed out, had seen a workers’ resurgence influenced and largely led by revolutionary Marxists, whereas the only workers’ movement persisting in 1990s Russia was established by the AFL-CIO as a pro-capitalist trade union movement seeking to help workers adapt to the nascent capitalism. Instead of the movements of workers councils and factory committees that were hegemonic in 1917, the leading force in the economy consists of the factory directors. In addition to the business of the particular enterprise, the social activities of the workers are also directed by management, helping to foster an enterprise-based “patriotism” or corporate spirit.

From the late 1920s down to the 1980s, David Mandel explained, the regime had not allowed the political space for the development of a workers’ tradition of struggle, so that those struggles that did occur were unable to leave traces in the political culture of the working class. (The development of such a tradition had been essential to the development of radical working-class consciousness in the period leading up to 1917.) The beginnings of a more militant independent workers’ movement during the Gorbachev period were dramatically set back by the subsequent economic shocks, which greatly reduced the movement’s strength. Many workers today have come to feel, through their own experience, that capitalism is bad for the working class — but they also have a sense of impotence. This is why a working class that’s as big, educated, and skilled as the Russian workers has been unable to leave its distinctive imprint on the political struggles of our time — Mandel concluded — whereas the smaller working class of 1917 had an impact that is still felt decades afterward.

Aleksandr Buzgalin, a left-wing analyst and activist from Russia associated with the magazine *Alternatives*, described the October Revolution as “the greatest event of the 20th century,” although it ended in the deep contradictions facing the Russian people today. In considering the heritage of October it is necessary to think of the practical lessons that it has for us. Buzgalin stressed that he could not approach this simply in an academic manner, because his emotions are necessarily

involved. One must be dialectical — looking for contradictory realities, not just negative lessons — in searching for the reasons that led to the revolution and to its collapse. In the revolutionary period, one could find crimes and mistakes blended with heroism — while today in Russia there are still crimes and mistakes, but, tragically, there is no heroism that can be found.

In 1917, Buzgalin added, people made the revolution because of objective necessity — resulting in an explosive popular energy seeking to create a new society. Unfortunately, there was not enough capacity for this — the tragedy of the Revolution was that there was a necessity to build the new society, but that this was at the same time an impossibility. This resulted in the so-called “socialism” of the USSR, which involved Stalinism with all of its crimes and victims, but also attempts to build the new society. The planned economy involved bureaucratic planning—but it was at the same time planning that mobilized, certainly in the 1920s, tremendous popular creativity and self-organization in many aspects of the social and cultural life of the country. A contradiction existed between the Stalinism and the creativity, with neither being entirely overcome. In the 1960s there was explosive cultural ferment, temporarily repressed during the Brezhnev era, but again coming to the fore when Gorbachev initiated his bureaucratic struggle against bureaucratization. Many were involved in that short spring.

The October Revolution erupted in a bad situation, but within this bad situation it created elements of a new society. This revolutionary “festival of the oppressed” did not result in the building of socialism — the new society was deformed from the beginning, but it contained elements that were qualitatively new. While it did not result in socialism, examining this experience will show us mistakes that we must avoid in the future:

(1) Revolution is an objective explosion, and the task of the Left is to create a road along which this creative revolu-

tionary energy can move forward — not a repressive dead-end such as Stalinism. It is necessary to stress self-activity and creativity from below. The Left can help future social forces create this within the framework of capitalism, while providing a program, a model for turning it in the direction of socialism.

(2) It is necessary not to underestimate the importance of the cultural revolution of the 1920s — involving street theater, communes, new forms of schools, innovative art and literature, and various outlets for creativity. It is necessary for the Left to concentrate on the task of helping to create a new socialist culture that involves poems, songs, books, movies and other forms of creative expression. This is necessary politically to help bring about the possibility of socialism, but it is also necessary economically to create the consciousness and energy necessary for a genuinely socialist economy.

(3) Without grass-roots democracy there can be no socialism.

(4) The old debates between Social Democrats and Communists, Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, etc., cannot be forgotten — but it is necessary to move beyond them in order to create a new movement, a socialist movement, capable of bringing a qualitative jump to a new society.

There were many other interesting contributions—from Janette Habel, Boris Kagarlitsky, Peter Gowan, Charles-André Udry, Shen Da Li, Francis Sittel, Andrea Catone, Michael Löwy, Ludmila Bulavka, David Mandel, Roland Lew, François Vercammen, Enzo Traverso, Jacqueline Heinen, and others.

Perhaps the most coherent and stimulating of the sessions, however, was the final panel. It was entitled “What Balance Sheet?” and consisted of presentations by Samir Amin, Daniel Bensaïd, Julio Carranza, Marc Ferro, Monty Johnstone, Catherine Samary, and Timur Timofeyev. This will be the focus of a second report. □

Comments on the Labor Party, the Unions, and the Present Situation

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It must be that I have failed to properly explain the idea. For me the concept is the fruit of long experience. I know what it is to run a weekly forum from my experience with the Friday Night Socialist Forum in Detroit in the 1950s and 1960s. I also know (from experience) that this good idea can be trivialized or made into a caricature. After George Breitman, the outstanding organizer of the Socialist Workers Party branch in Detroit, left Detroit in 1967 to work for the SWP in New York City, the Friday Night Socialist Forum came under the management of newly recruited activists of the anti-Vietnam

War movement. They thought the forum was (or could be) a useful adjunct to their anti-war activities, and nothing more, and of course it rather quickly deteriorated and eventually was abandoned.

The SWP in several branches tries, even now, to conduct more or less regular public forums. But these don't amount to much because the speakers usually are uninformed and inexperienced SWP members. Occasionally they invite an “outside” speaker who may know something about the subject, a striker or union official or community leader or academic. But this is not enough to sustain a forum that can become recognized as an educational

institution which attracts workers and others who want to learn what is going on in the world and what they can do to change the condition of their lives.

If you go back to the list of activities that was projected (in 1966) for the Metro Pittsburgh Labor Party chapter, I think you will find that each of the items listed would benefit from the regular meetings of a public forum sponsored by the Labor Party chapter.

