

**MORE CONCESSIONS IN AUTO AND MINES  
SEE PAGES 8 AND 9**

# **Socialist Worker**

**Paper of the International Socialist Organization 25¢ monthly**



**Vote No on UPS agreement See page 15**

OCTOBER 1984



NUMBER 90

**REAGAN AND MONDALE PROMISE  
PEACE, JOBS AND PROSPERITY**



# **THE POLITICIANS WON'T DELIVER**

Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko's appearance in Washington last month gave both Ronald Reagan and Walter Mondale a chance to portray themselves as "reasonable and peace-loving."

## **COMMITMENT**

Both candidates stressed their commitment to avoid nuclear war and to deal "firmly" with the Russians.

At the same time, the economy seemed stable, as the official unemployment rate dropped to 7.5%. The economic recovery has created 6.4 million jobs since the depths of the 1982 recession. And *Time* magazine gloated that the country feels optimistic again—printing "I Love U.S." on its cover.

All this talk of peace and prosperity—whether coming from Reagan's or Mondale's mouth—is illusory. It hides an ugly reality—an economic and political crisis which will deepen no matter who is elected November 6.

For one thing, the U.S. unemployment rate is *double* the official government rate, according to the Full Employment Action Council. This means that 15.1 million workers have no jobs.

Reagan's military-spurred \$250 billion budget deficit threatens to push the economy into a deeper recession when the current recovery peters out in 1985 or early 1986.

And it is not simply socialists who are predicting the economy's crash. Forecasters from *Business Week* to the *Wall Street Journal* agree.

The most recent round of major union contract negotiations, especially in coal and auto, suggests what economic crisis

means for workers—erosion in living standards and unemployment.

## **"EROSION"**

As the crisis deepens, the bosses will find that "erosion" is too slow to protect their profits. Their choice will be clear—step up an already open attack on workers' living standards and on the unions themselves.

But workers have a choice, too. They can refuse to accept the bosses' plans for increased unemployment, poverty and war. They must begin *now* to build a rank and file fightback. This is the only choice in an election year of dismal alternatives. □



**Why the electoral strategy  
is a dead end**

**See page 3**

## **INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

**WOMEN'S LIBERATION  
AND CLASS STRUGGLE**

**See page 13**

**SOLIDARNOSĆ**

**FOUR  
YEARS  
ON**

**See page 7**

# Defeat Washington "right-to-life" initiative

SEATTLE—The anti-abortionists are at it again—this time in Washington State. On November 6, voters will be asked to vote on Initiative 471, outlawing state funding for abortion.

In 1970, Washington became the first and only state to legalize abortion by popular vote. That victory is now under violent attack.

Two Washington clinics, one in Everett and one in Bellingham, have been set on fire—the Everett clinic three times. It is now closed.

Clinics in several other states have also been attacked: since January 1984, clinics have been bombed, set on fire or vandalized in Maryland, Florida, Virginia and Oregon.

### HARASSMENT

The organizers of Initiative 471 are the same people who led the picketing and harassment which began at the Everett Feminist Women's Health

### Rally and Picket Against Initiative 471

October 27

Rally: 1:00 p.m.  
at Seattle and Central Community College,  
Broadway and Pine Streets

Picket: 3:00 p.m.  
Human Life Office

For more information  
call 323-0701

Sponsored by Seattle ISO  
and Women for  
Reproductive Freedom

Center when it opened in August 1983 and continued until the clinic was closed by a third fire in April 1984.

Despite the picketers' claims that the fires were set by clinic staff to get publicity, the truth is that the man arrested and charged with the three Everett fires and the clinic fires in Bellingham was an active picketer in Everett and a county coordinator for Initiative 471.

Because they have been unable to outlaw abortion, the anti-abortion movement has turned to eating away at our rights and attacking clinics to close them down. Joseph

by MARY DEATON

Scheidler, famous for leading sit-ins at Chicago area abortion clinics, has written a book, *How to Close an Abortion Clinic*. It advocates using any means—legal, extralegal or illegal to shut down clinics.

Training sessions for anti-abortion pickets have been described by observers as lessons in harassing women.

The "sidewalk counsellors" who parade up and down in front of clinics all over the country are haranguing fanatics—invading privacy, intimidating women, shouting invectives and spewing their particular brand of hatred under the guise of "loving life."

### BACKDOOR ATTACKS

Such backdoor attacks hit the most vulnerable women first—poor women. These attacks on abortion rights are part of a larger attack against all the rights of women—attacks exemplified by the callous disregard for the needs of poor women and children displayed by this "pro-life" administration.

Nationally, only nine states still provide full funding for abortion. Five others will pay only if the mother's life is at risk or if rape or incest is involved.

Denying women their right to abortion because they cannot pay creates violence—violence against the women forced to resort to cheap backstreet abortions or to self-induced ones.

We must defeat Initiative 471. Its victory will set back the rights of all women. We must also fight to move beyond a situation where the right to abortion is dependent on the ability to pay.

Our current laws "guaranteeing" the right to abortion were won by women who took to the streets to secure their rights. With the crisis in capitalism, however, the system's willingness to tolerate legal abortions is strained.

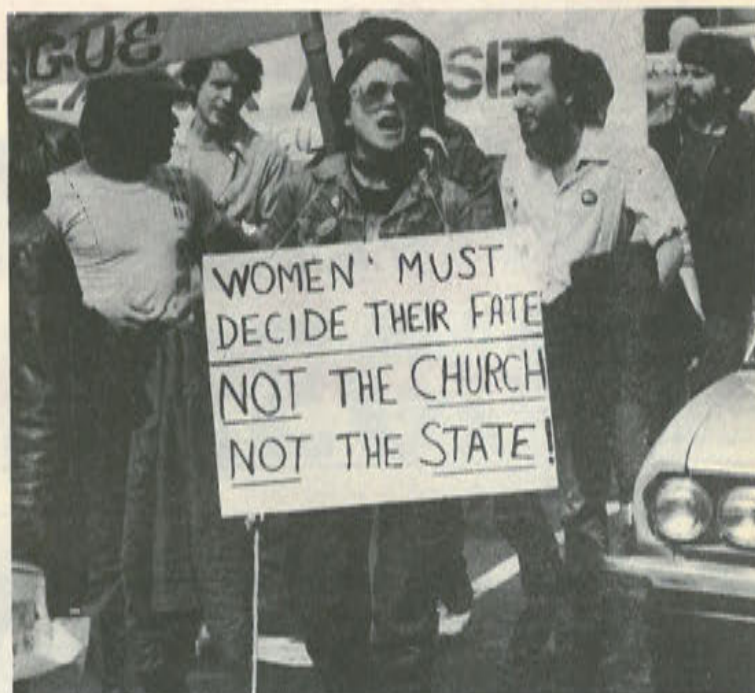
### REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE

Women are forced to make their reproductive choices based not on their personal desires, to have children or not to have children, but based on whether the system will provide

them and their children with a decent and dignified life.

One step in ending such oppression is demanding that all abortions be free and on demand: making it truly a woman's choice whether or not to use abortion to end a pregnancy.

Demanding free abortion recognizes that abortion is a necessity for women's liberation. Without access to abortion, we will never have complete control of our bodies or our lives. □



# U.S. no asylum for El Salvador refugees

In the first half of 1984, 2,900 Salvadorans were arrested—not in El Salvador, but in the U.S., in the Rio Grande Valley of south Texas. Their "crime" consisted of fleeing from the terror and economic disruption of prolonged civil war in El Salvador and seeking sanctuary in the U.S. without first obtaining legal permission to enter.

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, INS, considers undocumented Salvadorans to be illegal aliens, not refugees fleeing from war. South Texas is the major point of entry for Central American refugees, and the INS, known to its victims as "La Migra," has concentrated its enforcement efforts here. To get caught in its Gestapo-style dragnet, one need only have dark skin.

In south Texas, La Migra enforces its own version of the law. After arrest comes de-

by BILL STANT

tention at "El Corralon," the Port Isabel Service Processing Center, a barbed-wire and concrete prison camp.

### ALTERNATIVE

Under the law, there is an alternative to detention and the confusing legal process which follows arrest for illegal entry. Refugees not yet arrested for illegal entry may go to the INS District Office and apply for political asylum. These applications are processed in an informal hearing before the District Director. The refugee is not charged with violating any law.

The District Director for south Texas, Hal Boldin, avoids this process by having undocumented Central America refugees arrested and detained when they come in to apply for asylum. According to refugee lawyers of Proyecto Libertad, a

legal collective working out of Harlingen, Texas, all their clients who have voluntarily applied for asylum have been arrested on the spot. Lawyer Patrick Hughes says, "The only way for an undocumented Salvadoran to apply for asylum in the Valley is to get himself arrested."

The rights of refugees in times of war under the Geneva Accord are routinely ignored. Despite warnings to the Reagan administration from the United Nations, Central Americans entering the U.S. illegally continue to be arrested and detained in isolated concentration camps. Once there, they are likely to remain in detention for months unless they sign papers for "voluntary departure," which for many means a flight back to the security forces and death squads in El Salvador.

The administration knows that to offer sanctuary and asylum to undocumented Central American refugees would be to contradict its own policy of support for unpopular governments there. The state-sponsored terrorism of these regimes is a well-documented fact. Without millions of dollars in military aid and training from the U.S., this terrorism would be defeated by growing revolutionary movements in the region.

### ASYLUM

In 1982, the U.S. granted asylum to 22.4% of applicants from Poland, 75.8% from Iran, 78.2% from Russia, 53% from Afghanistan, 28.5% from Ethiopia, but only 2.4% from El Salvador. Boldin admits he doesn't usually hear asylum claims from Salvadorans and has never granted asylum to a Salvadoran. In fact, no Salvadoran in the Rio Grande Valley has ever won asylum.

Proyecto Libertad and other organizations working in the south Texas area are relatively isolated and need support. Contributions of money, food, clothing and other necessities are needed. For more information contact: Proyecto Libertad, 301 E. Madison, Harlingen, Texas 78550 or call (512) 425-9553. □



Another migrant worker harassed by La Migra.

The ideas of Karl Marx have been systematically distorted. In a clear and comprehensive study, Alex Callinicos restores the "self-emancipation" of the working class to its rightful place at the center of socialist analysis. "The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx," available from Hera Press for \$7.85.



# The elections won't change the system

by GLENN PERUSEK

Why should anyone vote for Walter Mondale in 1984? The most common argument is that Ronald Reagan is "extremely dangerous" and that he will continue to attack poor people and minorities.

Or he will have the power in his hands to appoint more conservative judges—who will continue to negatively affect the lives of ordinary people for years beyond the end of a second Reagan term.

Or finally, it is argued, Reagan will continue the arms build-up, thus continuing to threaten the world with the ghastly prospect of nuclear war. "Reagan '84; War '85" says a popular bumper sticker.

In short, the best reasons people can give to vote for Mondale are not reasons to vote for Mondale at all. They are reasons to vote against Reagan. As such they betray an important fact of the election: the lack of a genuine alternative—one which people can be enthusiastic about. This is part of the reason that the chance of Mondale winning is very slim indeed.

These arguments are often made by people who should know better: people who understand that the Democratic party is a capitalist party, people who have radical or socialist politics. They have given up their principles for what they wrongly argue is a "lesser evil."

Take the issue of war: Is Mondale really a peace candidate? Will a Democrat really make the difference between war and peace? It should not be forgotten that it was Jimmy Carter who in 1980 revived registration for the military draft. And Carter was not, of course, the first Democratic president to move towards war. Every time this century the U.S. has entered a major war, a Democrat has occupied the White House.

## "CHOICE"

The election of 20 years ago presented voters with a choice similar to the one they face this year. The Republican candidate, Barry Goldwater, stood on the extreme right-wing of the Republican party. He was so ideologically conservative that many big capitalists did not support his candidacy. Only 40% of key executive officers of the 100 largest corporations in the U.S. supported Goldwater in 1964.

Goldwater's opponent, Lyndon Johnson, was the consummate liberal. He had been John F. Kennedy's vice president and was promoting legislation of the program he would later name "The Great Society." Johnson proposed a "War on Poverty." In the



Spot the peace candidate . . .

midst of the stable economic expansion of the 1960s, it was believed that poverty could be eliminated in the U.S.

The "clear choice" between Goldwater and Johnson led radicals to support Johnson with the slogan, "Half the way with LBJ." But despite his promises of peace, by 1968, Johnson had presided over the most massive U.S. military effort since the second world war. The defense budget rose from \$46 billion in 1965 to \$77 billion in 1970. Johnson justified the escalation of the war by saying:

"The stakes in Vietnam are extremely high. The American investment is very large . . . The international prestige of the United States and a substantial part of our influence are directly at risk in Vietnam. There is no way of unloading the burden on the Vietnamese themselves, and there is no way of negotiating ourselves out of Vietnam. . ."

If that sounds similar to Ronald Reagan recently on El Salvador and Nicaragua, the conclusion to draw should be that there is fundamental agreement on foreign policy, in practice, between the Democrats and Republicans. We cannot expect Mondale to be any more "peaceful" than Reagan has been.

## CAPITALISM

Mondale would defend the needs of U.S. capitalism—as his predecessors have done. And in any case, he's not even running as a "peace" candidate. Rather, he is arguing that he can defend U.S. capitalism more effectively than Reagan.

On the key question of intervention in Central America, this is what candidate Mondale had to say: "I've been very condemnatory of the Sandinista government. I think it is an increasingly totalitarian state. . ."

