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# TRUTH

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**ORGAN OF THE TROTSKYIST ORGANIZATION USA/FRATERNAL SECTION/FOURTH INTERNATIONAL  
FOR A TROTSKYIST CONGRESS REBUILDING THE U.S. SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL**

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**Alliance  
for a Labor Party!**

**Barbara Putnam  
for U.S. House!**

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Organ of the Trotskyist Organization of the USA,  
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For a Trotskyist Congress Rebuilding the U.S. Section of the Fourth  
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# The Strike Wave and the Labor Party

By MARGARET GUTTSHALL

One group of workers after another has begun to strike in the last few months. AT&T workers in June, Philadelphia and Detroit city workers in July, LTV and USX steelworkers and regional phoneworkers in August.

This strikewave is taking place at the same time as a resurgence in the struggle against U.S. intervention in Central America and imperialist oppression throughout the world. The Central American Solidarity Committee and the AFL-CIO organized a demonstration against Reagan in Detroit, September 24. The Coalition for Peace, Jobs and Justice is planning demonstrations throughout the U.S. against U.S. intervention in Central America and support to apartheid, October 25. Workers and peasants in Nicaragua and South Africa continue their steadfast opposition to imperialism, workers in Bolivia and Chile organized general strikes and there is also a resurgence of strikes in Europe, including a one-day general strike in Spain.

Even more significant than the number of strikes and demonstrations, is the *character*. Workers are organizing mass picketing and roving pickets in order to forge inter-union solidarity against the exploiters. They are clashing more and more with the bosses and their agents, Republicans and Democrats, just like workers in Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

During the Detroit city workers' strike, in which hundreds denounced Democratic Party Mayor Coleman Young for giving himself a 44% raise and offering them a 2% cut, 150 workers at the Russell-Ferry truck yard battled an equal number of police trying to break up their picketlines. During the Guardian autoparts workers' strike in Flat Rock, Michigan, organized by UAW Local 174, after scabs beat-up a young picketer on his way home, hundreds of unionists throughout the area rallied at the plant gates and destroyed scab vehicles trying to pass through. Michigan state police (under Democratic Party Governor James Blanchard) finally closed the road to the plant and shot tear gas at the

strikers to break up the picket lines. And Boise Cascade workers and their wives organized in SOS (Spouses in Solidarity) organized mass picketing and clashed with professional strikebreakers, dressed in uniform black shirts, brought in from Georgia, in Rumford, Maine.

In short, the basic contradictions between the classes here and abroad, between exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed, are reasserting themselves. What is developing is not simply "another contract round," but a real *change* in the consciousness of the working class and its vanguard, a turn away from concessions and collaboration, toward independence and confrontation.

The strikewave, the resurgence of struggle against imperialist oppression here and abroad, the violent clashes with the police, show the strength and determination of the working class. There is about to be another recession, the Reagan regime is increasingly cornered, confronted on many sides and unable to offer concessions; the Democratic Party remains in deep crisis after Mondale's defeat and Jackson's collaboration. The Kremlin and its parties, which have long been an essential source of support to the bosses and their agents in the unions, are deeply divided, and in some cases split into warring factions.

It is now both possible and necessary to *structure* the growing movement against the bosses and bureaucrats, to give this growing organism the brain cells, nerves and backbone that it needs to confront and displace them. In other words, it is *now both possible and necessary to build an alternative to the bosses' political power, to build an Alliance for a Labor Party based on the unions.*

A movement by itself, without firm structure, without firm program, leadership and organization, no matter how powerful, no matter how large, cannot confront and defeat the bosses. A political party is necessary. The American working class is one of the most powerful in the world, from the point of view of numbers, organization, and even arms. Yet

it has never had its own political party, as workers of other countries have, like Britain, Germany, France, Sweden, the USSR, etc. Thus the American working class has never acquired many of the social gains that other working classes have, like socialized health care, education, adequate unemployment compensation, pensions, pregnancy care and childcare, vacations, etc. Most important, it has not yet acquired the political experience and organization that it needs to rule in its own interest, and that of the oppressed masses as a whole, in opposition to the bosses and their agents.