I hope no one thinks I am promoting this forum project as a panacea. I don't think it will solve our problems. But it is a way to get started on the road to meeting people, making friends, and possibly influencing the course of events. □

Early November 1997

Memorial Meeting at Tamiment for Myra Tanner Weiss

by Dorothea Breitman

A memorial meeting for Myra Tanner Weiss was held on November 7 at the Tamiment Institute, a labor history library in New York City affiliated with New York University.

Peter Filardo, head curator of Tamiment, opened the meeting with a short speech, welcoming everyone. Tamiment, he said, was pleased to host this meeting for Myra, whose papers were a valuable addition to the library's collection.

The audience, as they came in, saw a brown-and-white sketch of Myra. Her sister sent it from Utah to be shown at the meeting and then returned to her. Also facing the audience was a mat on which were pinned fifteen pamphlets written by Myra.

The meeting was organized by Myra's brother-in-law, David Weiss. The leaflet announcing the meeting named him as organizer and chairperson for the meeting. A bad cold prevented him from chairing. He sent Vivian Gilbert-Strell to replace him. She proved to be a most

able chairperson. After she explained why she, rather than David, was chairing the meeting, she asked that anyone who wished to speak make themselves known by raising their hands.

Fifteen people, who had known Myra at various stages of her life, spoke for three minutes each. By the time the meeting had ended, about an hour after it started, a picture of her life in the Socialist Workers Party, especially on the West Coast, emerged. An activist leader, a teacher of the youth, she, together with her companion, Murry Weiss, built the second largest branch of the SWP, the Los Angeles branch.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Myra helped organize migrant farm workers and cannery workers on the West Coast; she also helped the seamen comrades who were instrumental in organizing the maritime workers. Twice she ran for mayor of Los Angeles on the SWP ticket, in 1945 and 1949.

Myra and Murry moved to New York City in the 1950s, and she was the SWP candidate for vice president of the United States three times, in 1952, 1956, and 1960. (Former Teamsters union leader Farrell Dobbs was the presidential candidate.)

Myra and Murry left the SWP in the late 1960s — partly because of political disagreements, not just because of “male bastions of privilege” and “entrenched male structures,” as has been argued.*

Taking up a new profession, Murry became a psychologist. Myra found work as a proofreader, becoming a member of the International Typographical Union Local 8.

Perhaps Myra's greatest contribution over the years was that she introduced many young women to the ideas of revolutionary socialism by teaching them Marx's *Capital*.

Thanks to the various speakers at the meeting, the audience of fifty-five got a rounded picture of Myra's life as a revolutionary socialist. □

From the Memorial Meeting

We Dip the Red Flag in Her Honor and Remember Myra, the Revolutionary Socialist

Remarks by Dorothea Breitman

Dorothea Breitman was the first person called upon to speak at the Tamiment memorial meeting for Myra Tanner Weiss.

I met Myra in 1945 at a summer camp the Socialist Workers Party was holding in Jackson, Michigan. The party had set up the Trotsky School, and Myra, along with Ernest Mazey and two other comrades, was one of its first students. George Novack was the instructor.

I knew about Myra because of her reputation as a first-rate orator and a top-notch teacher of Marx's *Capital*. No one had told me about her inordinate good looks. She was by far the most

beautiful vice-presidential candidate that the SWP could possibly have chosen, with her dark complexion and her large brown eyes.

During those weeks at camp we became very well acquainted. I think she was giving a class, perhaps on some aspect of *Capital*. I attended that and introduced myself to her. After which we became “ping-pong pals.” We were pretty evenly matched and enjoyed our games together.

Twenty-four years later we met in New York. The crosstown bus took us to our work as second-shift proofreaders. We were both members of Local 8 of the International Typographical Union. She was still beautiful. Her hair was white now.

We talked about work and of our current interests. Myra told me she was still introducing young women to the ideas of revolutionary socialism by teaching them *Capital* at the New York Marxist School.

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*Like many others in the 1970s, Myra and Murry sometimes drifted rather far afield from Trotskyism. After the overthrow of the Salazar dictatorship in Portugal in the mid-1970s, for example, they hailed the (still Stalinist) Communist Party of Portugal as a “revolutionary” organization. — Eds.

Reading from Left to Right

by Joe Auciello

Marx was intellectually so much ahead of his time — ahead of the society in which he lived — that we are even now in many respects still behind him.

— Isaac Deutscher,
Socialist Scholars Conference, 1966

A young friend writes from Princeton, where she is attending college, to tell me of a paradox she has observed in her classes. In all of her courses, regardless of the subject, all of her professors have found it necessary to discuss Karl Marx, though most try to dismiss him. Marx, it seems, is the social theorist most often referred to, the one most often criticized, and the one least studied. Usually the professors will harrumph a bit and say that Marx is out of date and unimportant. But they can't stop talking about him. It's a behavioral quirk Shakespeare noted long ago; these disapproving professors do "protest too much."

One recent instance of this reluctant obsession with Marx can be found, of all places, in *The New Yorker* of October 20 and 27. The article, "The Return of Karl Marx" by John Cassidy, is surprisingly informative. Leave aside its obligatory dollop of sarcasm — the author, after all, needs to assure his audience that he is not a "red." Still, the general reader who would never find a copy of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* at the local newsstand and who would probably not look at it if one turned up in the mailbox, may very well read this *New Yorker* piece and from it learn a good deal about Marx.

Readers will encounter, among other points, a positive assessment of the materialist conception of history and the class nature of modern society.

The main point of the article — that an understanding of Marx is necessary for an understanding of our times — is summed up in these words:

Marx was a student of capitalism, and that is how he should be judged. Many of the contradictions that he saw in Victorian capitalism and that were subsequently addressed by reformist governments have begun reappearing

in new guises, like mutant viruses. When he wasn't driving the reader to distraction, he wrote riveting passages about globalization, inequality, political corruption, monopolization, technical progress, the decline of high culture, and the enervating nature of modern existence — issues that economists are now confronting anew, sometimes without realizing that they are walking in Marx's footsteps.

Remember "It's the economy, stupid"?

Cassidy points to the increasing inequality of income and wealth in America, revealing that class divisions have only deepened.