If elected, he said he would "continue to interdict, because I think the Nicaraguans have no right to do what they're doing . . . We should try to quarantine Nicaragua if it uses any force outside of its borders."

It is important to remember that the lessons of this argument were actually drawn in the late 1960s. Hundreds of thousands of Americans were radicalized by the war and its horrendous toll. Even reduced to its most basic, the lesson was: don't trust politicians, the politicians want war, we are opposed to the politicians.

Now it is many of the generation of 1968 who propose a strategy of "forgetting" the lessons of the Vietnam war. These activists think that by registering the right kind of people—those who will be more likely to vote for Mondale, such as Blacks and women—that they are helping to defeat Reagan.

But even this is not happening. The Republicans are also having great success in registering voters. And a massive voter registration campaign takes one thing that the Democrats have less of than Republicans: money. The Republicans have amassed an \$11 million "war chest" to register new voters. This allows them to target—with computer searches through mailing lists—their "right kind of voters."

In the middle of October, the Republicans will set up a \$3 million "Victory Squad" of volunteers to knock on doors and make telephone calls to insure that Republicans go to the polls.

## MONEY

Some people would assume that the reason the Democrats have less money than the Republicans is because they have less support from wealthy businessmen. But this is not true. The average contribution to the Republican party is approximately \$35, while the Democrats, who still rely on fat-cat contributions and black-tie dinners, average more than \$200.

The average contributor to the Democratic party is not the blue-collar worker or the welfare mother, but a wealthy or well-off businessman or professional. The Republican party is not the clear cut "party of big business." At least in regards to finances, the Democratic party appears every bit as much a party of the rich.

Those radicals and socialists who have been heavily involved in the effort to "dump Reagan" also want to forget about the character of the Democratic party. The character of a political party is determined by three factors: leadership, membership and programs. By all three factors, the Democrats are a capitalist party which should receive no support.

And the problem with what most on the left are arguing is that the election will be history on November 7. The election-night media hype will be

over. All the efforts of the well-meaning Mondale supporters will—most likely—have gone for nothing. But even if Mondale were to win, American society will not have changed one iota.

For political activists, the choice will be clear—the endless and impossible task of pushing the Democrats to the left, or to be "more responsive" to working people in 1988, or, on the other hand, to break with the illusion that this is a viable road for changing society.

## BREAK

Such a break would put its reliance, above all else, in the prospect that the consciousness of the American working class—cautious and defensive today—can in fact be transformed. And it is necessary now to begin to lay the foundations of a real alternative—one that is dedicated to transforming a system of crisis, rather than simply changing who resides in the White House.

Whatever the outcome on November 6, this will still be the task facing those seriously committed to changing society. □

## SOCIALIST WORKER

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## 2,500 SAN FRANCISCO RESTAURANT WORKERS CAN WIN!

SAN FRANCISCO, CA—Striking restaurant workers—2,500 members of Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 2—received a boost after three weeks on the picket line. 65 out of 70 workers at the prestigious Vanessi's restaurant have joined their strike.

The Vanessi's workers have been touted in the press as happy employees who wanted to quit their "greedy union." A union decertification petition was even filed by some of the Vanessi's workers. But in three weeks of struggle, the Vanessi's workers have found their owner, Bart Shey, to be as profit-conscious as any other owner.

The strike now includes 28 restaurants, mainly in the North Beach and Fisherman's Wharf tourist areas. The issue is quite straight forward: Can workers hold on to gains which have allowed some of them to adequately support their families?

### PROFIT MARGIN

The employers—observing others of their kind on the offensive—are trying to widen their profit margin. There are two groups of employers involved. One is the Golden Gates Restaurant Association of 55 restaurants. The other is a splinter group of 17 restaurants represented by union-busting attorney J. Mark

by DAVE SIDDLE

Montobbio, who was involved in the recent Las Vegas and Macy's strikes.

Both are hard-liners. They want a wage freeze, cuts in benefits, and, above all, the scrapping of work rules providing job protection. As one worker at Pompeii's Grotto on the Wharf said, "Some cooks have cooked 20 years, and the employers want to break their union. They have made the owner rich enough to support two Mercedes Benzes and a country house in Silverado."

### TACTIC

The union's tactic has been to selectively strike restaurants where they can pull out 100% support. So far this has been fewer than 50% of the restaurants involved.

Clearly, the bosses have been able to take advantage of the union's non-involvement of rank and file workers over the last three years. But Vanessi's shows it is not too late to win workers back to union action.

A strike committee has been elected by the strikers, which has the potential to reach out to win the solidarity necessary to maintain the picket lines and spread the strike.

Please call your support in to the Picket Hot Line at 864-8778—or come down to one of the picket lines! □

# CRISIS IN

**Economic contraction has hit health care. It is the poor and health care workers who bear the cost of a deteriorating system. Dena Magoulas explains.**

As political currents shift in America, so does the state of medical care. In the 1960s, political protests led to progressive reforms in the medical system. In 1965, Medicaid was enacted to provide health care to the poor, and Medicare was created for the elderly. These reforms did much to equalize the distribution of health care, and as a result, Blacks and low-income people are experiencing higher life expectancies and lower infant mortality rates. Health care was thought of as a right.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, as the economy deteriorated, more people began questioning the rapidly growing costs of medical care. Legislation on National Health Insurance was pushed aside. Reagan's election brought many cuts in existing health care programs. Today, more and more is being said about the high costs of health care and less and less about the inequities in the health care system.

### The high cost of medicine

Americans will spend \$392.7 billion on health care in 1984—more than 30 times what they spent in 1950. Unfortunately, when compared with other countries, the U.S. spends more money for health care and has less to show for it.

For example, the U.S. will spend \$1,500 per person in 1984 to give them a life expectancy of 75 years and an infant mortality rate of 12 per 1,000 births. Japan spends just \$500 per person and has a life expectancy of 77 years and an infant mortality rate of 7 per 1,000.

One reason Japan is able to improve health at a lower cost is that it makes use of fewer doctors and more alternative medical providers, and it emphasizes preventive medicine. Great Britain, which gives free medical care to all, spends only \$400 per person, and the life expectancy of its people is 74 years.

### Why health care costs so much

The medical system in the U.S. is based on profit. Today,

90% of Americans have some type of third-party coverage such as Blue Cross, Medicaid or Medicare. Doctors are reimbursed on a fee-for-service basis—the more patients they see and the more tests they order, the more money they make.

Doctors have learned to exploit this system, often charging third-party payers for tests and visits done in the hospital which they could not have charged for if done on an outpatient basis. This leads to the overhospitalization of patients, instead of efforts to keep people healthy. One study found that one out of five hospitalized patients did not need to be in the hospital.

Doctors who specialize can charge even more for doing tests and procedures, so more doctors become specialists while there is a shortage of general practitioners. The average doctor's salary is \$100,000/year and a heart surgeon can make \$500,000 a year or more.

As the medical care became more specialized, fragmented and impersonal, the number of malpractice suits increased. Then, instead of ordering \$50 worth of tests which could diagnose a disease with 97% certainty, doctors began ordering \$500 worth of tests on patients to avoid malpractice suits. Costs were inflated further as expensive high technology allowed medicine to keep alive terminally ill patients and one-pound babies at the cost of thousands of dollars, while ignoring preventive medicine.

### Attempts at cost controls

Rising costs have placed the medical system under scrutiny by employers, the government and insurance companies. Employers have begun taking back hard-won health care benefits and making employees pay the difference.

The Medicare system, which provides health care to the nation's elderly, is expect-

ed to go bankrupt by the 1990s. In 1984, it will cost the government \$63 billion.

Medicaid, which provides health care to the poor, costs \$22 billion a year. The government has already decreased eligibility for Medicaid, making it harder to get on.

Last year Congress passed a bill for a prospective payment system. This program will set flat fees for hospital services paid by Medicaid and Medicare. For example, a hospital will be paid the same amount of money for any patient admitted with pneumonia, no matter how long they stay in the hospital and no matter how many tests they need.

So doctors will tend to discharge patients sooner so they can make more profit.

Also, people have been hired to check charts of Medicaid/Medicare patients to be sure they do not stay in the hospital too long. But this sometimes presents a problem with sick, elderly people who have no one to care for them at home. And now approval for admissions must be obtained from the government before the fact.

### Hospital employee layoffs

The health care system is in crisis. No longer will "frivolous spending" be allowed. Because of the changes in reimbursement policies and the increasing number of people without any coverage at all, hospitals are losing business and not getting paid as much for the business they do.

The loss of business means more empty hospital beds and more and more health care workers being laid off. Small hospitals are being hit especially hard. In the struggle to survive they are laying off staff and forcing those left behind to work extra hard.

### Reorganization of health care

The current crisis in health care is causing a total reorganization of the medical system. Several different

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The Warren hospital strike of 1982 generated support from other unionists.

# HEALTH CARE

forms are appearing. Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) were first coined by the Nixon administration as a way to save money and to fend off the then-popular proposal for National Health Insurance.

HMOs, like Kaiser, have outpatient clinics, labs and hospitals all owned by one organization. A person pays a certain amount per month whether or not he or she is seen, or even hospitalized. Under this type of structure, the organization loses money if people are hospitalized, so it benefits the organization to keep people healthy. As a result, HMOs have 20-40% lower costs. Medicaid is now experimenting with HMO systems in several states in an effort to control its costs.

The other type of structure is a corporation. Chains of hospitals, nursing homes, drug supply companies, emergency medical centers and other businesses are growing like McDonalds. These corporations are becoming more popular, especially in the south. Over the next 10 years it is predicted that eight to twenty of these conglomerates will be formed and will take over most of the nation's health care. Already, the largest for-profit hospital chain, Hospital Corporation of America, owns or manages more



Striking 1199 workers in a recent Boston dispute.

than 800 hospitals.

The age of the small-business family doctor is gone. Just as a recession causes small businesses to either go out of business or to merge with bigger companies, so has the recession led private physicians and small hospitals to close down or merge with these corporations.

Some 30% of community

hospitals are part of multi-institutional corporations. Doctors are now investing in these health care corporations and are not interested in fighting them. The corporations, in turn, have been lobbying to prevent federal legislation designed to decrease their profits. They are not interested in patients who are unable to pay.

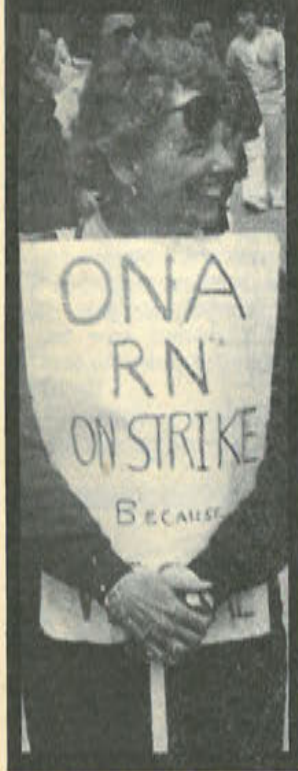
#### Health care alternatives

The best alternative would be a national health service providing free health care to all and not distinguishing between rich and poor, Black and white, old and young. Such a health service would pay doctors reasonable salaries and eliminate outrageous fees for service. Then more caring people would go

into the field of medicine. There should also be neighborhood health centers controlled by the people who work at them and use them.

An ideal medical system like this will not be won in a country still ruled by the rich and powerful. But it is something worth keeping in mind as we fight for medical reforms along the way. □

As the crisis gets worse, so do the attacks on health workers



## New York nursing home strike needs solidarity

by LEE SUSTAR

NEW YORK, NY—Pascal could not contain his bitterness as he walked the picket line in front of the American Nursing Home in Manhattan's lower east side.

"Look at us! All alone! We worked without a contract since March 30, and now we're all alone," he said. "We should have struck this summer when District 1199 went out," he said of the strike by over 52,000 hospital workers.

American Nursing Home is one of 11 such facilities struck by Local 144 of the Hotel, Hospital and Allied Health Services International Union. Pascal, like many of the 250 strikers at American, is angry that the union waited so long to call the walk-out over pension and health benefits.

"The nursing home knew they would finally make us strike. They had six months to prepare. They trained scabs, hired guards. But still, the union made us wait."

The nursing homes' employers organization quit paying a percentage of workers' wages into the union health fund when its contract with Local 144 expired. The bosses



demand that the union give up its health plan and wait a few months until the nursing homes could devise their own plan. But union officials refused to call a strike and even broke their own master agreement by signing contracts with six nursing homes that broke from the bosses bargaining group, the Southern Association.

#### CUTTING OUR THROATS

"Then we passed up the chance to go out with 1199," Pascal said. "That's cutting our own throats."

Eric Jacobs, a business agent for Local 144 has known for a

month that the nursing home bosses were preparing for a strike. "They went to labor-management relations seminars put on by a bunch of anti-union lawyers," he said. But Jacobs defends the union's reluctance to strike. "If we went out with 1199, there would have been a lot of bad publicity—that we didn't care about our patients. The media would have been against us."

But the media is always against strikers, and the media is against them now. Local 1199 strikers—which included private nursing home workers—were constantly accused of

abandoning "their patients." But it was management that refused to pay a decent wage to workers responsible for patient care.

By striking with 1199, Local 144 could have broadened the struggle against New York's union-busting medical bosses. "Bad publicity" would have meant little compared to the solidarity of a combined strike.

#### DIVIDE-AND-CONQUER

But solidarity is lost on Jacobs. He believes that the divide-and-conquer strategy of the nursing homes which left the association works to Local 144's advantage. "If all the public nursing homes went on strike at once, we wouldn't have enough union officers to go to all the picket lines. We (union officials) have to take care of the strikers."

