

Special Labor Issue

THE CAMPAIGNER

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Spring 1971

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This is a Campaigner Special Issue. *Trade Unions Today*, *History and Analysis of the Baltimore Strike Support Coalition*, and *Developing Socialists: The Mass Strike and the Labor Movement* were originally delivered at the National Caucus of Labor Committees sponsored forum, "Strategy for Socialism," in Dec. 1970. *From Revolution to Reuther* and *The Left and the Newark Teachers Strike* are reprinted from the Labor Committees' newspaper *Solidarity*.

Nationwide Strike Support Demonstrations On May Day

World capitalism's descent towards economic breakdown crisis has, since 1965, given rise to an ever-deepening long-term strikewave throughout the industrial areas of Western Europe, North and South America, and most of Eastern Europe. Workers have responded explosively to falling real wages, the collapse of public services and the weakened moral authority of established social and political institutions. The extraordinary depth of present strike ferment in the U.S.A. is indicated, as a reliable example, by the recent rash of policemen's strikes and police job actions on the East Coast: as Luxemburg and Trotsky noted in 1905, the strike-process must be well-advanced before it can bring in the police, the most degraded cast-offs from the working-class under capitalism. The spread of a New York telephone workers' strike, ostensibly called over a purely local issue, across all of New York State, demonstrates the degree of tension existing among many layers of unionized workers.

Strikes are taking on a political or class-struggle character. Local, state and federal governments are prepared to use anti-strike laws, court injunctions, police terror, and even (as in Newark) extralegal fascist-like goon squads, to forbid the large increases in money-wages necessary merely to maintain the present living standards of the employed against inflation, rising taxes, and collapsing public services.

In this situation, every strike has the tendency to overflow the bounds of a private affair between "master and workman," and to become a strike against many employers and the government. Thus last summer's national teamster strike won serious gains, as most recent strikes have not, because of the threat that a near general-strike in San Francisco would be duplicated in cities of the Midwest as other unionists joined in active support of the Teamsters.

The most severe repression is faced by municipal and other public employees, as government units struggle to save funds with which to bail out shaky or insolvent capitalist interests. Assaulted by court injunctions, arrests, and

"brownshirts" associated with Leroi Jones, politically-conscious Newark teachers decided that the approach of "pure-and-simple" trade-unionism would be collective suicide, and that as a defense of all labor and left groups, their strike must expand to involve all possible allied forces.

High and increasing unemployment, far from dampening the strike-enthusiasm of American workers, has prepared the basis for further rapid politicization of strike and other local struggles by surrounding the still-employed workers in contracting industries with a layer of jobless representing a direct link to the concerns of oppressed minorities and ghetto-dwellers generally, with whom they share many of the same conditions and problems of life. It was for a similar reason that the organization of unemployed by revolutionaries was the key link in the historic Minneapolis General Strike, among other political mass-strikes of the depression period.

The Movement

That the socialist movement is quite unequal to the tasks posed it by today's strike ferment is sufficiently proven by the recent Communist (CP) and Socialist Workers Party (SWP) labor sellouts documented in the Labor Committee statement "The Left and the Newark Strike." Within the official anti-war movement, the Columbia University, Queens College and Temple University Student Mobilization Committee (SMC) chapters are as yet alone in their recognition of the existence of a U.S. working class.

Part of the problem stems from the inability of nominally working-class-socialist groups to assimilate their adopted remnants of middle-class "New Left" forces to their working-class traditions, at whatever level of dilution those traditions existed. As a result, the Progressive Labor Party, for instance, is increasingly being outvoted by a growing, organized anti-working-class faction within its own youth group, even losing many PLP members to the so-called "New Line" faction. Within their own

youth group, the Young Socialist Alliance, SWP members have been forced to make the extraordinary equation that "nationalism is the same thing as the class struggle," in order to accommodate themselves to unregenerate "New Left" forces recruited to the YSA over the past few years.

The 1959-69 "New Radical" movement grew in response to a refraction of the same socio-economic crisis which produces today's labor militancy, but at a time when "blue-collar workers" seemed to be either dormant or moving rightwards politically. Given certain other supporting factors, anti-working-class trends grew and flourished. By the winter of 1968-69, national radical "leaders" in SDS were stating publically that the "blue-collar working class" was the "enemy" of the "revolution."