Between 1980 and 1996, the share of total household income going to the richest five per cent of the families in the country increased from 15.3 per cent to 20.3 per cent, while the share of the income going to the poorest sixty percent of families fell from 34.2 per cent to 30 per cent. These changes represent an unprecedented redistribution of resources from poor to rich — each shift of one per cent represents about thirty-eight billion dollars.

MIT economist Lester Thurow noted the same trend in a *Boston Globe* article last September 9, and in that article gloomily predicted the development of a lumpen proletariat or underclass "unattached to either the economic or social system." He feared that, "As their numbers grow, something eventually has to crack."

Capitalist governments are now less and less able to offset social inequality. Indeed, enterprising scholars can fashion a comfortable career by claiming that government investment in education, health, welfare, etc., are counterproductive and unnecessary. In real life these policies dramatically harm the most vulnerable and also affect the majority of the working class by driving down real wages. Thurow observes these forces at work and concludes, "The system that has held democracy and capitalism together for the last century has started to unravel."

Thurow fears that "the majority of workers who face lower real earnings has to become disaffected sooner or later with democracy." Perhaps so. Or, instead, the majority of workers will become disenchanted with the economic system that produces falling wages for the majority of the work force and fearful uncertainty for the rest.

What then can halt or slow the downward economic spiral in which the large majority of Americans are trapped? Thurow calls for a new kind of New Deal, but offers little reason for hope: "In our federal budget, investment activities have been cut in half in the last 25 years."

In his *New Yorker* article, John Cassidy, too, frets for the future of capitalism, though he labors to convince himself that "the economy is doing well."

So, what explains the "return" of Marx? The answer is not hard to locate:

The survival of capitalism to this day in the most industrialized countries has certainly given it a life-span far beyond what Marx expected. But this is not because the system has developed in essentially other directions than those predicted by *Capital*. Nor is it because it has been able to avoid a periodic repetition of explosive social crises. On the contrary...such crises have become recurrent features of contemporary history.

And, finally: "Despite [Marx's] errors, he was a man for whom our economic system held few surprises. His books will be worth reading as long as capitalism endures."

The first quote is from Ernest Mandel's "Introduction" to the first volume of *Capital*.

The second concludes the *New Yorker* article. That the two meld so neatly is a revealing comment on our time — and times soon to come.

All in all, an article in the *New Yorker* celebrating Marx is a further indication of what Michael Löwy last year noted as "signs of change in the political and cul-

tural climate in relation to Marxism.” (See *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, No. 132, May-June 1996).

A more recent article by Michael Löwy, “Che’s Revolutionary Humanism” from the July issue of *International Viewpoint*, is featured, in a different translation, as the “Review of the Month” in the October issue of *Monthly Review*. This issue also includes a brief review of

the Jon Lee Anderson biography of Che and “Latin America: Thirty Years After Che” by James Petras.

The November issue of *International Viewpoint* continues its examination of Che Guevara’s life and work, including an important article by Livio Maitan, “The Fourth International and Cuba.” Also featured in this issue are several articles assessing the historical legacy

of the Russian Revolution on its 80th anniversary. Subscription information to *International Viewpoint* is given in the inside back cover of the last issue of *BIDOM*. *IV* is also available on the Internet at: www.internationalen.se/sp/ivp.htm

The *IV* web site includes material from the upcoming issue and contains a large number of articles from previous issues as well as links to the Fourth International. □

Politics as Usual

Continued from page 27

this country, who have gained their great wealth by taking a portion of the value that we have earned with our hard work. One fundamental purpose served by the governmental structures is to force us to continue giving a portion of the value we have earned to the employers in the form of profits. Other purposes include regulating the competition within the employing class, both within the country and internationally, maintaining physical infrastructure for the transportation of commodities and communication of information (in the United States much of this is done by the private sector), educating the next generation of workers to enter the work force, both to do the jobs required of them and to work loyally to enrich their employers, and keeping order — with violence if necessary — throughout the society so that the process of making and selling commodities can continue without interruption.

It is the legal profession which has been charged with administering the mechanisms of the capitalist state. The overwhelming majority of those elected to government office in the United States are lawyers; most of them are not themselves great financiers. Their primary interest is in their own careers — making lots of money and maybe becoming famous in the bargain. And in order to rise in their chosen profession, they know what they need to do, and they play the game by the rules. Sometimes that means working within the existing political structure; it may at other times mean playing the part of the reforming outsider. A politician’s career may be enhanced by openly advancing the interests of big business as a whole

or even a particular industry or corporation; however, “fighting for the common man” has often been a sure vote-getter, especially for candidates who were anything but “the common man,” such as both Presidents Roosevelt and the Kennedy brothers.

The Democratic and Republican parties, regardless of where their money comes from, are committed to the existing capitalist state structure and exist only to provide the personnel to run it. Ideology and program are not fundamental to the Democrats and Republicans; both parties have always included both “liberals” and “conservatives,” and the “liberal-conservative” debate is increasingly being seen for what it is: a fake and a fraud. This especially became clear in the 1996 election, where, in spite of the rhetoric on both sides, most Americans could see that there was precious little difference in the political programs of Bob Dole and Bill Clinton.

The American political system is, in fact, consciously structured to prevent radical change regardless of who is elected to office. The drafters of the Constitution (principally the Virginia lawyer James Madison, who became the fourth president of the United States), openly explained that they were attempting to preserve order and stability in the interests of the propertied classes. Today, politicians and intellectuals will contrast the stability of the American political system with the multiparty parliamentary systems of Western Europe, especially Italy, where coalition governments frequently are forced to resign for lack of a parliamentary majority. The words may be different, but the meaning is the same. Candidates may argue about the details,

usually to win the votes of one or more constituency, but the fundamentals are not going to change.

The Democratic and Republican parties, like their predecessors, the Federalists, Whigs, and pre-Civil War Democrats, exist not to challenge or fundamentally change the state, but simply to provide personnel for it. They are the organizational mechanisms through which candidates appeal for votes, so that they may occupy positions in a government set up by the rising class of bankers and businessmen in the early years of the Industrial Revolution. This is what gives the Republicans and Democrats their class character as *capitalist* parties.