But the union officials' six-month wait to strike shows that the rank and file must "care" for itself. "We should never have worked one minute without a contract," one striker said. "Look where it got us—we're on the picket line anyway, and the weather is turning cold. With 1199, we all could have been out together. We could have won." □

# "OPTIMISM OF THE WILL"

Are revolutionary socialists pessimists or optimists? Often, we are accused of being both.

We've all heard the argument: "I wish you were right about revolution and socialism, but it will never happen here."

On the other hand, we are labeled as pessimists when we argue that the revolution in Nicaragua, for example, is limited and that workers' power does not exist there.

## TRUTH

There is some truth to these characterizations. As we follow the class struggle we often shift from "optimism" to "pessimism." The Greyhound strike last winter, for instance, offered some hope that a large group of workers was finally standing up to the avalanche of give-backs.

As the strike developed, however, the weaknesses—too few pickets, isolation from other groups of workers and the collaboration of the union bureaucracy and the company—proved our "pessimistic" prognosis.

It is because revolutionary socialists are in the business of changing the outlook of the working class, not just reflecting its ups and downs, that we are, in a sense, both optimists and pessimists.

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian revolutionary socialist, expressed this seeming contradiction best, when he offered the following motto for socialists: "Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will."

It is a motto that describes the two-sidedness of the real world. Karl Marx described it this way:

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances encountered, given and transmitted from the past."

## LIMITATIONS

Revolutionaries are always coming up against the limitations of human action in a given circumstance. Any strike situation, especially in the isolated conditions of today, exposes the numerous shackles holding back workers. We have to be truthful about the situation while at the same time trying to change it.

During the heady days of the student movement, many activists thought that all that was needed was an effort of will to overcome any obstacle. The real world finally crushed them.

Reformists also ignore the realities of situations. For example, when we tell reform socialists that the state is a major obstacle to real change, they call us "pessimists" and accuse us of lacking "realism."

We are realists, of course. But this realism only has meaning if it leads to something that can change a situation. The whole point of our analysis of a situation is that we are committed to changing

it. We are always looking for the key lever for pushing the situation forward in the interests of workers.

That is why we need to remember that even though a small reform activity has its limits, it is, nevertheless, our job to help it go as far as it can. Today that means, more often than not, that all we can offer is our insights. Our forces are tiny but we do carry the memory of the class and a perspective for real change.

Many socialists in Europe before World War I did not understand the important relationship between reform activity and the role of socialists. Even though they had the forces, they remained aloof from the various reform activities, making abstract propaganda for socialism. Even strikes were seen as mere adjustments to the system and not worth supporting.

The limits of reform were used as the excuse not to do anything in the real world. This approach was a fatal mistake for the socialist cause.

## KEY

Even in the worst of times, we must look for the key that unlocks the status quo, that pushes the struggle forward. That is why we support the limited strike with both pessimism and optimism. The two go together.

The last four years have required a "pessimism of the intellect" in large measure. Reformist wishful thinking—from the Freeze petitioning, the massive Solidarity march in D.C., to the Rainbow Coalition electoral strategy—has been the main approach to combat Reaganism.

Overestimating these initiatives, we have argued, only builds illusions and completely misunderstands the immediate tasks for socialists. In the period of some of the biggest street demonstrations ever, workers on the picket lines were going down to defeat after defeat. And now the reformer's ultimate goal—electing a Democratic president—seems doomed as well.

While it is important not to abandon the "optimism of the will" in periods of relative class inactivity, it is equally important not to allow an over-estimation of a situation. Will-power alone will not win anything.

Numerous strikes over the last four years have demonstrated that there are many dedicated workers willing to stand fast against the employers' offensive. Still, strike after strike has been lost and some unions have been broken. And despite the defeats there are plenty of examples of workers willing to fight. The problem is one of leadership and not will-power.

In combination, the saying, "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will" should help underline an important lesson: we can win tomorrow if we take care of the right tasks today.

# New AIDS tests a threat to privacy

by TERRY STONE

A new test has been developed for HTLV-III antibodies—a virus some researchers believe may be associated with AIDS.

Preliminary studies show that nearly 60% of all gay men may test positive for the antibodies. This does not mean that they will come down with AIDS—merely that they may have been exposed to the virus.

Scientists are unsure exactly what a positive test result may indicate. It may be, for example, that a positive result could indicate that the subject has been exposed to the virus and is now immune—as in the case of measles.

## QUESTIONS

With so many questions still unanswered about the accuracy of the HTLV-III test, many researchers question that its widespread use is justified.

But the Reagan administration—under pressure to produce something to indicate that it is working on the epidemic—is planning to authorize the test for commercial use. The result will be that many gay men will take the test with the hope that it may tell them something about their own health.

Gay leaders fear that the statistics gathered through this testing—the lists of names, addresses, health status, drug use history, sexual history, and so on of

gay men—will not be kept confidential.

Three governmental bodies—the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Public Health Service (PHS)—are involved in research and surveillance of the AIDS epidemic. To date, AIDS cases have soared to nearly 6,000 nationwide. Nearly half of that number are dead.

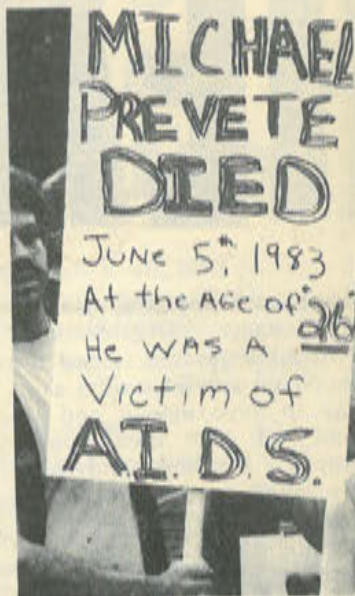
Populations greatly at risk for AIDS include gay men with multiple sex partners and IV drug users. Over 40% of people with AIDS are third world.

The government is unwilling to sufficiently fund research to help such frowned-up minorities. But it has given its stamp of approval to the HTLV-III test. Now CDC, NIH and PHS will be able to use the test freely.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

According to gay legal activists, CDC, NIH and PHS have insufficient confidentiality provisions built into their AIDS work. Employers, insurance companies, courts and the public at large could potentially get access to these lists.

As a result, gay men whose identities are revealed by the lists could be subject to employment discrimination, cancellation of



needed health insurance, military discharge, court suits, arrest and more. Gay newspapers around the country are running stories about the confidentiality issue and what it will mean for the rights of gays.

"It's a desperate situation," says Fred Hayes, an AIDS activist from Boston. "On the one hand, the gay community is watching so many of our brothers die of AIDS. We want the government to pour more money into research to find a cure. But on the other hand, the more research that gets done, the more information the government has, the more extensive their lists of gay men."

"What assurance do we have that that sensitive information remains confidential?"



## Bargain Basement...

Anyone who can't figure out just how the Pentagon manages to spend the torrents of money it gets every year ought to consider some of these figures. A recent Congressional investigation showed the Air Force bought a 10-cup coffeemaker for a C-5 transport plane.

Cost? \$7,622. The price does not include a stainless steel pot. The investigation found the military had paid \$670 for aircraft armrests which mechanics say could be made for \$5, and \$74,000 for a folding ladder.

An Air Force general defended the purchasing policies, especially the price tag for the "emergency lighting system" meant to operate under extreme conditions. In that case, the Air Force paid \$180 for a rechargeable flashlight.



## Tweedledee, Tweedledum

Walter Mondale complained when Reagan's meetings with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko upstaged him. The *New York Post* didn't miss a beat, announcing on its September 27 front page: "Fritz Rips Prez—'He Sounds Just Like Me.'"



## Hell Helms?

For 35 years, the United States has refused to sign a United Nations treaty opposing genocide. If Jesse Helms, the arch-reactionary North Carolina senator, has his way, the U.S. may never agree with the 96 other signers to outlaw Nazi-like death camps on its own soil.

Helms is waging a one-man battle to prevent the U.S. Senate from ratifying the treaty, which the UN wrote in response to the Holocaust—Hitler's massacre of 6 million Jews before and during the second world war. Helms, one of Reagan's staunchest allies, argues that the treaty would allow the UN to "interfere" with "internal" U.S. affairs.



# POLAND: FOUR YEARS ON



Four years ago, the Polish government was nearly toppled by the biggest strike wave seen in Europe since 1968.

Every major city was swept by strikes. By the middle of August, it was estimated that over 800 separate disputes were taking place.

One of the most repressive states in the world—with a massive police force and army, and a history of using them to crush workers—was paralyzed and helpless.

## STRIKES

The strikes began when the regime attempted to cut living standards to placate western banks who had lent them billions of dollars. Rising meat prices had forced workers to take on their bosses.

But as the strikes spread, the confidence of the workers involved grew. In factory after factory, machines were turned off as workers gathered together to formulate their de-

**"The winning of free trade unions was a massive victory . . . but even as it was announced, some workers expressed their fears."**

mands. Although management threatened victimizations and worse, workers from one end of the country to the other quickly

won major wage increases.

As the strikes spread out from Warsaw to provincial cities such as Lublin, the lessons of organizing began to be learned. The demands from different factories began to be standardized.

At each factory, workers called for wage increases, higher family allowances, an end to special shops for the privileged party officials and guarantees against victimizations.

*But the discussion and level of organization necessary in any large scale strike was beginning to have a spin-off. As workers gathered to elect shop representatives, they began to demand free trade unions.*

By the time the strike wave had spread to Lublin, free elections and the reform of the

trade union structure had been added to the demands.

The high point of this militancy came in Gdansk, the port town in northern Poland. Gdansk had a long history of struggle against the Polish regime. Especially inside the giant Lenin shipyard, there was a tradition of organization and violent confrontation with the authorities.

## SPARKED

The strikes in the Lenin shipyard were sparked off by the firing of a crane driver, Anna Walentinowicz, a veteran militant and a member of the Committee for Free Trade Unions. As well as her reinstatement, which was won on the first day, the workers demanded the erection of a memorial to those workers who

were killed by the security forces in 1970, when strikes in the yard had been brutally crushed.

The shipyard workers quickly won a 12% wage increase. But by then strikes had spread throughout Gdansk. When the strike committee recommended a return to work, their decision was overturned.

It was this display of class solidarity by the 16,000 workers in the Lenin shipyards which spelled the end for the government's strategy. Until then it had hoped to contain the strikes by settling with individual factories and thereby splitting the working class.

This solidarity had an organizational outcome. A Joint Strike Committee covering nearly 500 workplaces throughout Gdansk was set up, agreeing that it would only settle as a whole. Separate wage deals would not be struck.

This joint strike committee, with its own printing press, its own press bureau and its own translators for foreign journalists, challenged the power and authority of the state itself.

*At this stage, the continued rule of the Polish state was in doubt. The regime was in disarray.*

The Polish state dared not use repression as they feared that this would spark off a revolution. They realized that they had to buy time, and this would mean major concessions. Workers were already demanding free trade unions, and the state realized it would get no peace unless it recognized these unions.

## FEARS

The representatives of the Joint Strike Committee met with the representatives of the Polish Communist Party to negotiate a deal.

The negotiations did not take place in secret—exactly the opposite, in fact. Factory loudspeaker systems broadcast them into every workplace so that workers could ensure that their representatives were carrying out their wishes.

*The winning of free trade unions was a massive victory. But even as it was announced, some workers expressed their fears. How long could the unions last, they wondered, when the power of the Communist Party and its police and army were still intact.*

# Factories the key

Solidarnosc posed a fundamental threat to Poland's rulers. They knew that, in the end, either they went under or Solidarnosc did.

Unfortunately, Lech Walesa and most of the other workers' leaders thrown up by the 1980 strikes, did not understand this.

They sought instead a "self-limiting revolution," based on a compromise between the regime and Polish "society," represented by Solidarnosc.

The military of December 13, 1981 proved that there could be no such compromise. Martial law was proclaimed, Solidarnosc was banned, and thousands of union activists were interned.

Since the crushing of Solidarnosc, the regime of General

Jaruzelski tried to "normalize" the situation. They have used repression to prevent any revival of independent working class activity.

The hated thugs of ZOMO, the riot police, have been called out again and again to crush demonstrations called by the underground leadership of Solidarnosc.

## CONCESSIONS

At the same time, Jaruzelski has made a number of concessions, starting with the lifting of martial law. In early August, he released most of his 650 political prisoners, and halted the trial of the leaders of KOR, the Workers' Defense Group closely linked to Solidarnosc.

These measures have two motives. First, they are designed to placate Western governments and to encourage them to relax the economic sanctions imposed on Poland after the 1981 coup.

Secondly, the concessions are designed to reduce working class alienation from the regime. Jaruzelski's new "independent" unions have had little success in drawing in former Solidarnosc supporters.

But there is no question of the regime allowing the existence of genuinely independent working class organization.

Two underground Solidarnosc leaders, Bogdan Lis and Piotr Mierzewski, are still in prison, facing charges which include high treason—an offense carrying a potential death sentence.

As Zbigniew Bujak, the main leader of the Solidarnosc underground, put it in a joint statement with Wladyslaw Frasniki, union leader in Wroclaw, Lower Silesia:

"The fact that Bogdan Lis has been accused of treason is yet another attempt to portray Solidarnosc as a subversive organization and an agent of foreign intelligence services. It is also a further attempt at blackmail and intimidation—today Bogdan Lis, tomorrow

anyone who continues to engage in trade union activities."

## WARNING

As if to confirm this warning, Frasniki himself, only released from prison at the end of July, was jailed for two months at the beginning of September for his part in a Wroclaw demonstration.