Menshevism

Thus although the historically significant residue of the "New Left" ferment consists of working-class-socialist forces in the Labor Committees and scattered in pockets throughout other socialist organizations, otherwise the "New Left" heritage contributes to the strong trend of anti-working-class Menshevism in the socialist movement, whose most persistent symptom is the substitution of "peace" or the chimera of "national self-determination" or local neighborhood autonomy for U.S. ethnic minorities, for the class struggle, — crossing class lines to ally with capitalist forces considered "progressive" on issues of "peace" or "national self-determination."

Unable to see through ruling class propaganda which claims that Newark's strikebreaking Mayor Gibson and black protofascist Leroi Jones represent progressive "national-democratic" aspirations of the "black community," anti-working-class forces in the YSA have succeeded in preventing that organization, the SWP, and the SMC from engaging in any active or even significant literary support for the existence of the Newark Teachers Union. At the SMC's recent February national conference, YSA's block-voted to support the "women's liberation movement" and the "gay (homosexual) liberation movement," and to reject the Newark Teachers Union's request for support in its strike. The most precise indication of the balance of factional forces in the "three" organizations is their close identification with Newark's official citywide council of high-school student governments, described (favorably) by the SWP as "the only

truly independent black organization in Newark," *because it supports neither capital nor labor in the strike!*

It is because the bulk of radicalized workers, minorities and unemployed always respond to the socialist movement as a functioning social institution, rather than in terms of internal ideological debate, competing claims and counterclaims, that working-class socialists must either reeducate, effectively subordinate or expel this petty-bourgeois tendency from their midst.

Radicalized workers and others respond to the effectively dominant trend in the movement. Socialists can only lead sizeable, actual working class forces when and where an alliance of pro-working class socialists holds a hegemonic position in the movement, as in Baltimore last summer and fall.

The United Front

The proven method of achieving and consolidating this hegemony is through programmatic working-class united fronts, "cross-union caucuses" like the Baltimore Strike Support Coalition, which unite representatives of organized and unorganized workers with unemployed, minorities and socialists in behalf of the fundamental common interests of all these sections of the political working-class as a whole. This was the "generally applicable lesson of the Russian Revolution" which Lenin enshrined in his "Left-Wing Communism," and whose development Trotsky continued in his *Germany* pamphlets.

The fight against petty-bourgeois "socialism" within the nominally socialist movement, the fight against "pure-and-simple" business unionism within the labor movement, and the fight against the racist "cultural nationalist" currents which provide credibility for police agents Leroi Jones and Rhody McCoy among a decreasing number of radical blacks, are all three the same fight. Not only because these three methods of struggle involve manifestations of the same "class-in-itself" each-group-for-itself ideology endemic to capitalist society, but also because in this period any isolated struggle is fundamentally unwinnable *in its own terms*, i.e. within the confines of sociologically middle-class movement, a trade union, or a black organization *per se*.

Socialist Consciousness

Thus the most effective rejoinder to cultural nationalist and anti-working-class "socialist" currents in recent years has been the Newark

teachers strike, now in its sixth week and apparently approaching victory. It occurred at the intersection of trade-union, black and organized socialist forces.

A parallel development occurred during the SDS period, when the demise of the anti-working-class "Praxis" leadership of SDS was largely accomplished through the Columbia strike (of spring, 1968), which was characterized by common, programmatic organization of striking students, black Harlem radicals, white Morningside Heights tenants and university employees (in the Strike Coordinating Committee).

"Strike support coalitions" of the Baltimore type are the best means to accumulate the necessary "outside" political muscle to fundamentally change the balance of power in the divided sections of the future political working-class movement. More fundamentally, such united-fronts represent the only means by which masses of radicalized workers, youth, unemployed and ethnic minorities can actually become socialists, that is, to become conscious representatives of the interests of humanity as a whole.

The replacement of indirect relations among political working-class forces, mediated by capitalist institutions, with their direct and self-conscious cooperation, is at the same time the replacement of "instinctive" bourgeois ideology by instinctive class-for-itself consciousness or socialism in the individuals involved.