No matter what political “realignments” take place, no matter how much money the trade unions contribute to Democrats to counter the money contributed by businessmen to Republicans (and, by the way, big business contributes substantially to Democrats as well as to Republicans), no matter what kind of regulations are imposed on the raising and spending of campaign funds, their fundamental character as instruments of the employing class’s rule will not change. If working people are to be truly represented in the political arena they must have a political party of their own.

A New Threat to Workers’ Political Rights

After the radicals were for the most part driven out of the labor leadership during the first decade after World War II, a conservative and staunchly anti-Communist section of the union bureaucracy imposed its dictatorship on the trade union movement. The relative prosperity of that period tended to pacify the unions’ rank and file, allowing George Meany and his associates to

consolidate their rule over the newly merged AFL and CIO. The unions continued their long-standing practice of supporting — and contributing money to — the Democratic Party. But during that period the Republicans did not raise an objection — because they knew that the labor chiefs' loyalty to capitalist rule was unquestionable. They trusted the union bureaucrats to impose discipline on their members in order to preserve class peace and keep the profits flowing.

The postwar prosperity came to an end in the early 1970s, and the labor bureaucracy was as good as its word, refusing to organize any resistance as attack after attack by the employers succeeded in driving down both inflation-adjusted wages and union membership. It took twenty years, but now in the 1990s a new labor leadership has emerged determined to put a stop to the deterioration of union power and workers' living standards.

To be sure, the new leadership of the AFL-CIO, centered around John Sweeney, Richard Trumka, and Linda Chavez-Thompson, remains committed to the Democratic Party and to social reform rather than social revolution. However, they are much more responsive to the demands and aspirations of the unions' rank-and-file than were Meany and his successor Lane Kirkland. They are not committed to forcing the union ranks to acquiesce to humiliating concessions in the interests of class peace. Teamsters President Ron Carey, one of the best examples of this new breed of labor leader, showed that very clearly in his leadership of the Teamsters' successful strike against United Parcel Service in 1997. And this has the financiers worried.

One of the new Sweeney leadership's first priorities was to contribute thousands of dollars and get out a big vote for the Democrats in 1996. This part of their plan seems to be working. Labor support did make a difference in Bill Clinton's re-election, and while the Democrats have not regained their congressional majority, the Republicans are worrying. The Republicans won elec-

tions in New Jersey, Virginia, and New York City in 1997, but labor's political muscle was evident. New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani appealed to the unions to cross party lines to re-elect him, and many did. Trade unionists' defection to Giuliani assured the defeat of Democrat (and Democratic Socialist of America member) Ruth Messinger. In New Jersey, the popular moderate Republican governor Christine Todd Whitman was nearly defeated by State Senator James McGreevey, who was virtually unknown before the 1997 elections. Strong trade-union support for McGreevey was almost enough to offset the strong suburban and rural vote for Whitman. In Congress, organized labor's lobbying was a major factor, possibly the most important factor, in the rejection of "Fast Track" legislation, which would have given the president the authority to negotiate international trade agreements which the Congress could not amend. This was a defeat not only for the Republican leadership but for the Clinton administration as well. Their response has been to play political hardball with organized labor from now on.

So while opposing the campaign finance reforms proposed by the Clinton administration, Republican congressional leaders Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi and House Speaker Newt Gingrich of Georgia, are calling for investigations into the unions' political activities in the 1996 elections and new restrictions on trade unions' rights to contribute to political campaigns. The first stage of their attack is against Ron Carey, as reported elsewhere in this issue. How far it will go depends on whether the Sweeney leadership attempts to — and successfully attempts to — reassure the employers that they no more intend to make fundamental changes in class relations than George Meany did.

The Labor Party's platform contains a section on campaign finance reform which includes the following demands:

- A financial cap on what any candidate can spend on elections.

- Full public financing of state and national elections based on the principle of one person, one vote and government of, by, and for the people.
- Full and equal public financing and media time for candidates who have proven popular support, rather than just access to big contributors.
- Such funds should be made available only to those candidates who pledge not to raise and spend any private money whatsoever during the primary and general election periods.

These demands are clearly motivated by a desire to democratize the electoral process and put an end to its corporate domination. But the idea that the existing government can or will do that does not stand up to logic or to historical evidence. All past attempts to put an end to corruption in politics — let alone corporate domination — have been undermined in one way or another. And to call upon the capitalist government to restrict the flow of money from "special interests" in politics gives them a weapon to use against the organized labor movement. Organized labor must insist on its right to contribute however much money it wishes to whatever candidate it wishes, with no restrictions whatsoever. All the existing laws which prohibit union funds being used for supporting candidates must be repealed.

The Labor Party in actual practice is doing much more to break the corporate monopoly on political power than any government regulation could ever do. It is building a political organization responsible to working people and committed to *our* interests, not the profits of the rich or the careers of lawyers and government bureaucrats. And the Labor Party is committed to a new kind of political process, not to playing by the capitalist parties' rules on the capitalist parties' playing field. It is taking action to move political debate from the high-priced media to the workplaces and neighborhoods where working people live their lives, as well as to change the agenda of political debate from the silly "liberal-conservative" charade to issues that really affect our standard of living and our children's future. □

December 13, 1997

From a Hospital Bed

by Joe Auciello

My mother-in-law is dying. Perhaps she will not be alive when this article appears in print. Her body is the site of a race to determine which illness will kill her first. In addition to Alzheimer's, a tumor grows behind her heart, cancer spreads throughout her lymph nodes, and cancer grips what is left of her lungs. In an earlier operation, years ago, part of her lungs had been removed, the consequence of a lifetime of cigarette smoking. Now she coughs incessantly, futilely, in an effort to shake cancer from her throat. Radiation treatments have begun to shrink the tumor; this will lessen the pain but will bring suffering of another kind. Alzheimer's disease, a form of dementia, now appears merciful — my mother-in-law has no idea of what is happening to her and cannot even explain why she is in the hospital.

In a famous aphorism, Dostoyevsky observed that a society can be judged by the quality of its prisons. No doubt he is right. But more of us are likely to pass through hospitals than prisons, so perhaps a truer understanding of our culture and its values can be reckoned from the vantage point of a hospital bed rather than a jail cell.