Although Lech Walesa was allowed to address a 1500-strong rally outside the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk, the ZOMO used water cannons to disperse 2,000 Solidarnosc demonstrators in Warsaw.

The regime still has the repressive power to crush any opposition on the streets. But it is wary of Solidarnosc's enduring support.

Attempts to revitalize the Polish economy by cutting living standards may provoke another workers' revolt—as in 1970, 1976 and 1980. Preparing for such an explosion will mean, as Zbigniew Bujak recently proposed, "Rebuilding Solidarnosc in the factories."

It is inside the factories that Solidarnosc activists can best win their fellow workers' active support. The small victories on wages and conditions won today can lay the basis for the bigger battles of the future.



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# SHOP FLOOR STRENGTH IS THE WAY TO STEM THE TIDE AUTO BOSSES WIN MORE CONCESSIONS

1984 has been an important contract year. The economic recovery and big profits for the bosses have generated anger among workers. However, as GLENN PERUSEK and LANCE SELFA argue, the recent settlements show that anger is not enough—only a militant rank and file strategy can stop concessions.

The agreement between the UAW and GM is being hailed by the business community as an "historic" compromise. But is it really so historic, and does it contain "good things for both sides?"

To listen to the company and union officials, there was something for everyone to be happy about. Owen Bieber, head of the UAW, said, "We view the agreement as an excellent settlement. I believe it is indeed an historic settlement."

GM's vice president for industrial relations, Alfred S. Warren, Jr., said that he, too, was "delighted" by the agreement.

"By most conventional yardsticks," crowed the *Wall Street Journal*, "the settlement was moderate. It will cost GM about 20% over three years, including cost-of-living adjustments calculated assuming a 5% inflation rate. That is only half of the 40% three-year settlement that the UAW won from the auto industry in 1979."

## MEASLY

And the settlement is measly not only in terms of auto settlements over the last few years, but even when compared to other sections of the economy.

"The annual 2.25% wage increases in the Detroit settlement actually trails the roughly 2.7% average in other major U.S. settlements so far this year. It is also smaller than the dollar to percentage wage increase that the Japanese auto makers gave their workers this year."

After a lump sum payment of \$180 to each worker, there are two years of wage increases ranging from 1-3 1/2%, with the lowest increases going to the least skilled workers. Then there is an across-the-board increase of 2 1/2% in the third year. This is a deal which is worse than the original offer made by the company.

What is being hailed as so

"historic" is the idea of a job bank. GM and the UAW have agreed that workers laid off for "market" reasons will not be protected. That means that recession-related layoffs will continue to be treated as before.

## LAY OFF

But the new deal does establish that GM will not lay off any workers with at least one year's seniority who are displaced by new technology, consolidation of parts plants, productivity gains or the transfer of work to other facilities.

Instead of being laid off, such workers will be placed in a "job opportunity bank" to be overseen by committees of bosses and labor officials. Workers who make it into the bank will enter training programs for other jobs, be transferred to other plants, perform "non-traditional jobs" or become utility workers—replacing others who are absent. If a worker qualifies for the bank, he or she will be paid at the normal wage rate.

While this, on the surface, sounds good, it is really like any contract: it sounds good only until you read the fine print. There are four catches.

First, GM will pay only up to a limit of \$1 billion per year into the job bank.

Also, GM is entirely free to outsource—buy from non-union and foreign sources—and automate. If GM lays workers off because it is producing the same cars cheaper overseas, then they will argue that the layoffs were market-related—and thus the laid-off workers will not be eligible for the job bank.

## JOB BANK

Most importantly, the job bank will protect, at best, fewer than 4,000 workers per year. GM's plans are to lay off 100,000 in the next two years—so no more than 7 or 8% of all workers who lose jobs will

qualify for the bank.

And finally, the job bank workers who become utility workers will be used to boost productivity. "They'll be the cutting edge of the company's attempt to get rid of lots of job classifications," said one union official.

Not only will the job bank plan protect next to no one in the UAW, it will also be used as a weapon in the hands of the bosses to attack productivity and seniority.

## "AMBITIOUS PROGRAMS"

"The settlement," the *Wall Street Journal* concludes, "allows GM to carry out two ambitious programs—sharply stepped-up automation of its manufacturing operations and the procurement of increasing numbers of vehicles and components through outsourcing from Japanese, Korean and non-union domestic suppliers."

Of GM's agreement to spend \$1 billion for retraining, transfer or otherwise supporting displaced workers, the *Journal* concludes: Assuming that the next two contracts last six years, the \$1 billion comes to \$167 million a year—or about the cost of one new paint shop in one new auto plant."

Hardly an "historic" success for auto workers! But it does continue the trend of erosion of wages and benefits for auto workers.

During the 1960s and 1970s, it was possible for UAW members who worked for the major U.S. auto producers to gain regular wage increases. At an average of 3% per year real wage increases, the certainty of steadily improving conditions for the UAW seemed guaranteed—although productivity drives and equally regular work rules changes went along with the increases.

The 1974-75 recession sent shock waves through the auto industry, and then, in 1982—in the midst of the worst post-war



Owen Bieber and Don Ephlin: Self-satisfied and smiling after another economic recession—the UAW gave back \$3 billion in concessions.

## JOB SECURITY

In addition, there has been a serious erosion in job security. Since the peak of 1978, some 170,000 auto workers have been put on indefinite layoff. In the past three years, GM alone has laid off some 50,000 workers—and it plans to increase layoffs in the immediate future. GM wants to cut its present workforce by one quarter by 1986. That means laying off 100,000 of the 400,000 GM workers.

At the same time, the Big Three auto makers have posted record profits, earning combined profits of \$6.5 billion in 1983. GM alone made \$3.2 billion net profit in the first six months of 1984. GM and Ford together are expected to earn \$10 billion by year's end.

The bosses have put part of this money into their own pockets. GM paid its top three executives \$2.4 million in bonuses in 1983.

But the company bosses have not eaten all their profits. They have also gone on a massive investment program—\$6 billion on high technology and other plant and equipment purchases in 1984 alone.

Industry analysts predict that they will have to spend at such a level for many years to come in order to remain competitive internationally.

## SMALL CAR PRODUCTION

According to the bosses and the union leaders, the central question in the negotiations was the future of small car production in the U.S. Small cars are so important for three reasons.

First, these are the cars which the Japanese companies have been able to produce so much cheaper than their American counterparts.

Second, these cars make up 40% of the U.S. domestic car market. Given the price of gasoline, this share can only in-

crease in the years to come.

Third, because the profit margin on each individual small car is narrower than for big cars—which are more heavily-laden with highly profitable extras—the cost advantage for companies with foreign parts or all-foreign construction is intensified.

Says Owen Bieber: "We want current small car and parts production kept here, and we want future new models built here. It's that issue which is the key to a satisfactory settlement in the negotiations."

Ford claims they sustained a loss on every one of the 343,000 Escorts they sold in the U.S. last year—because they had to sell them so cheaply to be able to sell them at all. They say the Japanese have a \$2,600 per car cost-advantage. GM agrees that it cannot build small cars in the U.S. profitably.

So, GM plans to import 500,000 small cars from Japan and Korea as soon as the government lifts quotas—which will probably happen shortly after the election.

But, in fact, the question of small car production in the U.S. has been effectively settled. The auto companies no longer have an outlook which is limited by national boundaries. They are now planning car production on a world scale—and refuse to "pay twice" for production which can be planned for their world operations.

They refuse to duplicate their production facilities just for the sake of the particular national group of workers involved. Ford, for example, has just built a facility in Mexico and will be importing 130,000 cars a year to the U.S. by 1987.

## TOKEN STRIKES

So despite the settlement, auto workers still face the threat of unemployment and further cuts. The UAW leadership found it relatively easy to mollify its members with the token strikes last month. Bieber used the strike as a way to get



Striking auto workers in Linden, New Jersey.





sellout.

the membership to accept the contract—to show that he was leading some kind of fight as well as undercutting any opposition within the UAW.

The ease with which the International was able to force a return to work underlines the lack of organization among rank and filers. Even in the case of the Van Nuys, California local, which initially refused to return to work when the settlement was announced, they were sharply rebuked by Bieber and ordered back to work.

A central question for auto workers—as well as other unionized workers in the U.S.—over the next decade will be how to safeguard wages in industries which have overseas competitors with a large wage-cost advantage. The answer, clearly, is not give-backs—they have only led to more unemployment because they give the companies money with which to robotize.

There are two aspects of an effective strategy: one is real international solidarity, the second is militancy in fights against the bosses.

**MILITANT APPROACH**

A strong, militant approach to negotiations with the bosses can prevent deterioration of wages and working conditions in the present situation. Coupled with this, there must be an effort to organize the unorganized. If the bosses have no scab auto parts plants to "out-source" to, they will be less able to run roughshod over UAW members in negotiations.

Nothing short of such a strategy can possibly stem the tide of wage cuts and layoffs. But, unfortunately, such a strategy finds no sizeable audience among the rank and file auto workers today.

The necessity for militant and serious organization of the most far-sighted and political auto workers is the fundamental precondition for even the beginning of implementation of such a strategy. □



**MINE OWNERS ALSO GAIN**



Above: Richard Trumka. Below: National Guardsmen escorting scab coal trucks.

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**—UMW President Richard Trumka emerged from negotiations with coal industry representatives September 21 with a 40-month contract agreement in hand which, he said, included "not a single concession."

The contract was hastily sent to locals with Trumka pushing for ratification. It was the first time in 20 years that the miners settled a contract without a strike—a fact which Trumka and industry representatives viewed with pride.

The agreement calls for a 12% wage and benefit increase over the 40 months of the contract's life. In dollar terms, this means an increase of \$1.07 per hour next year, and increases of about 75¢ per hour over the following two years.

**NOTHING**

In other words, the contract gains next to nothing for UMW members. Bobby Brown, chief negotiator for the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA), said the agreement would cost the companies next to nothing because the industry anticipates a yearly 3% increase in

productivity over the contract's life.

The most recent settlement is in sharp contrast with the previous three settlements, which gave 35-45% wage gains over three years.

The 1978 contract followed a 111-day strike—broken when the Carter administration invoked the Taft-Hartley Act against the UMW. The 1981 settlement followed a 72-day strike.

But Trumka, negotiating his first contract since his 1983 election as a "reform" candidate wanted nothing of the strikes that broke out in 1978 and 1981.

He began as early as last April by holding closed-door meetings with BCOA officials—announcing that his goal was to avert a strike when the old contract expired on October 1. He maintained a news blackout on the negotiations, preventing UMW members from finding out anything.

**"PROFESSIONAL"**

Thus, Trumka, a 35-year-old lawyer, wanted to show the BCOA that he was a "professional," a strong leader who—unlike former president Sam Church—could successfully broker his mem-

bers' support.

Brown praised Trumka's "professionalism" and lauded the "discipline shown by the UMW."

"The most positive thing we start with is 80 months of stability," he said.

The UMW leadership made clear its interest in promoting the "stability" of the coal industry, which has closed almost half of its 6,000 mines since 1978, costing more than 400,000 miners their jobs.

This type of rationalization for "labor-management cooperation" and "professionalism for the 80s" is nonsense. UMW contributions to "stability" in the unionized sector of industry won't alter the fact that 60% of coal mined in the U.S. comes from non-union mines.

Non-union Pyro Mining Co. operates 7 days a week, 20 hours a day at a cost of 25% less than the average union mine which operates 16-hour days in five-day weeks.

Thus, the pressure on the miners' living standards comes—in an increasingly competitive international coal market—from the appeal of non-union operation to coal companies.

In an industry in which companies are going non-union, closing mines or selling off their coal interests, the new agreement's requirement that operators who sublease mines hire laid-off miners, it is a temporary measure at best. It might help some mines regain their jobs, but it does not address the larger issues which threaten miners' living standards.

**KEY TO WINNING**

The key to winning increased wages, benefits and jobs does not lie in labor-management cooperation to stabilize the coal industry or in Trumka's "new professionalism," but in an all-out effort to organize the non-union mines and a concerted fight for wages and benefits—goals which can be won when miners use their power in the workplace.

The miners were the most combative section of the U.S. working class in the 1970s. Today, they face the same employers' offensive as other workers. But they have faced and met such challenges before. We should look to seeing the same sort of revival over the next period. □



# Letters

## NO TO AFFIRMATIVE LAYOFFS!

### Reagan rally: a disgusting display

Dear Socialist Worker,

Fountain Square in Cincinnati was packed with Reagan supporters last month. It was every bit appropriate for the show—an elect Reagan for president campaign rally.

For approximately two hours prior to his late arrival, bands played and flags waved. Next, local Olympic athletes and Cincinnati athletic big wigs came to the stage, coming just for the show.

Who cares you ask? Actually most of those in the crowd did, and they cheered the side show to this big-top extravaganza which only lacked a tent. The clown finally arrived with his usual bad jokes and everyone was pleased with this lighter side of life, that of the unreal.

There were those with signs (including myself), the so-called demonstrators. Actually, the demonstrating was what Reagan supporters were

doing.

What I felt I was doing and those carrying placards was exercising our right to freedom of expression.

But the crowd seemed to forget that this is a fundamental constitutional right. After a young man grabbed my sign and ripped it up to shreds, the crowd around us gave him a round of applause! Earlier an elderly woman grabbed my arm demanding my sign and slapped me when I didn't give it up. No one except a friend with me, asked this woman to leave me alone.