Recent events in Newark and Baltimore demonstrate the immediate practicality of such a "cross-union-caucus" united-front approach under present circumstances. It is grasped as a form of defense of the conditions of life of working and allied populations which maintains its effectiveness when all "normal" means, such as business-unionist and allied political reformist methods, no longer work. In Newark, as in Baltimore, an apparently weak union came under concerted attack from the municipal and state governments, the press, etc. To limit the tactics of struggle to shutting down local "production" would have meant certain defeat. Strikers were receptive to broadening the issues and including all their allies outside the trade-union structure as equal partners. These similarities in the Baltimore and Newark situations will be ever more prominent characteristics of upcoming battles.

May Day

The Labor Committee has proposed nationwide united-front demonstrations to take place on May Day around the program of nationwide

strike-support.

May Day was first established as an international working-class holiday to commemorate the signal victory of just such a united-front, or political mass-strike perspective as that which recently proved its value in Baltimore, which in 1886 brought the U.S. working-class onto the stage of world history for the first time, in a nationwide political strike demanding the shortening of the hours of labor to eight hours a day. Through nationwide propaganda and agitation focussing on a fundamental need common to all the variegated sections of the overall strike wave of the late seventies and eighties, a united-front of working-class socialist activists expanded itself to include skilled and unskilled, men and women, negro and white, native and immigrant, organized and unorganized. The divided, defensive, "guerilla warfare" of local strike and consumer struggles was transformed into a consolidated assault of the political working class against the capitalist class. The new social relations established among working class and allied layers in the struggle succeeded in transforming thousands temporarily or permanently into revolutionary socialists.

We have proposed that all working-class socialist forces join us in organizing nationwide united-front demonstrations on May 1, addressing themselves to the fundamental issues of the present labor upsurge: wages, lay-offs and unemployment, wage-taxation and public services, and the repression of labor and the left. Labor, unemployed, minority and consumer groups, and left organizations should be pressed to participate. As the national propaganda demands of the demonstration, we have suggested: Full productive employment — no layoffs; \$150/wk. minimum wage for all, able to work or not; tax bank and corporate income, no wages; end repression of labor and left groups.

Additional local, agitational demands might concern local strikes, the conditions of the unemployed, tenant struggles, etc. We have proposed to use the tactic of coordinating nationwide demonstrations, which did much to build the anti-war movement after 1965, to assemble a national working class united front movement of the type of the Baltimore Strike Support Coalition.

We are confident that every working class socialist will see some basis for agreement and common work in this proposal, regardless of other principled differences, and be willing to join with us.

The Left and the Newark Teachers Strike

By RALPH FOSTER

The Newark Teachers Union, in its current life-and-death struggle with union-busting forces in New Jersey, has been assaulted by court injunctions, by arrests, and by fascist-like goon squads linked to police agent LeRoi Jones.

All this has found a place in newspaper headlines. It is far less widely known that the NTU is simultaneously being confronted by unambiguous class betrayals on the part of major socialist organizations in New York and nationally.

After three weeks' vain attempts to prod these organizations into active support, however minimal, for the existence of the NTU, the Labor Committee members involved are in a position to demonstrate that major sections of the left movement are prepared to sell the working class down the river in precisely the same way the Communist Party USA did during the Depression.

Coalition Proposal

The New York Labor Committee immediately began to build outside support for the Newark teachers through a strike support coalition including trade unionists, unemployed, students, the anti-war movement, oppressed minority groups and leftists. We proposed that this united front coalition build strike support around general demands in the interest of the working class as a whole.

As a first step, we planned a demonstration, held on Friday Feb. 12 in Union Square, New York City. A call for the demonstration went out in *Solidarity*.

This was the response from the left:

*SWP-YSA

After four days of meetings from Feb. 5-9, the Young Socialist Alliance, youth group of the Socialist Workers Party, found itself unable to formulate on the strike. The YSA was torn

between the leadership's unprincipled centrism, which has lately turned in on labor issues, and the prevalent rank-and-file view that the strike is a racist offensive against Newark's black community. In the past, the YSA has regarded LeRoi Jones as a wholesomely progressive nationalist.

The leadership of the Newark Teacher Union is black; so is 40% of the membership; most important, the union is fighting for improved school conditions as the key demand made against Gibson & the school board. So much for the "racism" issue.