Hospitals are no place for the sick. Hospitals are inhospitable. They are loud, busy, crowded, rushed, bureaucratic, and indifferent. Stand by the nurses' desk and listen. The more urgent the question, the less likely the answer. "The doctor can decide if..." But the doctor is not here. Where is he? When will he come? (Though this is not always so, the doctor is usually a "he" and the nurse usually a "she." In terms of quality of patient care, it makes little difference.) The doctor, for whom we have been waiting, finally arrives, holding the patient's chart, skimming it, and only occasionally, with a practiced smile, does he look at the patient, asking questions, barely hearing answers. Quickly jotted notes. The patient's chart is more real than the patient.

A hospital is Franz Kafka with fluorescent lights.

In the hospital patients are products on an assembly line. The line moves

more slowly than in an auto plant, but the relation between worker and product-patient is no more humane for that. Psychological distance from patients, especially terminal ones, may be necessary for the medical staff, and daily routine, too, has its dulling effects. But for all that, the nurses' lack of knowledge and interest is striking.

The nurses seem constantly in motion, as if to elude the patients' grasp. My wife and her sisters see all of the heedless rushing, the genial disinterest of the staff, and they are furious. Their mother is dying. For two days she has suffered needlessly from an excruciating headache. Her middle daughter finds and detains a nurse long enough to inquire about the Tylenol with codeine that had been prescribed. Working the third of three 12-hour shifts, the nurse is tired and impatient.

"We give the Tylenol when she asks, and she hasn't asked for it!" The nurses do not know or do not remember that the patient with Alzheimer's does not realize what medication has been allowed her and does not understand how to ask for it. The nurse hears the tone of rebuke in the question, and now *she* is angry. "Is this your last question?" In this way a patient is finally given a Tylenol.

Of course, it costs \$8 to dispense that Tylenol. My mother-in-law's semi-private hospital room costs about \$1,400 per day. Fortunately, she has insurance.

Money drives medical decisions, and money determines the quality of medical care.

The hospital has been cutting back on nurses. This section of the floor, like every other, is understaffed, with an RN, an LPN, and a nurse's aide. One very sick patient can consume the attention of most of the nursing staff. The other patients wait until someone is finally available to look in on them. Nurse-patient contact time can be measured in seconds. There are never enough nurses to do the work well. Superficial attention and deficient treatment make up the conditions of a normal working day in this hospital, which is considered a good one.

It's cheaper for the hospital to hire a few nurses to work many hours rather than hire many nurses to work fewer hours.

"The insurance companies have the doctors by the balls," mutters my sister-in-law, adding, more delicately, "and they have the women doctors by the foot." That is, the doctor, the "primary care physician," receives a certain amount of money per patient, a figure that is set and capped by the insurance companies. If patient costs exceed that cap, then the doctor must absorb the cost for a loss. Doctors hope that a number of relatively healthy patients, who cost less, will make up for the sick and needy who constitute a financial setback. Doctors have no incentive, monetarily, to care for the seriously ill. On the contrary, as the system is set up, it is a *disincentive* to treat the sick and expensive patients from whom no profit can be made.

Routinely, the insurance companies inspect the doctors' charts, lab work, etc., to determine whether the treatment the doctor ordered for patients is justified. If the insurance company decides that a prescription or procedure was unnecessary, then the doctor could be fined. The incentive for the doctor, then, is to give less care for a shorter period of time. The incentive for the hospital is to move patients out as quickly as possible before their expenses exceed the insurance cap.

The newspaper tells the same story about the quality of health care in America. The president of the American Heart Association, Martha N. Hill, noted that more people are dying now from preventable heart failure, the *Boston Globe* reports (November 11 and 12, 1997). "The problem is getting worse, Hill and others said, because doctor visits are more rushed and hospital stays are shorter, a trend driven by managed care imperatives to cut costs."

A study of 550 patients in eight states shows that heart patients are often "discharged from the hospital without adequate instructions on how to stay healthy," according to Dr. Jane Pederson, who conducted the research. Of the patients studied, only nine percent received information about weight loss and heart failure, and only half received adequate instruction on medications.

Lack of information is not the only problem patients confront. Lack of money also causes early and unneces-

sary death. "In a study of 110 indigent patients, researchers found average monthly incomes of only \$730 and monthly medication costs of \$250."

The rich in America are placed in the best facilities where they receive the best care and the most up-to-date treatment. The poor and the working class are limited to community hospitals where care and treatment are more haphazard and death is more frequent.

A doctor at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center presented a study which showed that "30 to 40 percent of heart attack patients don't receive aspirin — a simple treatment whose effectiveness was shown in the early 1990's." This study concluded "that nearly 6,000 lives could be saved each year if patients were given aspirin upon hospital admission."

Another study shows that those "least likely to get the proven therapies were women, minorities, patients older than

75 years," and "those with prior stroke or heart attack" (emphasis added). Of course, women, minorities, and the elderly make up the majority of America.

The hospital wants their bed back. My mother-in-law has been in here too long. Let her die at home. The next patient will bring in more money.

My wife and her sisters are angry with their mother for her failing health, though they know their feeling is misplaced. They are angry with the nurses, who sense the hostility and, like moving targets, rush quickly, evasively, through the hospital floor, ducking into one room, disappearing into another. That anger is also misplaced. My wife and her sisters remember to curse the doctors who only occasionally remember them and their mother. But the doctors on their rounds must treat too many people in too little time. No one chooses to be callous.

Behind all of this frustration lies a social system that is working as it was designed to work, a system that values money and private profit over health and life. My family is right to be angry. Will they realize where their anger should be directed? Will they understand and name capitalism as their enemy and join with others to end it? No, probably not, at least not now. But they know that somehow life and death can and should be better. In this way, too, seeds of rebellion are planted.

From a hospital bed we can see that capitalism has failed, just as we can see it from the factories, farms, and ghettos throughout America. From that knowledge, from that desire for a better life, comes the determination to create a more humane social system, one that values people more than profit. As my mother-in-law goes to her grave, capitalism continues, slowly but irrevocably, to breed its grave-diggers. □

The Fight to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal

Continued from page 35

tion to its treatment of people of color; and into the FBI's Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO), and all similar repressive programs, particularly in relation to their treatment of the Black Panther Party, MOVE, and other political organizations led by people of

color." The Tribunal promised to report its findings to the United Nations and the International community as a whole.