Most of this patriotic bullshit made me sick and depressed. I saw many opposition placards grabbed and destroyed. But one thing lightened my spirits: the masses will become educated and this knowledge will propel power into their hands.

Terri Smith,  
Cincinnati, OH

Dear Socialist Worker,

Affirmative action is a limited reform, and not a solution, to the problem of racism and job discrimination.

To the extent that affirmative action breaks down racism and the barriers to unity in the workplace, socialists are very much for the measure.

But there is something more to job discrimination than racist and sexist employers who can be put in their places by bringing lawsuits against them.

The main problem is that we live in a system which refuses to employ all of us.

This is the position with which to approach the 3-month old Supreme Court decision upholding seniority over affirmative action in layoffs.

The arguments that have appeared in the letters to Socialist Worker neglect one very important aspect of this decision—it was not about affirmative hiring, but about affirmative firing.

Before any debate about affirmative action comes up, we have to be clear that as revolutionary socialists we are against all lay-offs—under any conditions.

All workers, Black or white, women or men, have the right to their jobs. And we stand behind all workers when their jobs are attacked.

We defend the equal right to a job for women and minori-



We must oppose layoffs of all workers.

ties, but the issue here is defending the jobs of all workers.

Is this ducking the issue? Abstaining from a position? Hardly.

Any socialist who insists on putting either affirmative action or seniority ahead on the question of layoffs, is simply choosing who will be fired, and is placed in the position of being against one section of workers or an-

other—and for the boss who wants the layoffs.

We support affirmative action in hiring—to break down racism and sexism in the workplace.

But when the question of layoffs come up, we steer a very different course—we will have none of it. Otherwise we cannot win a real fight for jobs.

Alan Maass,  
Chicago, IL

# What is agitation and propoganda?

To agitate is "to excite or stir it up," according to the Oxford dictionary, while propoganda is a "systematic scheme or concerted movement, for the propagation of some creed or doctrine."

These definitions are not a bad starting point. Agitation focusses on an immediate issue, seeking to "stir up" action around that issue. Propaganda is concerned with the more systematic exposition of ideas.

The pioneer Russian marxist Plekhanov pointed out an important consequence of this distinction. "A propagandist presents many ideas to one or a few persons; an agitator presents only one or a few ideas, but presents them to a mass of people."

Like all such generalizations, this one should not be taken too literally. Propaganda can, in favorable circumstances, reach thousands or tens of thousands. And the "mass of people" reached by agitation is a highly variable quantity. Nevertheless, the general point is sound.

### Many ideas to the few

Lenin, in *What Is To Be Done* develops this idea: "The propagandist, dealing with, say, the question of unemployment, must explain the capitalistic nature of crises, the cause of their inevitability in modern society, the necessity for the transformation of this society into a socialist society, etc. In a word, he must present 'many ideas,' so many indeed, that they will be understood as an integral whole by a (comparatively) few persons.

"The agitator, however, speaking on the same subject, will take as an illustration the death of an unemployed worker's family from starvation, the growing impoverishment, etc., and utilizing this fact known to all, will direct his efforts to presenting a single idea

### DUNCAN HALLAS examines the meaning of two often used and confused terms.

to the "masses." Consequently, the propagandist operates chiefly by means of the *printed* word; the agitator by means of the *spoken* word."

On this last point Lenin was wrong because he was too one-sided. As he himself argued, both before and after he wrote the statement above, the revolutionary paper can and must be a most effective agitator. But this is a secondary matter. The important thing is that agitation, spoken or written does *not* try to explain everything.

Lenin speaks of "crying injustice." Yet as a profound student of Marx, he knew very well that there is no "justice" or "injustice" independent of class interest. He is pointing to, and appealing to the contradiction between the notions of "justice" or "fairness" which are promoted by the ideologists of capitalist society and the realities exposed in the course of the class struggle. And that is absolutely right from an *agitational* point of view.

The propagandist, of course, must probe deeper, must examine the notion of justice, its development and transformation through different class societies, its inevitable class content. But that is not the main thrust of agitation.

Those "marxists" who do not understand this are themselves victims of bourgeois ideology, of timeless generalizations which reflect an idealized class society. Most important, they do not grasp concretely the way in which working class attitudes actually change. They do not understand the role of

experience. They do not understand the difference between agitation and propoganda.

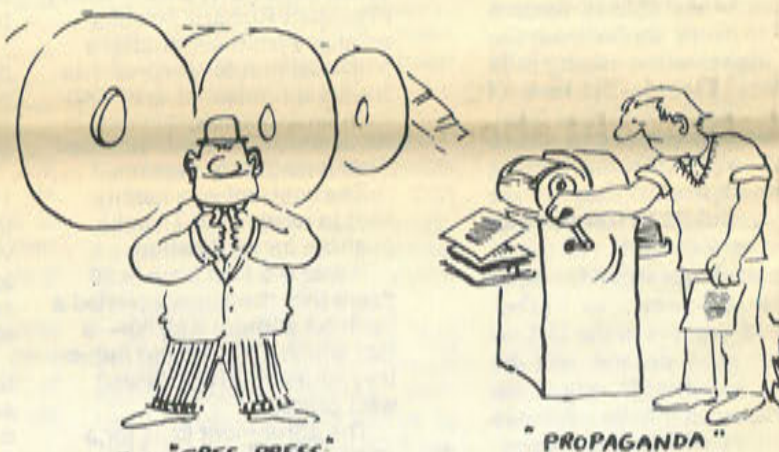
### Agitation requires bigger forces

Agitation requires bigger forces. Of course, an individual can sometimes agitate effectively against a particular grievance, say lack of soap or decent toilet paper in a particular workplace, but a widespread agitation with a general focus is not possible without a significant number of people who are suitably placed to carry it—without a party.

So what is the importance of the distinction today? Socialists in this country are not talking to thousands or tens of thousands. We are talking to small numbers of people, usually trying to win them through general socialist politics, rather than on the basis of mass agitation. So what we are arguing is basically *propaganda*.

But it is here that the confusion arises. Because there is more than one sort of propaganda. There is a distinction between *abstract* propaganda and that propaganda which can hopefully lead to activity—concrete or realistic propaganda.

Abstract propaganda raises



ideas which are formally correct, but which do not relate to struggle or to the level of consciousness which exists among those to whom the ideas are being put. For example, to argue that under socialism the system of wages will be abolished is absolutely correct. To place such a demand to workers today is not agitation, but propaganda of most abstract form.

Similarly constant demands for a general strike, regardless of whether the prospect is a real one in the present situation, leads not to agitation but to abstaining from the real struggle in the here and now.

Realistic propaganda, on the other hand, starts from the assumption that tiny groups of socialists cannot decisively influence large groups of workers at present. But it also assumes that there are arguments over specifics around which socialists can attempt to build.

So the realistic propagandist in a factory will not argue for abolition of wages. He or she will argue for a set of demands which can hopefully lead the struggle to victory, and certainly beyond the tokens of the trade union bureaucracy. So they will argue, for example, for a flat wage increase or for an all-out rather than a selective strike.

### Getting the balance right

None of this is agitation in the sense that Lenin talked about it. It is one or two socialists raising a set of ideas about how to win. But neither is it abstract propaganda, because it relates to a real struggle

and so can relate to a sizeable minority of the workforce.

This means that realistic propaganda can strike a chord with a much larger group of people than those who are fully open to socialist ideas. At present only a very small group will be open to all the ideas of socialism. The larger group will not be, but may still accept much of the propaganda of socialists about such things as not trusting the officials and organizing among the rank and file.

The importance of this distinction is two-fold. Those socialists who believe that they make propaganda in their small discussion groups and agitate in their workplace are very likely to over estimate their influence among the mass of workers and therefore miss the opportunity to build a base among a tiny number of supporters.

Those who believe they should just raise abstract propaganda in their discussions with other socialists and in their workplace are likely to adopt an abstentionist attitude when real struggles do break out.

By raising realistic propaganda in a period when mass agitation is not generally possible, socialists are much more likely to be able to avoid both traps. □

**Duncan Hallas will be on a national speaking tour for the ISO this month, speaking on "The Meaning of Marxism." See page 12 for the date in your city.**



Millions of workers erupted in spontaneous political strikes against the Russian empire in 1905. Rosa Luxemburg recognized the importance of this workers' activity in her 1906 pamphlet, "The Mass Strike." Many of her insights are relevant to workers' economic and political struggles today. LANCE SELFA explains.

# THE MASS STRIKE



Russian workers rose up against the tsarist autocracy in 1905, wielding huge political strikes against the government and winning previously denied democratic freedoms. Workers throughout the Russian empire created workers' councils (soviets) through which they ran their factories and cities.

The sight of millions involved in strikes, demonstrations, factory occupations—millions struggling to improve the conditions of their lives—provided the vantage point for Rosa Luxemburg's 1906 pamphlet *The Mass Strike*. To Luxemburg, a Polish-born revolutionary leader in the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), the

**"Mass strikes do not fall from heaven . . . they must be brought about by the workers themselves."**

1905 revolution demonstrated the power and potential of "spontaneous" working-class activity.

## SPONTANEITY

Luxemburg's insights on spontaneity—militant and creative activity that workers exhibit in the heat of struggle—were important for her analysis of the German labor and socialist movements.

Germany had experienced a relatively long period of economic expansion at the end of the 19th century. This had a conservatizing effect on socialists and the working class as a whole. Though the SPD and labor unions expanded greatly, they became bureaucratic organizations committed solely to winning short-term reforms from Germany's rulers. SPD deputies were well entrenched in parliament, and SPD trade union leaders were well entrenched in their offices.

Always the opponent of those who pretended to win benefits on behalf of workers, without workers' active participation, Luxemburg seized on the lessons of the Russian experience to make some points in Germany.

The mass strike offered an alternative to bureaucratic maneuvering, Luxemburg argued. It involved workers in taking control of their own lives. "Mass strikes do not exactly fall from heaven," she wrote. "They must be brought about in some way or another by the workers."

Luxemburg attacked the SPD and trade union leaders who wanted a tight rein on mass action, conducting strikes as an orchestra leader conducted musicians—if they did not avoid militant action altogether.

A mass strike was not called

forth from party or union pronouncements, Luxemburg argued. It was not "a crafty method discovered by subtle reasoning for the purpose of making the proletarian struggle more effective, but the method of motion of the proletarian mass, the phenomenal form of the proletarian struggle in the revolution."

Mass strikes are not commanded. They are made. And they are important parts of revolutions, from Russia in 1905 and 1917 to Iran in 1979.

## POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

Mass strikes represent high points of class struggle. But Luxemburg's analysis of the dynamics of the 1905-1906 period provided other insights into the relationship between political and economic struggles, which take place at all times.

Perhaps the biggest problem Luxemburg noted in the German labor and socialist movements of her time—and a phenomenon that can be observed in labor movements around the world today—was its separation of politics from economics.

This separation is the main feature of all reformist parties and labor organizations. The "economic" struggle takes place in the trade union and the "political" responsibilities are left to parliamentary representatives. Reformists, even those who call themselves marxists or socialists (like the British Labour Party or the French Socialist Party) confuse the issue of power in society.

They see it as flowing from the number of socialist seats in parliament or the number of "left" trade union leaders and not from the workplace in the balance of forces between the contending classes in society. Thus, reformist parties and union leaders often

find themselves in the position of discouraging workers' struggles when they seem to threaten "political" aims, such as the election of a labor party.

Luxemburg saw the politics/economic division as artificial. She realized that economic (trade union) struggles could raise the question of which class holds political power. And political struggles (for voting rights, etc.) could touch off economic struggles as workers and the oppressed demand more than simply formal rights.

"The economic struggle is the transmitter from one political center to another," Luxemburg wrote. "The political struggle is the periodic fertilization of the soil for the economic struggle . . . And their unity is the mass strike."

## POLAND

The experience of Solidarnosc, the mass workers' organization in Rosa Luxemburg's native Poland, demonstrates the strength of her analysis in *The Mass Strike*—and some of its weaknesses as well.

In Poland, in 1980 and 1981, there were certainly all of the ingredients of the mass strike Luxemburg observed in 1905. In July 1980, a "political" government decision to raise food prices touched off a wave of "economic" strikes. Factory occupations, involving millions, spread throughout the country, forcing the government to the bargaining table.

The Gdansk agreements of August 1980 represented a granting of a series of demands once thought "impossible." Economic gains, such as the right to free trade unions, coincided with political gains, such as the release of political prisoners and restrictions on censorship.

Solidarnosc, the 10-million

member union that emerged, represented a direct challenge and an alternative to the Polish state and its bureaucratic ruling class. Its ability to paralyze the economy and its state raised the most fundamental question of workers' power: who would control society: the workers or the army and bureaucracy?

But that question could not be answered in the absence of a revolutionary organization that, arguing for workers' control, would prepare the way for the inevitable confrontation with the state.

Solidarnosc's initiative and power slipped after its leader, Lech Walesa, unilaterally called off a March 1981 general strike protesting police beating of Rural Solidarnosc activists. Without a revolutionary organization, arguing for the next step forward, the subsiding of struggle increased the influence of ideas of "moderation" and "dialogue," whether coming from Walesa, the church or the regime. And this road played into the hands of the government, which, given breathing space to reorganize, delivered the crushing blow in December 1981.

Though Luxemburg's analysis fit brilliantly to many of the events in Poland in 1980 and 1981, Solidarnosc proved that something else was necessary: a genuinely revolutionary organization. Workers in Poland achieved much with "spontaneity." But they also lost much without a revolutionary organization.

## ORGANIZATION

History provides many other examples of innovations arising from workers' struggles—flying pickets, the sit-down strike and the basis for a workers' state in the Russian soviets in 1917.