The question of joining the demonstration was referred to the New Jersey YSA for further consideration. Several days later, New York YSA organizer Peter Seidman told us the YSA would not participate because "your intentions are sometimes good but your approach is incorrect." Seidman later told an SMC meeting that "If the SMC supports the Newark strike, even by a narrow majority, it will split the anti-war movement."

After refusing to name specific disagreements, Seidman was asked what position the YSA had adopted toward the strike. He assured us that he supported the strikers, but declined to discuss the matter. "Read the next issue of the *Militant* if you want to know our position."

*SMC

The YSA, which dominates the Student Mobilization Committee, prevented it from joining strike support action. At the first New York regional SMC meeting since the strike began, YSA spokesmen insisted that to discuss strike support was impossible for lack of information.

This was on Feb. 6, when the strike was a week old. At the next meeting a week later, Mike Weissman, the YSA member who was chairing, made a desperate attempt to avoid discussion. He refused to call on members of his own organization and repeatedly recognized on Labor Committee members. We then introduced motions requiring

the YSA to reply to our arguments and proposals; YSAer Carl Frank objected that this would be “undemocratic.” The Labor Committee moved that the SMC send a delegation to a Newark rally sponsored by the Newark Teachers Union on Feb. 14. Frank moved to table the discussion. His obvious hope was that the strike will be over before the next SMC meeting.

After the meeting heated disagreement broke out among YSAers over the question of supporting the strike. In arguing with their comrades and with Labor Committee members, many YSAers urged the claim that the strike is racist.

*YWLL

Initially the Young Workers Liberation League, youth group of the Communist Party, said it would actively organize for the coalition’s Feb. 12 demonstration. Then it withdrew, citing pressure from New Jersey and Philadelphia YWLL branches who they said were uncertain whether the black community supports the strike. Despite the favorable coverage given the teachers’ union in the *Daily World*, many YWLL members, like their YSA counterparts, were disposed to call the strike “racist.”

A pressing reason for the YWLL withdrawal was the coalition’s attacks on Mayor Gibson. Gibson was elected with the material support of Prudential Life Insurance, the principal landlord and employer in Newark, and the political assistance of LeRoi Jones’ anti-poverty machine. Gibson put union-busters Jesse Jacobs, Don Saunders, and Gene Campbell on the Board of Education to mobilize for the negotiations. (Substantiation of the “union-busting” charge can be found in *Solidarity*, Feb. 19, 1970).. If Gibson can now maintain a “neutral” position it is only because he installed his front men to do the dirty groundwork for the attempt to break the NTU.

The Rank & File Group for Trade Union Action and Democracy refused to participate in anything which attacked Gibson, declaring that this would damage “the struggle to fight racism.” Similar responses were received from the CP Unity Caucus

of the Social Service Employees Union and the Teachers’ Action Committee of the United Federation of Teachers in New York City — (TAC has since changed its line). These groups asserted that it was wrong to attack “moderate Mayor Gibson, supported by progressives and the majority of the people of Newark.” The YWLL presently demanded that the attack on Gibson be deleted from the call for united-front strike support.

IS and Workers League

Among the less consequential left forces who abandoned the strike are the International Socialists and the Workers League. The IS finally decided that the union, a co-sponsor of the Feb. 12 rally, “had made a mistake by holding a joint demonstration with left groups.” By “exposing itself to red-baiting,” the Newark Teachers Union “might be isolated on account of the demonstration.” The Workers League, in an obverse display of timidity, refused to join a coalition with “Stalinists” and declared that a general strike in Newark is required for the teachers to win.

PLP

When approached on several occasions by Labor Committee members, representatives of the Progressive Labor Party served up their all purpose “principle” to explain their refusal to even discuss support for the Newark strike or joint sponsorship of the New York support demonstration, “We don’t enter united fronts with Trots.” The PLP also added that they were “too busy building the national ROTC thing” to bother about supporting strikes.

The Newark strike, in its militancy and its broad demands for improved education, has — in the face of the mayor’s attempts to destroy it — become a major focus of the battles of the political working class.

It is all too clear that these left groups on the scene have abdicated their responsibility. We cannot rest content with scoring internecine points against their failures — we are continuing to work toward a reconstitution of united revolutionary forces.