Socialists and other progressive-minded people need to build a broad movement to win the freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Resources are available through International Concerned Fam-

ily and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal (215) 476-8812 or www.mumia.org. Several excellent videos on the case are available, including "Beyond a Reasonable Doubt" (HBO) and "The Killing State." □

December 21, 1997

The Labor Party, the Trade Union Movement, and Revolutionary Socialists

Continued from page 42

discussed above (with no one's sense of "discipline" binding anyone else), forums, conferences and publications, plus informal discussions, may be the most appropriate "organizational forms" to achieve what can and should be achieved at present. More formal structures may emerge soon but should

not be forced prematurely in the present fluid situation.

In the context of a developing class struggle, in the context of a revitalized labor movement that generates a mass working-class political party, our aspirations for a socialist democracy and our revolutionary notions of how to get there will assume a new relevance. A

genuine working-class revolutionary current of significant proportions will have an opportunity to crystallize within that context, capable of advancing an orientation that could lead the working class to power and the democratic restructuring of the economy. We must try to do as much good work as possible to contribute to this goal. □

October 31, 1997

We Dip the Red Flag in Her Honor and Remember Myra, the Revolutionary Socialist

Continued from page 52

The last time I saw Myra she was in the hospital. I think it was St. Vincent's on 12th Street in lower Manhattan. Frank and Sarah Lovell and I went to see her. Her left side was paralyzed and she had lost her speech. Her nurse told us that she understood everything and we

should talk to her. We did. She responded by pressing our hands and by looking at us with her brown eyes and blinking her lids, to let us know she understood and was happy that we had come to visit her.

Her sisters transferred her to the West Coast so she could be near them. I heard

that her condition had deteriorated. She lived a few years after she left New York.

Logically we accept the fact that our death is inherent in our birth. But our hearts are not logical. We weep because Myra, who we loved and admired, has died.

We dip the Red Flag in Myra's honor and remember Myra, the revolutionary socialist. □

A Valuable Book on Che Guevara

Michael Ratner and Michael Steven Smith, eds., *Che Guevara and the FBI: The U.S. Political Police Dossier on the Latin American Revolutionary* (Melbourne, Australia: Ocean Press, 1997), 240 pp., \$18.95.

reviewed by Joe Auciello

■ f 1968 was “The Year of the Heroic Guerrilla,” then this must be the year of Che Guevara. Several biographies have recently been published—including a memoir by Fidel Castro—films are soon to be released, left journals and magazines abound with commentary on Che, and most importantly, new editions of Guevara’s writings are appearing in English. Given this abundance of material by and about Che, is a new book, *Che Guevara and the FBI*, really needed? Does it add anything significant to what we already know?

While no lurid revelations or exposés emerge from these files, the portrait they provide of Che is certainly consistent with the man we know from his writings and life. The material in this new book complements and helps complete the work of the biographers, adding material previously unavailable to them, coloring in some lines of Che’s portrait. *Che Guevara and the FBI* is a necessary and worthwhile contribution that should be read by anyone who wants to know about Che’s life, work, and influence.

It is certainly not difficult to explain the widespread and enduring fascination with Che that would compel the editors to produce this collection of material from his FBI file. Fidel Castro, in his eulogy for Che Guevara, struck the themes that have been repeated ever since: “Che has become the model of what men should be...No other man of our time has carried the spirit of proletarian internationalism to its highest possible level, as Che did...[His] blood was shed for the sake of all the exploited and oppressed; that blood was shed for all the peoples of America and for the people of Vietnam...”

In his memoir *Street Fighting Years*, written twenty years after Che’s death, Tariq Ali recalls the moment when he learned of the terrible news: “I sat at my desk and wept. The sense of loss and grief was overpowering...Nor was I

alone. On every continent there were many others who felt and reacted in a similar fashion...I do not remember, if the truth be told, what I was doing when Kennedy was assassinated. But I can recall every small detail of the day that Che died.”

Che’s influence permeated the thinking of the international left throughout the 1960s, and beyond. A detailed account is beyond the scope of this review, but one reference may stand in for the many others that could be cited. James Forman, a leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), explains how Che’s writings helped shape the direction of the civil rights movement: “In the fall of 1962 I had read Che Guevara’s book on guerrilla warfare and drew some lessons from it for our work. I saw SNCC establishing bases throughout the South, bases that would grow into larger units. As we consolidated our power in the rural areas and the smaller cities, the time would come when we would work in larger cities” (*The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, p. 338).

Che’s influence only intensified after his murder in 1967. For many affected by the radicalization of the 1960s, Che’s death sparked a renewed personal commitment to the revolutionary cause. “The duty of a revolutionary is to make the revolution” — that statement adorned meeting halls throughout the world, and thousands of militants took its sentiment deeply to heart.

Che Guevara and the FBI is also a study of an imperialist government — “the greatest enemy of humanity” — in Che’s words, and the workings of one of its oppressive instruments, a spy agency. The U.S. assumes the “right” to direct the destiny of every small nation, and, in addition to the well-known strategies of diplomatic pressure, economic bullying, and military intervention, Washington recruits spies to help preserve its domination.

From the files reprinted in this book, it is now known that the U.S. government began collecting information on Che Guevara before he became a leader of the Cuban revolution and an international symbol of socialist revolution.

The first substantive documents in the book date from 1956, before Castro and Guevara sailed to Cuba on the *Granma* and launched the war that would triumph in the overthrow of Batista in 1959. Judging by the degree of detail in subsequent reports, it is obvious that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency had at least one informant in Guevara’s guerrilla army.

During Cuba’s revolutionary war, and especially after the consolidation of the socialist revolution, the U.S. was determined to learn whether Guevara was a communist and whether he was a party member. It’s a persistent question in the files. Washington wanted to know exactly what type of Marxist Che might be. The U.S. government wanted to discover whether Che was docile, whether he would be like the Soviet bureaucrats with whom they could “do business,” bureaucrats who were always ready to cut a deal with imperialism.