Luxemburg's analysis was a welcome antidote to the reformist and union leaders who had given up on the basic marxist idea that the "emancipation of the working class must be the act of the workers themselves."

However, spontaneous action, like steam from a kettle, can disperse as quickly as it erupts.

In the absence of a revolutionary organization that builds on workers' self-activity, generalizes the lessons of struggle and points the way forward as the struggle swells, mass activity can collapse and fall in on itself. At the crucial moment, when the struggle hangs in the balance, when it could progress in favor of the workers or regress in favor of the ruling class, an organization with a clear perspective may mean the difference.

The Bolshevik party, in the context of mass strikes and the creation of workers' councils in Russia in 1917, was decisive in resolving the revolution in favor of a workers' state. Through timely argument and painstaking organizational work, its members molded into reality its slogan "All Power to the Soviets!"

However, in the context of similar workers' activity in Germany in 1918-1919, no organized revolutionary force existed to help push the struggle to victory—in a large part due to Luxemburg's failure to organize that force.

Faced with the challenge from below by workers' and soldiers' councils, the SPD leadership, which had supported the Kaiser in World War I, turned against the revolution, putting it down with force. In the repression, a soldier killed Luxemburg.

By the time the German Communist Party was formed in 1919, the revolutionary upsurge had passed. Luxemburg and other committed revolutionaries failed to form an independent revolutionary organization for several reasons, of which two are the most important.

First, she did not conceive of a revolutionary organization as a fighting organization that magnified struggles in good times and preserved a network of militants in bad times. In that way, Luxemburg's image of the party was colored too much by the bureaucratic timidity of the SPD and its unions.

Second, Luxemburg overestimated the possibilities and prospects of workers' spontaneous activities. Though she was right that a rising tide of struggle would "sweep away" the conservative trade union and party leaders, she did not appreciate the many subtle ways that such leaders could prevent or hinder those struggles.

But despite her limitations, Luxemburg's contributions to the revolutionary socialist movement remain enormous. The mass strike will remain a centerpiece of class struggle throughout the world. As Rosa Luxemburg once said, the rulers may have won the upper hand in the winter, but to the workers belongs the spring. □



Above: Demonstration in Cadillac Square, Detroit in support of striking Chrysler workers, March 1937. Top right: Rosa Luxemburg.

# WHERE WE STAND

## WORKERS' CONTROL

Workers create all the wealth under capitalism. A socialist society can only be built when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and democratically plan its production and distribution according to human needs instead of profit.

The working class is the key to the fight for socialism. Freedom and liberation will only be achieved through the struggles of workers themselves, organizing and fighting for real workers' power.

## REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The capitalist system cannot be patched up or reformed as some union leaders and liberal politicians say. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of workers. No reforms can do away with this exploitation. The only way workers can come to control society and create a system based on freedom and a decent life for all is by overthrowing capitalism and replacing it with revolutionary, democratic socialism.

## A WORKERS' GOVERNMENT

The present state apparatus (federal and state governments, the courts, army and police) was developed to maintain the capitalist system. This apparatus cannot be taken over as it stands and converted to serve workers. The working class needs an entirely different kind of state based upon mass democratic councils of workers' delegates.

Supporting the present state apparatus is a vast network of propaganda—newspapers, radio, television, movies, the education system. Workers are bombarded daily from all directions with capitalism's point of view. The working class needs its own sources of information. To help meet this need, we are dedicated to building a newspaper that the working class can trust and use in the fight against the present system.

## FIGHT OPPRESSION

Capitalism divides the working class—pitting men against women, whites against Blacks. Capitalism fosters and uses these divisions to block the unity necessary for its destruction. As capitalism moves into crisis, oppressed groups—Blacks, women, Latinos, Native Americans, gays, youth—suffer the most. We support the struggles and independent organizations of oppressed people to strengthen the working class struggle for socialism.

## BLACK LIBERATION

Our support for the struggle against racism is unconditional, and we oppose any attempt to subordinate this fight. We fight racism in all its forms, from institutionalized "legal" racism to the activities of groups such as the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan.

We fight segregation in the schools and in housing, we support affirmative action, and we oppose racist firings and harassment. We support armed self-defense in the face of racist attacks. We support independent self-organization and the right to self-determination of the Black community. We demand freedom for all political prisoners.

## WOMEN'S LIBERATION

We fight for women's liberation. We support equal pay and equal job opportunities for all women. We demand free abortion and an end to forced sterilization, and quality child care. We oppose all forms of violence against women including sexual harassment at work. Under capitalism the state intervenes to maintain women's subordination within the family, to maintain oppressive sex roles and her exploitation at work.

We support lesbian and gay liberation. We demand quality sex education in the schools, we are for lesbian and gay custody rights and the right to be open lesbians and gays at work, home and in school.

## RANK AND FILE ORGANIZATION

The unions today are largely business machines that long ago stopped truly fighting for the interests of the working class. Business union leaders act either as brakes on workers' struggles, or as cops, delivering workers into the hands of the bosses. We fight in the unions to put an end to this.

To make the unions fight for workers' interests, workers must organize their power on the shop floor. This can only happen if the rank and file organize themselves independently of the union bureaucrats. We work to build rank and file organizations in unions and companies wherever we are employed.

## INTERNATIONALISM

The working class has no nation. Capitalism is international, so the struggle for socialism must be world-wide. A socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation.

We champion workers' struggles in all countries, from Poland to Puerto Rico, from Palestine to El Salvador. We support all genuine national liberation struggles. We call for victory of the Black freedom fighters in South Africa and Namibia. We oppose all forms of imperialism and oppose sending U.S. troops anywhere in the world to impose U.S. interests.

Russia, China, Cuba and Eastern Europe are not socialist countries. They are state capitalist and part of one world capitalist system. We support the struggles of workers in those countries against the bureaucratic ruling class.

## REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The activity of the ISO is directed at taking the initial steps toward building a revolutionary party in a working class fragmented and cut off from socialist ideas. Revolutionaries must be involved in the daily struggles of workers and oppressed groups at the workplace, in the unions and in the communities. We build every struggle that strengthens the self-confidence, organization and socialist consciousness of workers and the oppressed.

As the working class movement gathers strength, the need for revolutionary leadership becomes crucial. We are part of the long process of building a democratic revolutionary party rooted in the working class. Those who agree with our stand and are prepared to help us build toward revolutionary socialism are urged to join us now.

For more information about the International Socialist Organization (ISO) please write P.O. Box 16085, Chicago, IL 60616



# What's ON

## BALTIMORE

Duncan Hallas on *The Meaning of Marxism*. October 12.

**Marxism Study Series: Marx's Approach to History.** October 14 at 7:30 p.m. Call 235-4620 for details.

## BOSTON

Joe Allen on *Socialists and the Working Class: Lessons of the 1930s and 1970s*. October 7.

Duncan Hallas on *The Meaning of Marxism*. October 16 at 7:30 p.m. Call 427-7087 for more information.

## CHICAGO

Duncan Hallas on *The Meaning of Marxism*. October 2 at 7:30 p.m.

Ahmed Shawki on *The Politics of Black Nationalism*. October 7 at 2:00 p.m.

Duncan Hallas on *What is Socialism?* October 9.

Christina Baker on *Lenin, National Liberation and Black Liberation*. October 16 at 7:30 p.m.

Nigel Harris on *The End of the Third World*. October 17. Call 288-7572 or 549-8071 for more information.

## CINCINNATI

Duncan Hallas on *Why We Need a Socialist Party*. October 3.

Duncan Hallas on *The Meaning of Marxism*. October 20. Call 561-8567 or 751-1871 for details.

## CLEVELAND

Duncan Hallas on *The Meaning of Marxism*. October 11 at 7:30 p.m. Call 651-5935 for more information.

## DETROIT

Duncan Hallas on *The Mean-*

*ing of Marxism*. October 10. Call 526-2180 for details.

**Midwest Coalition Against Apartheid Conference.** Wayne State University, November 2, 3 and 4.

## KENT

Duncan Hallas on *The Meaning of Marxism*. October 11 at 12:00 noon. Call 873-1710 for more information.

## MADISON

Duncan Hallas on *Lenin and the Bolsheviks: Myth and Reality*. October 8 at 7:30 p.m. See "Today in the Union" for the room number.

Alexandra Kollontai and the *Marxist Approach to Women's Liberation*. Call 251-5982.

## NEW YORK

**Can Elections Make the Difference?** Columbia University, October 3 at 7:30 p.m. Call 280-7484 for details.

Duncan Hallas on *The Meaning of Marxism*. October 15 at 12:00 noon. Columbia University.

**Reform or Revolution.** October 24 at 7:30 p.m. Call 847-3990 for more information.

## PHILADELPHIA

Duncan Hallas on *The Meaning of Marxism*. October 13 at 7:30 p.m.

## ROCHESTER

Brian Erway on *Nationalism and Internationalism*. October 14 at 7:30 p.m.

Duncan Hallas on *The Meaning of Marxism*. October 17 at 8:00 p.m. Rochester Institute of Technology Building A205.

Jack Porcello on *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*. October 28 at 7:30 p.m. Call 235-3049 for details.

## SAN FRANCISCO

Duncan Hallas on *The Meaning of Marxism*. October 5.

Tom O'Lincoln on *Missile Madness*. October 14.

Tim Wicks and Larry Bradshaw on *American Democracy*. October 28. Call (415) 285-4057 for details.

## SEATTLE

Duncan Hallas on *The Meaning of Marxism*. October 7 at Sherwood Inn. Call 324-2302 for more information.

October 27 **Rally and Picket Against the "Right-to-Life" and Initiative 471.** 1:00 p.m. at Seattle Central Community College. Sponsored by ISO and Women for Reproductive Freedom. Call 323-0701.

## YELLOW SPRINGS

Duncan Hallas on *The Meaning of Marxism*. October 4 at 7:30 p.m.

**"The philosophers have merely interpreted the world. The point is to change it."**

— Karl Marx

If you want to help us change the world, join us. There are ISO members and branches in the following cities:

- Baltimore, MD
- Indianapolis, IN
- New York, NY
- Bloomington, IN
- Kent, OH
- Northampton, MA
- Boston, MA
- Los Angeles, CA
- Portland, OR
- Chicago, IL
- Madison, WI
- Rochester, NY
- Cincinnati, OH
- Minneapolis, MN
- San Francisco, CA
- Cleveland, OH
- Muncie, IN
- Seattle, WA
- Detroit, MI
- New Orleans, LA
- Youngstown, OH

ISO National Office, P.O. Box 16085, Chicago, IL 60616

## Women's liberation and class struggle

Review by  
Nancy MacLean

*Class Struggle and Women's Liberation*, by Tony Cliff. Bookmarks, 1984, \$8.00. Available from Hera Press, P.O. 16085, Chicago, IL 60616.

Revolutionary socialists have always seen the emancipation of women as a crucial task of the workers' movement. This is particularly true today, when women are a full 43% of the U.S. workforce with similar proportions in other countries.

Without the involvement and support of millions of these women, socialist revolution is unthinkable. And unless the movement takes up and fights for women's specific needs and demands—such as access to jobs that provide a living wage, child care, abortion and an end to sexual harassment in the workplace—their participation is unlikely.

Although socialists share with feminists and others the goal of women's liberation, we differ in basic ways over how to achieve it. So, for example, we argue that the struggle can best be fought—and won—at the place where women have collective strength and social power: the workplace.

But with the decline of the women's movement, we have seen a shift away from collective activity and toward a focus on the areas where women are isolated victims of abuse—rape, domestic violence, pornography and so on.

### STRATEGIC

Beneath these tactical differences lie some very important strategic differences. As socialists, we believe that *only* the working class is capable of fundamentally changing society and achieving the liberation of the oppressed, including women. This is not because we have some mystical faith in workers' goodwill, but rather because they are the only social group with the strategic social power to change capitalist society at its roots.

Yet in recent years, much of the left has moved away from the principle that the working class is the key agent of revolutionary social change. Under the combined pressure of the downturn in class struggle over the past decade and the influence of the various movements of the oppressed, many people who call themselves socialists have drifted to a view of the working class as but one more "interest group" in a mosaic of movements for "progressive" social change.

At the same time, many have also come to see the separate organization of the oppressed, not as an unfortunate necessity due to existing divisions—which represent weaknesses in the working class, but as a positive virtue—an end to be promoted in and of itself.

In such a context, Tony Cliff's new book, *Class Struggle and Women's Liberation: 1640-Today*, makes an important contribution. For in it he breaks with the knee-jerk, uncritical response to feminism that has become pervasive on the left and subjects the movement, its thinking and its practice to harsh scrutiny.

Throughout, he reasserts the centrality of class struggle and the impossibility of short-cuts to socialism or to the liberation of the oppressed. "Women's liberation," Cliff writes in the introduction, "cannot be achieved without socialism, and socialism is impossible without women's liberation."



Demonstration for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, Chicago, 1979.

Cliff makes this point in several ways. One of them is to show how the capitalist system depends for its ongoing existence on the unpaid labor women perform in the family. So, for example, the average woman worker puts in an extra 34 hours per week doing housework and raising children. The aggregate value of housewives' unpaid labor is over \$100 billion a year in this country alone.

### MARXIST

Like Engels and the marxist tradition as a whole, Cliff argues that this system of private reproduction of the labor force is the material root of women's inferior position in the workforce, of sexism and of all the various manifestations of women's subordination. To eliminate it, a socialist revolution which socializes housework and child care will be necessary. Only when society as a whole has assumed responsibility for these tasks will the basis be laid for true equality between women and men.