The current strikewave and resurgence of struggle against U.S. intervention, in conjunction with the growing worldwide offensive against U.S. imperialism and its allies, provides us with an opportunity to begin to resolve this problem. An Alliance for a Labor Party based on the unions is the way to begin to do it. Thus the Trotskyist Organization urges all working class organizations taking part in this struggle, especially organizations and militants making an active struggle for a Labor Party, like the Workers League and its candidates, to join us in forming an Alliance for a Labor Party based on the unions and in building this Alliance in the workers daily struggle.

At the same time, we urge all working class tendencies, again particularly the Workers League and its candidates, to join us in forming a united slate for an Alliance for a Labor Party in the current elections; to support Barbara Putnam, our candidate for U.S. House in the 13th District, as the candidate leading this fight, against the bosses' candidates, George Crockett (Democrat) and Mary Griffin (Republican).

The unfolding of the recent employees' strike at Wayne State University in Detroit showed the importance of leadership in the class struggle, that alliances, even between very small forces, can influence the course of the struggle. The university administration offered the professors' union a raise, but refused even to negotiate with the clerical workers' union, and hoped, in this way to divide and destroy the strike. Members of the Trotskyist Organization, the Workers

League and the Revolutionary Workers League and many workers waged a struggle against this maneuver, convinced the professors' to postpone ratification of their contract and almost won the vote to turn down the contract finally proposed to the clerical workers and continue the strike (250 to 253).

Now is the time to strengthen and deepen this collaboration, on the level of the construction of the independent party of the American working class. An Alliance for a Labor Party based on the unions will have an impact throughout the vanguard of the working class, particularly with organizations like Socialist Action, that are for a Labor Party, but are reluctant to make an active struggle for one.

It is for precisely this reason that Democratic Party spokesmen in the workers movement are beginning such a concerted propaganda campaign against an active struggle for a Labor Party. Members of the Rainbow Coalition and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) recently organized a conference in California in which they advocated support to the Democratic Party against Reagan on the grounds that there will not be an alternative to the Democratic Party "before the year 2000".

Let's take this for what it is -- pro-bourgeois propaganda designed to subject the workers to the exploiters!

Alliance for a Labor Party Now!  
United Slate in '86!  
Barbara Putnam for U.S. House!

## The SWP and the Elections

By KEVIN FITZPATRICK

The current political situation is highly contradictory. On the one hand, the class struggle is marked by the attempts of the unions and the organized workers to shake off the chains that have bound them over the last decade — the chains of concessions most of all. But, on the other hand, the response by the socialist organizations of the working class is, to say the least, confused and ambiguous. This contradiction finds its sharpest expression in the policy of these organizations, particularly the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), toward the upcoming elections.

The Trotskyist Organization has consistently called for the formation of an Alliance for a Labor Party — to unite the most advanced elements of the working class, a fight to give a political expression to the new upsurge of the labor movement.

In contrast, the SWP, which was for years known especially for its role in election campaigns, its opposition to the Democratic Party and its support, at least in words, for a Labor Party, now does not even carry out this old, general perspective.

Once, "socialist educational and propaganda campaigns" — even if the propaganda was formal and the education not very advanced — formed the hallmark of its activity. Today, its electoral presence and the Labor Party slogan are increasingly minimized. Weeks go by without so much as a mention of the elections in its paper, *The Militant*.

In Michigan, where a campaign that is attracting national interest — a Black Republican running against a Democratic incumbent — offers great opportunities precisely for propaganda on an alternative to such a charade, the SWP has had a very strange policy. It did not even try to get its name on the ballot, something it has achieved in the past, and which the much smaller Workers League did accomplish. And, while it nominated its previous gubernatorial candidate for lieutenant-governor, its present

nominee for governor does not even meet the legal requirements (age) for candidacy. This alone gives the campaign the character of an empty gesture, magnified by its decision to seek even independent status for only one of its candidates — Andrew Pulley, who is running against Democrat John Conyers in the First Congressional District.