These files reveal the depth of Che’s revolutionary convictions. They show a man unwilling to bargain with principles, who accepted no self-limiting revolution, a Marxist leader who insisted that Cuba be treated respectfully as a sovereign nation. Che was willing to enter into negotiations with the U.S., but not at the expense of the revolution. There was nothing docile about Che Guevara.

In 1961 Che met informally with Richard Goodwin, a former adviser to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, who listened to Che’s proposals to improve relations between the United States and Cuba. In a memo to Kennedy, Goodwin suggested that the U.S. seek “some way of continuing the below ground dialogue which Che has begun. We can thus make it clear that we want to help Cuba and would help Cuba if it would sever communist ties and begin democratization. *In this way we can begin to probe for the split in top leadership which might exist*” (emphasis added).

The editors, Michael Ratner and Michael Steven Smith, wryly observe that Goodwin is considered a liberal. Actually, the label is apt. Goodwin only wanted to promote possible divisions in the Cuban leadership, and to this end he urged President Kennedy, in U.S. rela-

tions with Cuba, to pursue a policy of manipulation and deceit. That was the liberal position. Conservatives wanted the Cuban leaders assassinated and mounted a number of attempts to kill Castro.

As is well known, Che was captured alive in October 1967 and was murdered in captivity by a Bolivian soldier. The Bolivian Rangers were trained, advised, and armed by the United States government. A Special Forces unit ("Green Berets"), in addition to two CIA agents, operated in the area near Che's guerrillas and assisted the Bolivians.

In a recent *Wall Street Journal* column (November 19), a retired U.S. foreign service officer gleefully recalls Che's defeat as one of his government's foreign policy "successes" with relevant lessons for imperialist strategy today. In the event of future combat with Iraq, this writer recommends the use of proxy armies loyal to their own ruling classes but trained and armed by the United States. In that way, the hands of U.S. soldiers will not be on the trigger, thereby making it possible to deny direct involvement. "The lesson of Che's capture applies to Saddam: Sometimes avoiding the use of American arms has many advantages."

The same spirit of cynical dealing is evident in the documents that have come to light with the publication of *Che Guevara and the FBI*. Nothing in these files indicates any effort by the United States government to reach, or even consider, peaceful relations with

revolutionary Cuba. No U.S. president, neither Democrat nor Republican, has been willing to negotiate with the Cubans. Instead, imperialism has hoped to reverse and destroy their revolution — just as, two decades later, the U.S. was able to do in Grenada and Nicaragua.

The files themselves, though of uneven quality, make for engaging reading. Some of the content — the sources, for instance — are blacked out. Also, the files are rife with error and speculation, especially for the years 1965–1966 when Che disappeared from the public eye. A publisher's note cautions that transcribed speeches "should not be regarded as accurate." Still, the distinct and true voice of Che Guevara often leaps out from these documents.

In a 1962 speech at Havana University, Che notes, "There is nothing that is more convincing than one's own example to express or defend an idea," thereby articulating an ideal that governed his life. In another speech given later that year Guevara reportedly said, "The Cuban revolution...must continue forward and feel within itself all the wrongs of this oppressed world in which it is our fate to live. It must make its own the sufferings of peoples which, like ours a few years ago, are raising the banner of freedom and see themselves massacred, destroyed by colonial power." To rid the earth of this oppression was Che's life work. To refer again to the judgement expressed in *The Wall Street Journal*, "Che represented a very real

threat to the West in the 1960s." That, of course, is a judgment which would have made Che proud.

The passage of time has not erased the memory of Che, and not only in Cuba where his image and example is a summons to defend the revolution. One of his recent biographers, Paco Ignacio Taibo II, reports, "Travelling through the mountainous Mexican region of Guerrero a year ago, I saw hundreds of images of Che painted on white houses all along the road. Underneath each was the cryptic notation *1 x 1*. A friend told me that it was a message for the police: 'For each peasant killed, a policeman executed.'" (*International Viewpoint*, November 1997.)

Che Guevara and the FBI clearly demonstrates that the U.S. government feared this militant internationalist because it feared the spread of socialist revolution in Latin America. While this book adds to the body of information available about Che Guevara, it also stimulates a desire to learn more about him and the ideas that so terrified the U.S. government. Fortunately, Ocean Press has also recently published the *Che Guevara Reader*, which looks to be more comprehensive than previous collections.

After hearing about Che in the words of FBI and CIA informants — as useful as this is — one finally wants to hear Che in his own words, to discover or rediscover, as Michael Löwy has written, that "Che's message still shines like a beacon in this dark and cold end of the century." □

From the Managing Editors

Continued from Inside Front Cover
test such declining standards of patient care. Auciello has also provided an enlightening review of *BIDOM* supporter Michael Steven Smith's new book on Che Guevara.

In our last issue we appealed to readers for more about the late Myra Tanner Weiss. We are gratified that Dorothea Breitman has shared with us her reminiscences of Myra and a report on a New York City memorial meeting.

We are also grateful to John Kirkland for his report from Philadelphia on the People's Tribunal in the case of Black liberation fighter Mumia Abu-Jamal, and to Paul Lefrak for his coverage of a

planned march in Washington demanding freedom for all U.S. political prisoners, above all, the Blacks, Latinos/Latinas, and Native Americans victimized by corporate America's government.

Continued Discussion on the Labor Party

We print a second report on the Labor party's electoral policy commission. This was written by Bill Onasch for the *Kansas City Area Labor Party Advocate* (a point we apologize for omitting in regard to his first report, reprinted in our last issue, November-December 1997).

Problems of building the Labor Party and the present stage of the labor movement in general are discussed in an exchange between Paul Le Blanc and Frank Lovell. Just before going to press, we received from Frank Wright an article heatedly disagreeing with our views on particular questions of labor party tactics and strategy, going back to the eve of the Labor Party founding convention. There was no time to write a response to Wright's sometimes provocative charges. We expect to print Wright's article, with a response, in our next issue.

The Crash in Asia

Through most of 1997 the contradictions of the capitalist economic system have erupted in widening circles in much of Asia. It started last February with Thailand, where foreign investors and lenders had been pouring in capital for several years, expecting high profits. "Flush with foreign money, Thai banks and finance companies lent heavily," the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) explained November 26 in a round-up article entitled "Asia's Financial Shock: How It Began, and What Comes Next."