In two of the book's strongest chapters, those on the Russian revolution and counterrevolution, Cliff documents these points historically. He shows how the Bolshevik revolution took the greatest steps towards women's liberation the world has yet seen. These range from the complete elimination of discriminatory laws against women to the legalization of abortion, divorce and homosexuality, to the building of communal dining halls, laundry facilities, and so on.

Likewise, Cliff shows the devastating effects of the revolution's defeat and the rise of Stalinist reaction upon women. Communal facilities disappeared. Abortion and homosexuality became criminal offenses once again. And the traditional family and the repressive attitudes associated with it were rehabilitated as conservative props for the state capitalist regime.

Cliff is not only concerned with revolutionary periods, however.

### AIM

"The aim of this book" as he writes in the introduction, "is to show how women's liberation depends on the class struggle." The book does this with varying degrees of success and in a variety of ways.

In general, Cliff shows that the stronger the politics of class struggle and revolutionary socialism in the various workers' movements, the better was the record in fighting for women's liberation as a necessary way to advance the class struggle as a whole. And the greater the unity of the working class, the greater was the polarization between different classes of women.

Cliff tries to show how women's oppression differs by class and how these differences affect politics. Because women, like society as a whole, are divided by class, no movement can legitimately claim to speak for *all* women. Sooner or later, it will either have to take a side or split along class lines.

Cliff's criticisms of the recent women's movement in Britain and the U.S. are very compelling, if not completely convincing, in this regard. In these cases, the taking of sides has tended to occur—not as a conscious decision, as it would in a revolutionary situation like Russia's, but in a process of slow drift.

### SOCIAL BASE

The feminist movement has had as its main social base women of what Cliff calls "the new middle class": college-educated professionals or upper-level white collar workers whose conditions of life lead them to see the world in highly individualistic terms. From the beginning, this was evident in the great emphasis on "lifestyles" and the tendency to see all men, rather than the social system which gives rise to oppression, as the enemy.

Because the movement grew out of this social group and lacked an orientation to the working class, or an understanding of the strategic centrality of the workplace, Cliff argues, the movement became more and more inward-looking, and less and less capable of or interested in changing the whole system that oppresses women and breeds sexism.

Instead, the socialist wing of the movement was eclipsed by the reformist and separatist wings. While the former tries to get positions and perks for its members in the existing system, the latter tries to create island havens or "safe spaces" outside of it. Both, in effect, abandon the goal of women's liberation and limit their appeal away from women workers and toward "movement" women.

Cliff thus offers much insightful political analysis. The book, however, is far from flawless. It is presented as history. Yet it is more a polemic against feminism, and against the capitulation of marxists to feminism, than it is a serious historical account. And, more important, the immediate political argument often prevails over the analysis of the facts, and the argument itself is skewed. This leads to several problems.

### SEPARATISM

Some of these arise in Cliff's treatment of feminism. He tries to make all feminism synonymous with radical feminism, that is, with separatism. "Feminism," he

writes, "sees the basic division in the world as that between men and women."

But this is a gross distortion. Scores of feminists would deny any such view. Cliff may want to *argue* that feminism must lead to such a position. But to act as if this were already a fact is both to misrepresent reality and to duck the argument many feminists have made about sex divisions *within* the working class.

Likewise, Cliff maintains that feminists call upon "women of whatever social class, to unite against men, of whatever class." Here again, Cliff oversimplifies, and on the basis of this false premise, Cliff portrays feminists always and everywhere the enemies of unity within the working class and therefore the enemies of marxism.

Yet the reality is that feminism has in many places encouraged the struggle and organization of women workers, as in the early 1970s, and thereby promoted the cohesion and confidence of the class as a whole.

The logical contradictions Cliff sees between feminism and marxism, however, blind him to this and cause him to misread the evidence in a number of places. Because he fears any separate organization by women leads to separatism, he repeatedly denies that the independent organization of women has ever contributed to the unity of the working class or achieved anything of value.

Thus, for example, Cliff denies that the Women's Trade Union League in the U.S. did any valuable work in organizing women workers in the face of hostility from the AFL in the early part of this century. To "prove" this, he cites figures on unionization in the decade *before* the WTLU started this work.

So determined is Cliff to deny any progressive historical role or positive achievement to feminism, that he insists that the 70-year-long suffrage struggle had nothing to do with the final granting of the vote to women by western ruling classes in the 1920s.

### APPROACH

Such a dismissive approach to women's organization contradicts Cliff's claim in the introduction that "the emphasis is on working class women as the subject of history." Here again, the problem results from the one-sided nature of his polemic. In arguing so hard against those who make the separate organization of women a virtue in and of itself, Cliff seems to deny that women's self-activity or organization has achieved or can achieve anything. His emphasis has the effect of downplaying women's

struggles against their subordination, contrary to his stated intention.

This lack of balance appears in yet another way. In combatting the claims of sections of the women's movement that all men benefit from and have a stake in women's oppression, Cliff goes to the opposite extreme.

He rightfully asserts that the structures of capitalist society bear the most responsibility for women's inferior status and that the ruling class benefits most from the situation. Yet he also denies that working class men gain *any* advantages from the situation. This argument would hardly wash with the woman who works all day for wages and then comes home to face all the housework while her husband watches television.

Actually, Engels, Lenin and other marxists recognized that men received privileges from women's subordinate position. At the same time, they argued that working class men had a class interest in combatting the situation and fighting for women's liberation. In stressing only the long-term interest and downplaying the immediate advantage, Cliff's argument has the effect of trivializing women's experience of oppression and of failing to show how marxists stand with them in fighting it.

### OPPOSITION

Likewise, Cliff succeeds in showing the historic opposition of the marxist tradition to bourgeois feminism and separatism. But he doesn't do nearly as good a job in showing how seriously people like Lenin and Kollontai took the question of oppression. Nor does he show how they adjusted their tactics with great flexibility depending on the demands of a particular situation. A reader who did not know this history could come away from Cliff's book seeing only the hostility to bourgeois feminism and not the real commitment to women's liberation on the part of marxists.

Even those who do know that revolutionaries take the side of the oppressed in order to build the unity of the class as a whole, will not get from this book a sense of what that means in practice, for Cliff gives no concrete idea of what we should do in situations where male workers are hostile to women workers or indifferent to their needs.

The abstract quality of his argument on this point is unfortunate, for it means evading the central problems we face today: *how* to achieve the unity we all desire in a sorely divided working class.

This is the kind of discussion we need today, as well as discussion about how to relate to those feminists who genuinely believe in women's liberation and are willing to fight for it—and can be convinced of marxism.

### MIXED REVIEW

On this score, and in general, *Class Struggle and Women's Liberation* gets a mixed review. It challenges the trend on the left toward uncritical acceptance of even the sloppiest claims of the women's movement, and toward reinforcement of the existing divisions in the class through a worship of "autonomous movements" and "independent organization."

But people who share Cliff's overall politics and the marxist approach to women's liberation will be disappointed that his book makes a weaker case for them than could have been made had the book not been so skewed by his polemic against these tendencies. Read *Class Struggle and Women's Liberation* for what it does have to offer, but read it critically. □



## on the picket line

# Union buster wants "business as usual"

CINCINNATI, OH—Union workers at William Powell Co.—the Cincinnati-based manufacturer of industrial valves—unanimously voted to strike on August 21 after their current contract expired.

Toward a new contract, the company proposed only an array of concessions on the part of the workers: a giveback of \$1.75/hour; vacations slashed to 3 weeks from the previous 5 weeks available to long-term workers; holidays cut by 2½ days and medical benefits reduced.

During the six weeks on strike, the approximately 450 union employees at two Cincinnati plants have been receiving only modest strike pay for the past three weeks. Meanwhile, key company executives have reportedly been in Spain and Japan attempting to secure castings at low cost.

Limited by a court injunction to 6 pickets, the workers seemed discouraged because no further negotiations are on the horizon until, possibly,

late October. Lending credence to the workers' apprehension about their jobs is the fact that the Lunkenheimer Company, another Cincinnati industrial valve manufacturer and a competitor, recently closed down permanently. This followed the layoff of its

250 union employees.

Even if Lunkenheimer had found a buyer for the firm, the new owner would be under no contractual obligation to rehire the former union employees. But the plant remains unsold.

At William Powell Co.,

there are no current plans for selling the plant, but management is training non-union office employees to work on the assembly lines and to operate machinery—attempting in the face of the strike to continue business as usual. □

—MARY SWEDERSKI

## BAKERY WORKERS SAY "ENOUGH!"

PARMA, OH—The workers at Parma Home Bakery have had enough. Ever since new owners took over the bakery 18 months ago, the workers here have had to face cutback after cutback in their standard of living.

Finally in mid-August, the 54 workers at the shop, all members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 880, walked off their jobs.

The last straw for them was a demand by the new bosses for the workers to take a \$.90/hour pay cut, from \$4.25/hour to \$3.35/hour—the minimum wage.

"We can get a minimum wage

job anywhere," said one striker. But the fact is that most workers want to work at the bakery, but not under the conditions the bosses are imposing upon them.

### NO NOTICE

During the past year or so, workers at the bakery have faced loss of holiday pay without prior notice from the bosses. Only after the fact did workers realize they were being stripped of what they had worked so hard to gain.

Also, work schedules that had been previously posted three weeks in advance, had suddenly been put up only a day or two before it was to be in effect. Not only that, hours were cut—again, with workers having no prior notice,

let alone having any say-so in the matter.

All this, plus the demand for a 20% cut in wages, forced workers to go out on strike.

The strikers have shown solidarity with each other through strong picket lines at both entrances of the shop. They have reduced business at the bakery by well over 50%, and the bosses have even been forced to close on Saturdays—normally their busiest day of the week.

It is this kind of solidarity that will win strikes, both small (in size, but not importance) and large, and put the employers on the defensive, instead of the workers. □

—DAVID SKUBBY

## TIME RUNNING SHORT AT DANLY

CICERO, IL—The International of the United Steel Workers (USW) stepped into the dispute between members of USW Local 15271 and Danly Machine Corporation late last month.

Top union officials entered into negotiations with Danly's parent company, the Ogden Corporation—without any local representation whatsoever.

The International had shown very little interest in the Danly strike up to this point, offering little more than vouchers for the strike fund. Organizing the strike was left up to local officials.

### FAMILIAR

For anyone who has followed the plight of labor over the last few years, this new story sounds all too familiar.

In strikes like last year's walk-out of bakery workers at the Salerno-Megowan Biscuit plant in Niles, Illinois, International officials have arrived late on the scene, just as the strike's power has begun to ebb—to sell out the strikers in "private" negotiations—giving away all but a few of the workers' hard-won benefits.

With friends like this, Danly workers had better not let their guard drop. The entrance of the International into negotiations is a sign of the strike's increasing weakness—not of imminent victory.

And it is also a telling sign of the morale of the strike. Weekly union meetings which used to be packed to the bursting point now bring out less than 100.

The union-busting tactics of the Danly bosses are bad enough, but a large part of the reason for this demoralization is that local union officials have kept a close lid on rank and file activity.

### SNAZZY

They have channeled the energy of strikers away from the picket lines and into a "corporate campaign"—which adds up to passing out snazzy leaflets in front of the homes of scabs and corporate officials.

On the face of it, especially considering the court injunction which limits pickets to eight per gate, this sounds good. Danly workers have legitimate grievances, so if the "message" gets out to the public, "pressure" can be brought to bear on Danly.

Actually, the corporate campaign is having the opposite effect. Few strikers are actually involved in it, and the union is neglecting the picket line—where real arguments could be had with other workers about solidarity.

The Danly strike can still be won. Machinists at the auto press-making plant are highly skilled, and most strikers say that the company is only getting out "small stuff."

But time is running short. The number of scabs back at work has nearly doubled in the last month.

Danly workers will have to insist on local representation with the company to avoid a sell-out. And they will have to exercise their power to shut Danly down until the strike is won. □

—ALAN MAASS

## TALKIN' UNION BY JOHN ANDERSON

# GM settlement: no solution for auto workers



John Anderson is a lifelong militant and socialist. He was formerly president of UAW Local 15 in Detroit.

For months prior to the termination of the UAW-GM contract on September 14, the company and the union gave optimistic reports about a settlement without a strike. This served the purpose of disarming the workers ideologically. Neither party wanted the workers to prepare for a strike. On September 14, 12 plants were called out on the pretext of failure to reach local agreements, but the procedure for striking on local demands was not followed. It was generally accepted that it was a "strategy strike" to force the company to a quick settlement. On September 20, the parties seemed far apart, but the next day a tentative agreement was announced.

According to UAW President Owen Bieber, an "excellent" accord had been reached. The company said the agreement would improve "management-worker relations." From this, one must come to the conclusion that both the corporation and the union bureaucracy have tightened their grip on the workers in the plants. For 40 years, Paragraph (8), giving management control on the shop floor, and Paragraph (117) with the no-strike clause have served the company and the union bureaucracy.

### EFFECT

Both the company and the union leadership know only too well the effect of a strike on the workers. It was well expressed by the late Emil Mazey in 1970 at the time of another GM strike. He was quoted as saying: "I think strikes

make ratification easier. Even though the worker may not think so, he is reacting to economic pressures. I really believe that if the wife is raising hell and the bills are piling up, he may be more apt to settle than otherwise."

The corporate and union leadership know after a week-long strike that the workers are not going to vote down an inferior agreement to go on strike a second time. The membership will suspect the whole scenario was worked out in advance by the Company and the union leadership. They will have no confidence in the leadership leading a more successful strike. This means they will have to live with forced overtime and their oppressive conditions for another three long years.