But the case of the SWP is really just the most obvious example of what is found among a whole series of organizations that claim to be Trotskyist, as well as for a Labor Party.

The Workers League (WL) claims to be for a Labor Party and runs candidates under this slogan. Yet to date the WL has refused to enter into an alliance to fight for a Labor Party in the unions.

The Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) claims to be for an Alliance for a Labor Party based on the unions but questions running working class candidates against the liberal Democrats that tie the unions to the Democratic Party. The RWL says: "... It is necessary to be open to united fronts with rank-and-file workers and even with labor bureaucrats who want to run independent candidates in opposition to the most notorious criminals in the Democratic Party." ("The Fight for a Workers' Party," *Fighting Worker*, September 1986.)

But "the most notorious criminals" are not the problem. It is the *liberals*. And the RWL quietly participated in the *middle class* Peace and Freedom Party (PFP) in California, a party that is distinguished by being without notorious criminals, by being a refuge for the most liberal supporters of capitalist politicians, the yuppies of yesterday and the yuppies of today.

The real cheerleader for the Peace and Freedom Party, however, is the Morenoite Internationalist Workers Party (IWP), whose whole election position is a proposal to and in the PFP. This organization is for the formation of a mysterious "One Big Movement Against Capitalism and Imperialism." When it calls for the labor movement (and the rainbow

Coalition, which is nothing but an arm of the Democratic Party) to break with the Democrats, this boils down to "voting for the socialist candidates of the Peace and Freedom Party." This is ambivalent, to say the least -- only for the socialist candidates in the PFP, or are all PFP candidates socialists?

Then, with the high disregard for the truth that characterizes Morencism, the IWP states: "The remaining small groups have adopted a sectarian stance, which essentially says that millions of workers who vote should be ignored." (All quotations from "Electoral Manifesto of the Socialist Slate [of the PFP]: For a Socialist America!" in *Working Class Opposition*, August 1986.)

What the IWP "completely ignores" is the need for a united front of the most advanced elements of the working class, especially the organizations that claim to be Trotskyist, to carry the fight precisely to those "millions of workers who vote," to arouse those who do not. Against the Alliance for a Labor Party the IWP really fights for support to a modification of the Democratic Party, to the PFP that is a dead end for anyone seeking to break with capitalist politics.

Even in the past, the SWP opposed this sham. So an organization like Socialist Action (SA), which represents in part an attempt to avoid a drastic analysis of the present-day SWP by mythologizing its past, feels no urge to support the PFP. Indeed, in an article in its paper, SA does a good job of exposing those "radicals" and "socialists" who want to capitulate to the Democrats. But when it comes to making a proposal, it is equally at a loss: "A labor party in the United States will be the natural outgrowth and political expression of the workers movement as it takes on the bosses in the political arena." ("Crisis of the left in the US . . . West Coast conference steers activists to Democrats," *Socialist Action*, September 1986.)

As reflected by the tautology -- what other kind of "expression" could it be in the "political arena" except a "political" one? -- this statement is highly muddled. The Labor Party will never be a "natural outgrowth" of any fight. If that were the case we would have

had a Labor Party at least forty years ago. It will be the product of a very difficult and intense battle in the workers movement, a battle that requires action first of all, not detached forecasts. And the whole problem lies in the fact that the workers have been kept from taking on the bosses "in the political arena." Our fight is precisely to raise the struggle to that level, beyond economic struggles, a fight that demands a perspective and a plan for activity, which the Alliance for a Labor Party is, not begging the question as this statement does.

This rampant confusion among elements that are among the most advanced in the American working class is the long shadow of the crisis of the SWP. As early as the mid-1950s, in conjunction with its retreat from the fight to rebuild the Fourth International, the policy of the SWP became increasingly abstract, vague, general and opportunist on the Labor Party. The fight for a Labor Party in the US is inseparable from a fight to educate and develop a revolutionary leadership of the American working class. As this fight was not waged by the SWP, it led at one and the same time to both the confusion on the Labor Party and the elections and to the dispersion of the elements who wanted to be Trotskyists.