History of Baltimore

Strike Support Coalition

By **STEPHEN PEPPER**

During the last several months the work of the Baltimore Labor Committee in creating the Baltimore Strike Support Coalition (BSSC) has rightly excited great interest and enthusiasm in the National Caucus of Labor Committees, and in the most responsive areas of the Left. The reason is, of course, that the BSSC is an embryonic formation of an organic class-for-itself social formation. The success of the Baltimore Labor Committee in establishing this unique organization as a result of applying Labor Committee practices to strike support activity is the more remarkable when contrasted with other left groups, whose activity consisted of "soup-pailing" or the holding of insignificant rallies. Hence, the importance of complete account of the Baltimore Labor Committee's work in achieving this success is the lessons it permits us to draw about strike support activity in the wake of the UAW strike.

I myself participated in nearly every phase of strike support activity from June until the present time, although I did not play a leading role in shaping the unfolding conceptions of strike support activity until the very end of this period. Other people concerned were Chuck Stevens, who was active in the development of the BSSC throughout this period, Tom Ascher, who had a leading part until he left Baltimore in September, and Dick Sober, who came to Baltimore only in early October, at a crucial point in the development of the work. It cannot be stressed enough, however, that the development of this work was a collective undertaking.

To do justice to this subject would require a fugal form in which the consciousnesses of various persons could be simultaneously contrasted with the objective situation. Although this paper is not such a complete scientific analysis, it is intended to put forth the unfolding process of consciousness that underlay the realization of the BSSC from the

period in June when it existed only as a conception in the minds of Ascher and Stevens, to its period of greatest political impact, to the present ebb period, when we are confronted with the task of holding workers' educationals.

In the Beginning. . .

To understand the creation of the BSSC at this time is in part to understand Baltimore. Baltimore differs from all other Eastern cities in that it is a working-class city, unadorned by a large cultural or academic intelligentsia. The university population is small, and in terms of activism, is distinctly backward. The left consisted mainly of anarchist and liberal peace groups, from whose midst emerged the Berrigan brothers and the Catonsville Nine. It is no accident that Labor Committee work coincided with the profound disorientation and collapse of such groups, which in Baltimore only this past summer were freed from their concentration on anti-war activity and became possible additional cadre necessary to augment the Labor Committee's activity. Baltimore therefore provided a large working population, whose initial expression of radicalism was manifested in heavy Wallace support as early as 1964, a relatively small and impotent student movement, and no competing left groups to speak of.

In addition, workers in Baltimore had been engaged in a mini-strike wave prior to June 1970. The AFSCME (American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees) was leading a bitter strike of road workers in Garret County; a wildcat strike by gravediggers had been defeated; in both of these strikes, as well as in the teamster strike of Allegheny-Pepsi Bottling and sit-ins by hospital workers at Seton Hall Nursing Home, led by 1199, state power had been used to bust the strikes, and in several instances sabotage had been the workers' response.

The importance of this situation had been grasped by Stevens in June and he had communicated it to Ascher. The problem they faced was how to successfully relate to this labor upsurge. Among the earliest steps that they took was to work to Johns Hopkins University, where a number of students and faculty who had participated in the campus strike wave over the Cambodia incident, remained during the summer. The first result of this activity was the production and distribution of a leaflet to demonstrating city employees, occasioned by the Mayor's threat to roll back pension benefits.

The first instance of sustained strike support work took place in June 1970 at the time of the strike called by the Teamsters to organize the driver-salesmen of the Allegheny-Pepsi Bottling Co. This was a strike of relatively highly-paid workers, who were seeking union security in the face of threatened lay-offs. In its intervention the Labor Committee attempted to organize outside support for the strike by forging an adhoc group of leftists and students; by distributing a leaflet that set the issues of the strike in a national perspective for the benefit of other workers; and by attempting to lend immediate moral and physical support to the strike. This last was attempted by joining the picket line and by attempting to organize a boycott of Pepsi products in A&P's several outlets. In this work the Labor Committee drew to its periphery Steve Pepper and several other members of the Johns Hopkins Strike Committee, and youths from YIP, a local youth program located in a working-class neighborhood. In addition, the Labor Committee received a warm response from the Teamsters for its propaganda; a lengthy newspaper article on student support for workers highlighted the Labor Committee's role. An additional repercussion of student involvement was the withdrawal of financial support to Johns Hopkins Hospital by the President of the Allegheny-Pepsi Co.