With 91,000 on strike, 15,000 on forced layoffs and 150,000 unemployed, they made the solidarity of the membership impossible. Their strategy is to divide and rule.

### PITTANCE

What the company has done was forecast by the press: they have thrown a lot of money at the workers. With a reported \$10 billion of cash on hand, the \$1 billion for job security spread over 6 years makes it seem like a pittance. It will do little to give the auto workers job security.

GM has over \$7 billion in the hourly workers pension fund. The interest on this money will go far to pay for the pensions. Early retirement is no solu-

tion for the problem of unemployment. Neither is the job training program going to be a solution to the problem of the unemployed. With millions of high school graduates and hundreds of thousands of college graduates unable to find work in their chosen fields, these young workers will get the high tech jobs. Only the elimination of overtime and a shorter work week will solve this problem.

### BONDAGE

To get the workers to vote for three more years of bondage, the workers are offered \$180.00 in "ratification" money. The question must be asked, will the locals hold meetings of the membership to allow a discussion of the agreement, or will the agreement be ratified by a secret ballot vote on company property?

It seems certain that several GM locals will find a lot of opposition, not only from the membership, but from local officers as well. The way these negotiations have been handled has aroused a lot of suspicion in the ranks. They and the corporation officials may get a surprise by the opposition. We must get the message to the workers what this contract means—it means continued bondage for the workers. □



# VOTE "NO" ON UPS CONTRACT OFFER

In August, workers at United Parcel Service were surprised by the announcement of a new union contract proposal secretly negotiated by Teamster President Jackie Presser. The contract called for a small base wage increase and bonus in exchange for the elimination of the cost of living adjustment and continuation of the two-tiered wage system for part-timers.

On September 19, it was Presser's turn for a surprise. Federal judge William B. Bryant in Washington, D.C. ruled that by allowing only two weeks for the UPS Teamster membership to consider the proposal, Presser had not given the membership an "adequate opportunity to discuss and debate all aspects of the contract" and had "denied their right to an informed and meaningful vote."

The judge ordered a new vote on the same contract proposal. New ballots are to be mailed out on or after October 4 with an announcement of the vote later in the month. The vote count will be observed by two representatives of each Teamster conference in the country.

The lawsuit was brought by four UPSers who are members of Teamsters for a Democratic Union, a reform organization within the union. In a letter published in one of TDU's UPS Contract Bulletins, the four Teamsters explained why they brought the suit:

"As UPS employees we have given up a lot over the years. We've lost our cost of living clause. We've lost the union principle of equal pay for equal work. We've lost full time jobs. And all too often we have lost our dignity and peace of mind.

### "ENOUGH"

"When we saw the tactics Presser was using on this contract, we felt it was time to say 'enough,' that we would not lose our right to collective bargaining and a fair contract vote. We strongly felt that this was a concession that we could not give away to Jackie Presser or anyone else."

Immediately after the court ruling, UPS management and the Teamster hierarchy began a campaign to discredit TDU. On September 20, UPS supervisors and managers around the country read a statement to all UPS Teamsters that falsely claimed that the TDU lawsuit "could result in the delay or elimination of the wage and bonus" provisions of the tentative agreement. This could only happen if the proposal is voted down, and then UPS withdraws its offer in the second round of bargaining.

A week later, Presser issued an official statement implying that TDU was attempting to prevent a vote on the contract. "I will not allow the overwhelming majority of our members to be deprived of a vote on this contract proposal." TDU was not trying to prevent a vote, but rather to insure that enough time was

by BEN BLAKE

allowed for the membership to seriously consider the pros and cons of the proposal.

### RED-BAITING

At the same time, UPS management and conservative Teamster officials red-baited TDU as a "communist organization" to divert attention away from the continued concessions in the agreement. While it is true that a number of TDU activists are socialists, the organization's goal is the democratic reform of the union and an end to concessions.

Moreover, we have to argue for the right and necessity of socialists to be involved in the unions and point out the role of socialists in building workers' organizations.

The leaders of the famous 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strikes, for instance, were revolutionary socialists. As the techniques developed in those strikes were used throughout the midwest, the Teamsters emerged as a powerful force in the industry.

### RANK AND FILE

Today, a return to democratic rank and file organization at the workplace is key to reversing the tide of concessions at UPS and other Teamster workplaces. The first step in this direction is the establishment of a strong system of elected union stewards who can organize UPSers on the job to combat production harassment and prevent disciplinary firings.

It is this type of day to day organization that will lay the basis for a successful fight against concessions at UPS. Vote No! Equal Pay for Equal Work! Stop Concessions!

For more information on organizing at UPS, contact TDU, Box 10128, Detroit, MI 48210, (313) 842-2600. □

## UPS AGREEMENT ANALYSIS

Teamster Magazine, the mouthpiece of the top union officials, states that concessions are "not the game that Teamsters play and never will be. We believe in negotiation, not collaboration, and in facing reality, rather than sticking our heads in sand." The facts show otherwise.

In 1983 and 1984, the Teamster leadership allowed UPS to use the previously negotiated Cost of Living Adjustments to pay for the increased cost of benefits. This meant that the average full-timer lost \$1,162 in income from May 1, 1983 to September 4, 1984. The average part-timer lost \$581. The \$1,000 and \$500 bonuses for approving the agreement are supposed to make up for this. The difference will save UPS \$10.9 million, and the cost of living adjustment itself will be eliminated.

Hidden with a bunch of doubletalk in the proposal is the provision that all COLA money will be wiped out by



## "They never thought we'd go out this strong"

For over a month now, 150 engineers and technicians of the New York R.K.O. General station have been out on strike.

Local 209 of the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians called the strike late in August, after working for 13 months without a contract.

WOR-TV, which operates TV Channel 9, WOR-AM and WRKS-FM in New York, has tried to force on the broadcast workers conditions far below those of other workers in the industry. If management gets its way, employees can be forced to work through mealtimes, on their days off and during overtime hours. New employees would be brought in at considerably lower wages and inferior working conditions.

### "CONSULTANT"

Management had been anticipating the strike and expecting a fairly long one. In the spring, the bosses hired a "labor-management consultant" to help the station prepare for a strike. The most important job was organizing

by ELEANOR TRAWICK

training programs for management employees so they could step in, in the event of a strike. Some cynical management personnel called this "scab school."

Other unions—writers, directors, stagehands, AFTRA—are crossing the picket line, but are not filling in for the strikers.

The bosses are doing their best to make scabbing attractive to non-striking employees and management personnel. If these strikebreakers do a striker's job during their regular shift, they are paid an extra \$6 an hour. If they come in and work outside of their normal shift, they are paid \$25 an hour. Management is providing three free meals a day, hotel rooms and security guards for the scabs.

The technical operators, editors and maintenance workers who are out on the picket line remain defiant. "Management must be made to understand that their success can't be brought about by forced labor," workers say. One of the strikers remarked, "They never

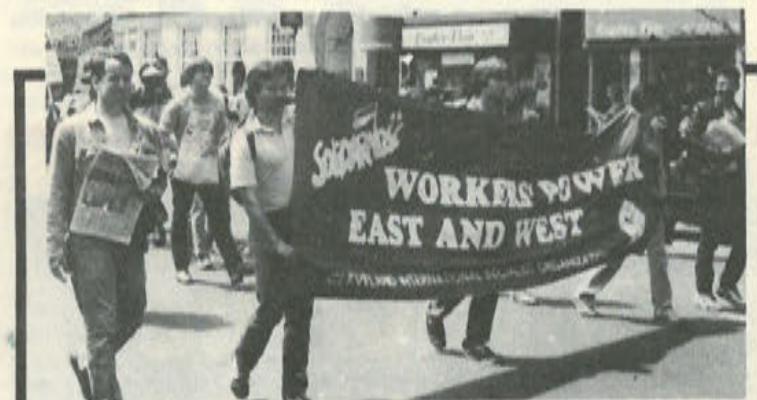
expected us to go out this strong. But we're staying out as long as it takes to get what we want."

Other workers in New York and nearby cities will be watching the outcome of what is clearly a management push to break the R.K.O. union. If the bosses' gamble pays off, the union's defeat could trigger more give-backs and anti-labor outrages in other unions.

### BATTLE

But if Local 209 can keep up the strength and spirit to show the bosses that they won't take any abuse, a small but significant battle will be won for labor as a whole.

In a society where the desires of the bosses—for lower wages and poorer working conditions—are necessarily opposed to what the masses of working people demand, and in a society where the police, the government and the media invariably side with management, the R.K.O. workers are doing just what workers everywhere are forced to do: fighting back. □



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Fight the sellout! □  
- BEN BLAKE

# Socialist Worker

PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION

## BLACK WORKERS SHAKE SOUTH AFRICAN REGIME

South Africa's racist apartheid regime is experiencing a shock wave in the form of an increasingly militant and organized movement among the Black working class. CHRISTINA BAKER reports on the developing situation.

An incredibly volatile situation faces the new regime of South African President P. W. Botha. Through the month of September, at least 55 Blacks were killed and thousands arrested in the course of protests against massive rent increases, discontent over political grievances and the first legal strike of Black gold miners since 1946.

### MINERS

On September 17, 40,000 miners struck eight gold mines, all but one of them owned by the Anglo-American Corporation, over the issue of wages. Gold provides South Africa with half of its foreign exchange earnings. Union organization among Black gold miners has been legal for less than two years. Since that time, the new National Union of Miners has managed to organize 70,000 of the 460,000 Black gold miners and appears to have even greater influence than that would suggest.

In the two-day dispute, seven miners were killed by police and more than 350 were injured. The police used tear gas, rubber bullets and shotguns against the miners who were out at their mines in

record numbers.

Meanwhile, rioting continued in Soweto, the Black township south of Johannesburg where 500 Blacks were killed in 1976-1977 by police. The main issue in this "home" to about 2 million Blacks was the announcement of massive rent increases in the Black townships around Johannesburg. The rioting centered on Sharpeville and other townships in the crucial Vaal triangle which is South Africa's key industrial center. Official Black unemployment in the area is 56%.

On September 11, the eve of the seventh anniversary of the police murder of Steve Biko, leader of the Black consciousness movement, the government banned indoor meetings of two or more people called to discuss any government policy or "in memoriam of anything." Outdoor meetings have been banned for many years.

The next day, when a memorial service for Steve Biko was held, the police attacked with tear gas and whips.

Over the weekend of September 22-23, more than 600 Blacks were arrested for attending illegal meetings. 500 of them were detained for attending the funeral of 22-year-old Joseph Sithole who was



Black workers attacked by riot police.

shot by police earlier in the month. The funeral came within the ban against meetings. The same scenario was repeated on a larger scale on September 26 when 6,000 Blacks were arrested for attending the funeral of another police victim.

### WAVE OF DISCONTENT

This wave of discontent and violence came just as Botha instituted a new constitution and governmental structure meant to be seen by all non-white South Africans and the rest of the world as a reform of apartheid. The "reform" was the institution of a racially-segregated three-part parliament, and granting of the vote to South Africa's 870,000 Asians and 2.7 million "colored," or people of mixed race. None of South Africa's 21 million Blacks, 73% of the population, were given the vote or any representation in the new parliament.

Blacks were only given the "right" to elect town councils of middle class Blacks, designed by the regime to implement its general policy and to force through the rent increases. These elections were boycotted overwhelmingly. In Sharpeville, only 14% of the people voted, and much of the anger in the recent upheaval has been directed at these town councils. In Sharpeville, the deputy mayor was killed after he opened up on protestors with a gun.

Announcement of the plan led not only to discontent among Blacks, but to wide-

spread anger and protest in the colored and Asian communities as well. An election boycott was organized, largely by the United Democratic Front, the most important legal, non-white organization in the country since the African National Congress was outlawed in the 1960s and since the Black consciousness movement was banned in the 1970s.

Botha responded to the boycott call by detaining 43 UDF leaders without charge through the course of the election, but the boycott succeeded nonetheless. The turnout was a crushing embarrassment to the regime. 80% of eligible Asian and colored voters failed to show up at the polls.

In the Cape Town area, where half of the country's colored people are concentrated in a 50-mile stretch of segregated townships, only 6% of those eligible to vote turned out. And the Asian population was even less interested. In Lenasia, a large township near Johannesburg, 6.8% in one constituency voted and 9.5% in another.

In addition to setting up the segregated parliament, Botha has appointed an Asian and a colored to his cabinet, although neither was given any responsibility. Each of them, making \$55,000 a year, will be given two houses, two chauffeur-driven cars and free plane and train travel for life. The puppet members of parliament in the colored and Asian houses of parliament will



P. W. Botha

make \$31,000 plus benefits. One such "representative" was elected by a paltry 118 votes.

### BLACK WORKING CLASS

The *Economist* summed up Botha's strategy: "Instead of being an almost wholly race-based society, South Africa would begin to crawl towards a more obviously class-based one—with whites, for sure, the top class." But this plan has been upset by the emergence of a powerful Black working class. The *Financial Times* described a situation in which "a Black proletariat is turning on a Black establishment."

While this is far from the first, or even most disruptive, of upheavals in South Africa in recent years it represents a much greater threat to the current regime and to the future of apartheid.

Even the *Economist* expressed concern that while the 1976-77 unrest was student-based, the current crisis is centered around Black workers. The growth of legal Black and multi-racial trade unions, and of increasingly militant Black working class activity, represents a dramatic change which could lead to more, and better organized resistance to the racist regime. □

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