The SWP of today has such a bad policy, not because it is confused by this, or that development, but because it has abandoned, and is increasingly throwing away, every lesson and every gain it ever represented. The confused and even opportunist positions of the other tendencies reflect this development and do not offer an alternative to it. The fight for an Alliance for a Labor Party is an essential part of this alternative. It not only maintains the positive contributions of the SWP on this question, it goes beyond their limitations and carries the fight forward today. And in the same way, it offers a major step forward in resolving the crisis of leadership, of those who say they are for the Fourth International, in the US.

The depth of the SWP's election disorientation indicates the choice: either follow it on the same road, or make a decisive break with it. That second choice is what the Alliance for a Labor Party represents.

# The Wayne State University Employees' Strike

## An Account of the Strike

*Barbara Putnam, our candidate for U.S. House of Representatives in Michigan's 13th District, played a leading role in the recent Wayne State University strike. She fought to continue the strike, to maintain the solidarity of the unions against the administration, and spoke out in favor of an Alliance for a Labor Party based on the unions to fight for the workers. Here is her account of the strike. This is particularly important since there was a near news blackout of the strike, which neatly served the interests of Governor Blanchard, his cronies of the college administration, and the vast array of corporate interests determining policy at WSU.*

On September 4, three campus unions struck WSU following a complete breakdown in negotiations. They were the Staff Association Local 2071, UAW, of which I am a member and which represents the bulk of campus employees (1,100 secretaries, clerical workers and others), the Professional & Administrative Local 1979, UAW, and the third was the professor's union, the AAUP. A loose coalition of all the locals formed before the strike held a support rally the day before. President David Adamany's last "offer" to us was a total insult — a 4.7% increase across the board. This would be completely negated by proposed concessions on sick time, higher parking fees, increased Blue Cross, removal of longevity pay, etc. in the rest of the "offer." This "generous offer" also would maintain the hated merit system so beloved by the administration.

Hundreds of pickets filled the sidewalks at key entrances attempting to win the greatest support for the strike. Clearly, it was a mass demonstration of opposition to the administration. But little more than two hours after the strike began, the professors' (AAUP) bargaining committee compromised the unity of the coalition and reached a tentative agreement, telling its members to go back to work. Although this was a blow to the other locals still out, it did not end the strike as Adamany & Co. hoped.

Our fight in the strike began with a leaflet supporting the strike and its demands and calling for an Alliance for my campaign.

I worked with another secretary throughout the strike to build it, extend it, make it more effective, and I worked particularly for it to have a political outcome. At first we were alone and even opposed by stewards who began to change their minds in the course of the strike. I demanded at the first opportunity (a mass strike benefits meeting) that a real strike committee be formed to discuss the tactics and strategy of the strike. Our union President, Elois Martin, not wanting to be upstaged by a UAW rep who said it was a good idea, said there would be a strike committee meeting that day at 1:00.

At the strike committee meeting, a militant steward and I raised the question of the AAUP's backstabbing policy of accepting the first tentative agreement that came up. I argued for a picket line of staff secretaries at their ratification meeting asking the professors to vote "NO!" on the tentative agreement. When it came to a vote, only 3 of us voted to do anything. The 15 others present did not know how to counter the arguments put forward by Fred Vocino (vice president of our local) and Tim Killeen that we must respect the holy sanctity of the professor's right to make their "own decision," and not "tell them what to do." However, it was OK with Vocino and Co. that, in effect, the AAUP was telling us what to do.

That weekend I found out from the vice president of the AAUP that they had been told by our leaders to ratify because the Staff Association wanted it that way. She said our president told them that would be the only way the Staff would get a contract. That weekend I organized a meeting with secretaries and a member of the AAUP to plan an action to get the professors to turn down the tentative agreement.