But the attempt to organize a product boycott to materially assist the strike exemplified the lack of conceptual development of the student allies of the Labor Committee and some Labor Committee members, while the most advanced members of the Labor Committee were not able at that juncture to formulate an alternative activity. With such few allies, the objective situation did not permit further development. The union extended almost no benefits to its members, and without significant support the strike caved in.

The Schmidt's Strike

At the time that the Schmidt's intervention began, the Baltimore Labor Committee had succeeded in forming a periphery of students and youths for strike support activity and had achieved an initial impact on Baltimore labor leaders.

The Schmidt's strike began on July 21. This strike was organized by the Bakery and Confectionary Workers Union to win union recognition at the first of four local bakers that had held out against the unions in strike action dating back to the thirties. The strikers represented the most oppressed members of the working class — overwhelmingly black; paid as low as \$1.75/hour; and frequently forced to work 12-18 hours a day. In addition, the same Bakery was being struck at its Cumberland location in Western Maryland.

The Labor Committee's intervention took the form of a rally called on Tuesday, July 28. There were no speakers at this rally, which was attended by 12-15 "outsiders": Labor Committee members and students. But the Labor Committee put out a leaflet entitled "Not by Bread Alone" which was distributed at the Bakery, UAW and Bethlehem Steel plants. This leaflet formulated the confrontation of labor with government and management at this juncture in time, and called for outside strike support on the basis of a program in the interest of the entire working class.

This leaflet won the support of a leading member of the Young Workers Liberation League (YWLL), Charles Henry. At our second united front discussion Henry agreed to join the strike support coalition on the basis of five points: full productive employment — no layoffs; \$150/week minimum wage; taxation of profits on real estate and other speculation — end of taxes on wages; end to repression of left and labor groups; full democratic equality within unions.

Immediately preceding this alliance, the YWLL, Labor Committee, and Workers League had blocked together at a public meeting called by anarchist left groups in Baltimore early in August, calling for support for the Schmidt's strike and a provision calling for an end to repressive measures of labor, as well as the Baltimore Black Panther Party. Although no response was forthcoming from these groups at the time, the Mother Jones

Collective, an anarchist group with ostensible labor orientation, was later to respond to the limits of its capacity, as we shall soon describe.

Hence, the situation by mid-August was that a united front had been achieved, and the leaflet calling for outside support for the Schmidt's and projected UAW strike on the basis of the program had been widely distributed. The situation of the strike at this time was that picketing had been limited by a court injunction; scabs — unemployed people — were maintaining the Bakery at more than 50% capacity; and the initial response of other labor unions to the Bakery local's call for support had quickly cooled. Thus the Labor Committee was confronted with a situation in which the Schmidt's strike seemed to be heading for defeat, and it lacked a clear plan to develop UAW strike support.

It was at this time that Stevens conceived of intervention in the Schmidt's strike as the means of moving the Baltimore UAW local to respond to the call for outside support. Two factors prevailed in this decision: the magnitude of our possible impact in the Schmidt's strike and the likely self-imposed isolation of the UAW local at the outset of their strike.

Developing a Strategy

The period between mid-August and September 14 was largely devoted to developing this strategy. Plans were made to organize forums and out-door rallies on area campuses as soon after the start of the term as possible. More propaganda was printed on the basis of the five-point program. Within the Labor Committee an argument continued on the question of two to relate the Schmidt's strike to the UAW. One view held that direct contact with the UAW was the only means of intervention, and that our Schmidt's propaganda was indirect and misleading. In this view, the Schmidt's strike was doomed to failure, and instead of our strategy of calling for outside support, we should urge the striking bakery workers to encourage other bakery workers to mass strike with them. In this view labor was considered the only source of its own salvation, and the role of the Labor Committee was deemed to be that of calling for superior trade union militancy. This outlook was to reappear consistently; its most aggravated form was the Workers League representative's strategy that the bakery local should "issue a call to area labor" to mass strike the bakery and shut it down. If the

injunction were to be invoked, in this clown's view, a general strike would be in order.