The speculative boom in Thailand soon ended, with numerous "office towers and condos" having been built, but no one to buy them. They "proved to be worth less than the cost of construction." Investors grew worried about "the Thais' ability to repay" and began moving their capital out. The result, in July 1997, was a crash of the Thai baht, which lost 16 percent of its value relative to the dollar.

Neighboring Asian countries — Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines — had economies that "shared all or some of Thailand's problems with heavy foreign debt and wobbly banks," wobbly because they had lent out heavily during the boom. "So here, too," the WSJ explains, "people began converting local currencies into dollars," and from August to October, the value of the Philippine peso, the Malaysian ringgit, and the Indonesian rupiah plunged. The IMF tried to "shore up confidence," says the WSJ, "by orchestrating emergency credit lines of \$17 billion for Thailand and about \$40 billion for Indonesia."

Then in October "the panic spread to Hong Kong, Southeast Asia's most sophisticated financial market, where heavy borrowing has fueled fast growth" — in other words, where capitalism's classic cycle of speculative boom was under way. Hong Kong had \$88 billion in foreign reserves, and so was able to maintain the value of its currency against the dollar, but loss of investor confidence led to a plunge on the Hong Kong stock market. That affected stock markets all over the world. In the U.S., stock prices fell 7.2 percent; in Brazil, 15 percent.

The Crisis Hits Korea — and Japan

The *Wall Street Journal* summary reports that "several Korean conglomerates, having borrowed too heavily," recently went bankrupt. Then on November 17 the value of the South Korean won against the U.S. dollar collapsed. On November 21 the South Korean government "asked the IMF for a Thai-style bailout."

As we go to press, the business pages are talking about the world's *eleventh largest economy*, that of South Korea, being on the verge of collapse. And in Japan, several major banks and financial firms have been shut down. The Japanese government is being urged to step in and save the situation with taxpayers' money — the same way the U.S. savings and loan business was bailed out to the tune of some \$120 billion, according to one source. Or Mexico, in 1995, to the tune of over \$50 billion.

The bailouts being offered involve unprecedented amounts of money (adding up to more than \$100 billion). The main source of the bailout money is of course the International Monetary Fund (IMF), along with major capitalist banks and governments in Western Europe and North America. (One wonders where they get all this capital; they've been telling us for years that there's no more money, that all social programs have to be cut back or shut down altogether.)

Striking examples of overproduction are being reported, including in China. South Korea's Hyundai Corp. has unsold inventories of 65,000 cars. Also in South Korea, unsold cars "line the roads and crowd the lawns of Kia Motors Corp....while [in Indonesia] thousands of Kia-built Timor sedans [have sat] baking in the sun near Jakarta's international airport...for more than a year." Toyota, too, is feeling the squeeze. "With five months of inventory sitting in parking lots, Toyota has suspended production at its two Thai plants for the rest of the year."

The IMF bailout loans bring with them requirements for shutting down plants, laying off workers, and driving down living standards through "austerity programs." Workers are protesting and fighting back, especially in South Korea, where the labor movement last

year waged a general strike against the threat of layoffs and where the new, militant Korean Confederation of Trade Unions ran their own leader as a candidate for president in the recent elections. In China, dissidents are urging the formation of independent unions.

And even in Vietnam, as the January 1998 *International Viewpoint* reports, workers in the "export processing zones" have been striking and organizing against superexploitation by foreign firms.

In Indonesia, in response to the deepening economic crisis, the new radical opposition is calling for the overthrow of Suharto, whose personal fortune and those of his relatives are expected to be the sole beneficiaries of the bailout.

A "reformer" and a "dissident," Kim Dae Jung, won the South Korean election in December. During his campaign he had promised to oppose the layoffs required by the IMF bailout plan and to resist foreign encroachment on the Korean economy. He dropped these promises immediately after being elected — one more illustration of why labor needs its own political party.

New World Economic System Needed

Some commentators in the U.S. capitalist media have been gloating over how "well" the U.S. economy is doing compared to its rival Japan, which is possibly threatened by depression. But this is whistling past the graveyard. If a crash indeed comes to Japan's economy, can the other major capitalist economies be far behind? In this era of "globalization," it is hard to imagine that U.S. capitalism will continue to boom at the expense of its floundering capitalist rivals.

We conclude our editorial remarks with a bit of doggerel a poet friend sent in (printed with apologies to our verse-unfriendly readers).

Things are looking pretty grim
All around the Pacific Rim
— a Rim that all of us are on.
So it isn't just Korea's *won*.
We all could soon look pretty wan
As capitalism stumbles on...
Time to replace the system, we think,
Before it floats us down the sink. □

An Appeal to All Readers and Supporters of Bulletin IDOM

You look forward eagerly to each new issue of *Bulletin IDOM*. There is nothing quite like it among the many newspapers and magazines attempting to propagate the ideas of revolutionary socialism. Of first importance: it is on the extreme left without being sectarian. Where else could you find such a stimulating mix of news and discussion articles? You can't quite put your finger on what it is that makes it so outstanding. Is it because of its reports on activity in the labor movement on both sides of the Atlantic and Pacific? Is it because sometimes issues are hotly debated? Or the fact that there may be two or more different opinions put forward about the same piece of news? Or because the editorial viewpoints concretize what you have been thinking? Even if it is none of the above and you have your own particular reasons for liking the magazine, we ask you now to concretely show your support in two ways:

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Information, Education, Discussion Bulletin

In Defense of Marxism

Call for a BIDOM Conference

A decision-making conference of BIDOM supporters will be held at a convenient hotel at the Newark, NJ, airport on Saturday, May 23, 1998. It will be by invitation only. Most of our readers, subscribers, contributors, and production associates are being invited. If you wish to inquire about an invitation, write to the Editorial Committee at BIDOM, PO Box 1317, New York, NY 10009.

The main purpose of the conference will be to orient our magazine more firmly than ever toward radicalizing workers, especially in the Labor Party, in strike struggles, and in the many new campaigns of organized labor.

An internal discussion bulletin among BIDOM supporters will continue to publish contributions as a necessary part of pre-conference preparation and clarification. Pre-conference discussion will conclude May 22, 1998.