In the morning, several professors came to our picket lines. They asked us what we, the members, not our leaders, thought about their union ratifying. Instantly, 30 or 40 secretaries signed a petition expressing their opposition to the professors' proposed ratification. We took the petition and went to the union hall to show the real feeling of the secretaries. Tim Killeen, who had taken over chairing every strike committee meeting to keep a lid on militant actions, groaned "Not again!" when we insisted on rediscussing the AAUP ratification meeting. We managed to get the AAUP delegation question reopened. A majority of the professors believed the staff wanted them to ratify regardless of whether or not our leaders told them that. Communist Party members present insisted that if anybody went, it had to be an official delegation. In the end, Julie Miller, the office rep, called the President again to ask her if she was for or against sending a Staff delegation to the AAUP ratification meeting. As the strike committee meeting broke up, a secretary and I stayed behind, waiting for an answer from our illustrious leader. We began making picket signs on the backs of our official "UAW on Strike" sandwich signs: "Don't Ratify!", "Turn it Down", etc. We planned to go ourselves if necessary and try to take as many pickets with us as we could. The phone call went on and on and on. Time for a Student Council support rally drew closer and closer. The stalling continued. We prepared to leave with the signs; finally the word came — "No."

At the rally we had a chance to speak to 80 or so students and strikers about the ratification meeting soon to take place. A supporter of the RWL, whom we had invited to speak at our strike committee meeting, proposed a boycott of classes to support our strike. One person from our local got up and said, no, that would not be necessary, that there were "other things you can do." When I spoke, I said, "Yes! By all means boycott, it will be a tremendous support, because it is possible to shut down the high and mighty University and win our dignity back. Once again I pointed to the elections and called on the unions to support working class candidates against the bosses candidates, Barbara Putnam, 13th Congressional District,

McLaughlin and Crivens, Workers League candidates for Governor and Lieutenant Governor. I concluded that we should go to the AAUP meeting to get the professors not to ratify and rejoin the strike.

Some Staff members protested. Our local leaders love Blanchard, and make some members believe in lobbying such bosses' candidates in place of independent, working class candidates and an independent struggle that truly represents the workers. Alva Crivens of the Workers League came forward and spoke against the Democrats and for a Labor Party.

About 20-25 secretaries left the rally with us to go to the AAUP ratification. We picketed, we chanted "Don't Ratify, Shut it Down!"; "On Strike, Turn it Down!". Each time a professor opened the door to go in the meeting we shouted "Don't sell us out! We need you, you need us!" A number of professors thanked us, they said they too didn't want the contract but thought the Staff wanted them to ratify. One of them put a motion on the floor to table ratification. It passed!

This AAUP picketing action was the real turning point of the strike. It encouraged the secretaries and put the ball back in their court against the previous strategy of the local leaders trailing behind the professors' union. From then on we began to organize a much larger opposition. We went to the striking Detroit Public secretaries organized a march with them. On the last day of the strike we had a big hand in organizing another march to snake around the campus including other locals such as local 1200 of the UAW. But that night our local bargaining committee reached a tentative agreement and Fred Vocino's prerecorded message said to take down all pickets, a settlement had been reached.

A Workers League militant, Debby Simonsen, told me and others the next morning about the sellout. Another militant printed up a leaflet with the terms indicating that it was virtually the same agreement we struck against two weeks before. The added twist was that the administration was making hollow threats of court injunctions. That same day the P&A bargaining committee was able to ram



the tentative agreement down the throats of 200 P&A members. This gave our local leaders added ammunition to sell the rotten contract to us. We organized several stewards and other secretaries to work up a joint leaflet for our ratification meeting. It was truly a collective effort, with each having their say about the formulations, etc.

A number of us, including from P&A, distributed the leaflet at the ratification meeting calling for a "NO" vote, up with the picket lines, shut down WSU. A fight raged at the ratification meeting. Simonsen, encouraged by the large opposition, stood up on the stage in front and told about all the dirty tricks she had witnessed in the bargaining. In the end the vote was split right down the middle, 253-250.