The Process of Building Strike Support

To return to the serious process of building strike support, the predicted low level of awareness among the UAW workers was confirmed by the aggressive hostility shown by workers to Labor Committee leafletters in the weeks immediately preceding the GM strike. At a September 14 rally held at Schmidts, speeches called for the building of solidarity throughout the labor movement, and of continuing and expanding the means by which outside support was to be encouraged; in particular the impact of the UAW strike on all labor activity was emphasized. The five points were explained and were well-received by Schmidt's workers.

This rally was followed by a forum on strike support held at Johns Hopkins on Sept. 15. Henry Koellein, secretary of the Bakery local, and two rank-and-filers, Norman Chase and Jim Woods, spoke to students. When Ascher specifically asked the union representatives about the five point program, he received a rather vague and wordy response from Koellein; in contrast both Chase and Woods affirmed their support enthusiastically at the Hopkins forum, attended by twenty students and faculty. Koellein urged students to participate in the boycott of Schmidt's products. At a meeting of this same group the next day Ascher was able to counterpose to this trade union strategy a political formulation that called for the creation of outside support on the basis of a united interest program. As a result, an outdoor rally for Schmidt's and UAW workers was scheduled at Hopkins for Thursday, October 1.

In preparation of the UAW-Schmidt's rally several students and faculty in the Labor Committee periphery who were responsible for planning the rally visited the UAW Hall and picket lines. They were permitted to attend the educational held by the Union for its rank and file. The atmosphere in the Hall was redolent with trade-union militancy; the educational leaders stressed the analogies with the 30's, and posed the union's solidarity as the workers' only possible defense. The several rank and filers contacted, while swearing their union loyalty, expressed considerable bitterness at the union contracts — especially where benefits were delayed up to 18 months before going into effect. In sum, any approach to the union would have to account for

extreme union parochialism, militancy channeled by the union, and a defensive attitude towards outsiders as potentially divisive.

The participation of the UAW at the Hopkins rally reflected these attitudes: stress on economic issues; insistence on obeying the legal right to strike; affirmation of union loyalty to the present economic system; the aim of the strike was defined as winning labor's fair share of the spoils. In contrast to the UAW policy, the Bakery Union actively encouraged support, although it wished to involve the commercial boycott of Schmidt's products. By contrast, the keynote by Pepper, who was chairing the meeting, was the political aim of strike support: **to unite various "aggrieved" parts of the population in a common struggle situation to win the political goals of their united interests.**

Hence, the leaders of the Baltimore Labor Committee had succeeded in uniting the most active and intelligent operatives of other left groups, and of the politically active campus representatives in a united front coalition with the striking workers. The Schmidt's strikers, in their weak trade union situation, could relate to this support, whereas the "strong" UAW, involved in a national strike, had no place in their perspective, as yet, for such activity. The basis of the united front at this juncture was to undertake political propaganda on the basis of the five point program among politically-related members of the population on behalf of the strike, but uniting these elements on the basis of the program. Finally, the development of this labor-oriented activity had attracted like flies to honey the attention of anarchist groups. Their activities must now be summarily treated.

Mother Jones

The Mother Jones Collectives was a grouping of ex-SDS RYM-2 activists (many from Cornell), who were attempting to create a semi-labor-oriented commune in Southeast Baltimore. They had called for a rally on Saturday October 3 that was widely advertised as leading to a bust. The brief role history assigned to this pathetic group was quickly played out at the appointed noon hour; in ritual fashion, they repeated their litany of abuse at the white pig power structure, and then they attacked a delivery truck; in the ensuing skirmish they were duly arrested.

The Mother Jones intervention, besides breaching the Sunday papers' blackout of the Schmidt's strike, also drew the distinction more sharply than mere words between the Labor Committee tactics and anarchist activity. The anarchists' approach to the strike, to insist on separating it from other labor activity and to approach it as a racist struggle, at first appealed to black workers, but the Labor Committee's insistence on the inter-relatedness of the strike to the UAW and to a political class replaced the parochial attitudes encouraged by the anarchists. This was demonstrated, for example, at a rally at the black Morgan State University, when a Schmidt's worker opposed the separatist attitudes of the students.