BARBARA PUTNAM

The Vanguard in the Strike

In the strike, and not accidentally, it was clearly the elements claiming Trotskyism who were also the key strike leaders. Debby Simonsen, a supporter of the Workers League, and a member of the Bargaining Committee of the Staff Association, Local 2071, UAW; Vic, a student leader and supporter of the Revolutionary Workers League, and Barbara Putnam, a member of the Trotskyist Organization and of the strike committee of the Staff Association, at least reinforced each other in the actions they led, actions that confronted the local and international bureaucrats and the Communist Party. Our collective efforts resulted in a far more militant strike, a demand for a strike committee for the Staff Association, a militant picket line to convince the professors union not to ratify a sellout contract, a march drawing in the striking Detroit Public School secretaries, a constant fight for the most effective organization of pickets, demands that the local provide us with information concerning negotiations, that they call the media, call in other locals to back the strike, efforts to draw students into a boycott of classes, organization of leafleting to reject the tentative sellout agreement of the local bureaucrats, etc. Ultimately, a large and strong opposition formed and a fight ensued at the Staff

ratification meeting, unexpected by the University and the bureaucrats. In the end, the vote was split right down the middle 253-250.

Although the contract passed by 3 votes, there is a good basis to fight for an inter-union solidarity council representing all the campus unions. There is an enlarged arena to fight for a Labor Party and for support for working class candidates vs. bosses' candidates in the elections. However, these fragile gains must be immediately concretized in a conscious decision to work together. Once again, we call on the WL and RWL to respond, to form an Alliance for a Labor Party with us. Without this, positions gained in the strikes can evaporate like so much steam.

# Global Conflict

## Chile

A general strike of forty-eight hours on July 2 and 3 has been the latest high-point of the struggle against the brutal regime of General Augusto Pinochet. Once again, the masses — as in the Philippines and Haiti and South Africa — are seeking to overthrow the pro-imperialist and pro-US dictatorship that bleeds them.

One sign of the cruelty and viciousness of this regime was the setting on fire of nineteen-year-old Rodrigo Rojas, who died of his injuries, and of a young women companion, who was severely burned. This incident was so horrible that even the Reagan administration had to let Pinochet know that he had to keep his thugs on a tighter leash.

But in the midst of this upsurge and these troubles for the dictatorship, there was an ambush, which failed, that tried to kill Pinochet. While we would shed no tears for him or anyone in his gang, we must ask whose interests such an attack serves. Pinochet is only an individual, the system is what must be overthrown. One alternative means revolution by the masses, the other means execution by a self-selected band.

The only thing that has come of this attack is more repression inside Chile, not a single step forward for the masses.

While no group has actually claimed responsibility, it is widely believed to have been an action carried out by the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Liberation Front, the military arm of the (very pro-Kremlin) Chilean Communist Party. Here again, the opposition of the CP to a real revolutionary upsurge could easily find another, but essentially similar, expression.

## Poland

In mid-September, the Jaruzelski dictatorship in Poland announced a series of amnesties that essentially involved freeing all the Solidarnosc militants who had been imprisoned for their activities.

While we greet the liberation of these fighters, it is necessary to add two things.

First, the regime made this step not because of its self-confidence, no matter what it may say, but because of the demand, inside and outside Poland, for the liberations. This means that Solidarnosc is still alive, and it requires an increased clarity on the part of its leaders and militants to move on to the next stage of the Polish Revolution. They must not be assuaged anew into dreams of "peaceful solutions" and a "self-limiting" revolution.

Second, this step was made by the regime in close collaboration with the Catholic Church, as part of a deal with it to expand its influence in Poland, to increase its influence over Solidarnosc toward these same "peaceful" delusions. In return, Jaruzelski's road to cleared to journeying to the Vatican, to visiting the pope in order to arrange yet another visit by him to Poland. And in turn, this will increase the pressure on the imperialist powers, especially the US and Italy, to come to terms with Jaruzelski, to restore trade and credits that will, he hopes, preserve his rule.