After the Mother Jones' rally the Labor Committee continued to develop its tactic of encouraging outside support by holding forums at various area colleges, at first with UAW and Schmidt's representatives, but eventually the UAW was permitted its temporary isolation undisturbed. Hence, at this juncture, the focus of attention was shifted to the potential allies of labor, rather than to the UAW itself. To capitalize on this work the Labor Committee undertook to mount a strike support march in the name of the coalition in behalf of the UAW and Schmidt's workers.

The March

The planning of this march permitted the Strike Support Coalition to plan a major tactic of the Schmidt's strike as an equal partner of the trade union. In so doing, it made it possible for the Labor Committee to draw the distinction between the fragmented workers' formations, based on trade union goals, and its program, that made possible the strategy of introducing outside support to overcome the trade union parochialism.

This approach characterized at least Pepper's understanding of strike support work: an example of politicizing the strike to force a reorientation of existing trade union practices advocated as the winning strategy for a strike. To implement this policy, the Labor Committee encouraged Koellein, the Bakery union leader, to call the UAW local president, Stockton, to invite him to join the march: Koellein himself was surprised at Stockton's flat refusal. This conversation took place in the week preceding October 15; by October 23 Stockton was encouraging outside support.

The rally of October 15 was primarily a Schmidts rally. The largest numbers in the march were students, although the rally was enlivened by the fire-eating union militancy of a black woman leader of the Amalgamated Garment Workers, who were striking a local company, Diplomat Ties. This natural revivalist leader instinctively responded to the unity of the beleaguered workers: she exhorted the crowd that if they saw Schmidts' bread not to buy it, just to squeeze it. The exactly opposite attitude was expressed by the one speaker representing the government in the ghetto, the local poverty agency representative. His contribution, when faced by an enthusiastic class-for-itself constituency, was to bemoan the need for "students from Hopkins to come down to help fight black battles." His parochial theme fell on deaf ears.

The result of this spirited demonstration was to raise the morale of the Schmidts workers to its highest pitch and to provide the objective base for calling the first autonomous public meeting of the BSSC for the Friday evening following the march.

The proposal for the meeting was advanced by New York Labor Committee member Sober who had arrived in Baltimore on the eve of the march. The factor that must be stressed here is that prior to the march, **the objective base for such a meeting probably did not exist**; but it is unlikely that the majority of the members of the Baltimore LC or BSSC would have spontaneously arrived at this tactic, at least at that date, because their conception of the activity was still focused on the strike and not on independent development of the coalition. The difference in attitudes may be characterized as considering the united front as formed around the strike, and the united front leading to the creation of its own organic and appropriate political formation, the BSSC. This distinction can be characterized in the differing views of two local members of the BSSC. One held the view that the main task of the Coalition was to build strike support through the creation of nuclear groups on area campuses, whereas the other argued that the correct conception was to draw support to the BSSC meetings.

The first BSSC meeting was held Friday, October 16. It drew nearly 20 people, including a large number of Schmidts workers. This un-looked-for success was gratifying to everyone. At the second meeting the following week the

effort was made to explain the meaning of the BSSC and its program as the first autonomous political organization drawing for its constituency on the various elements of the political class-for-itself. The later formal history of the BSSC is not of great importance. It continued to hold regular Friday meetings attended sporadically by students and workers. **More important, however, was the fully-developed autonomous nature of the organization in the minds of LC members and their close allies.** This autonomy was manifested in the unfolding of the UAW phase of the work.

Breaching the UAW's Isolation

In the week following his rejection of participation in the strike support rally, Stockton underwent a change in attitude. He granted a long interview to a Workers' League representative, and he was very cordial to LC members when they visited him on Oct. 26. He agreed to mass distribute BSSC literature and to introduce Schmidts workers and BSSC representatives at the UAW educationals. This in fact ensued. But the introduction of Schmidts workers at the UAW meetings was delayed several days because of Stockton's absence. This delay had the effect of undermining the confidence of the rank-and-file leader at Schmidts. The conjunction of these circumstances points up the present sociology of the working class. On the one hand the UAW rank-and-file were completely engrossed in their class-in-itself trade-unionism, while their leader, Stockton, was becoming somewhat aware of the objective political conditions in which the strike was being fought. Hence, he was prepared to cast about for outside support. On the other hand, the Schmidts workers were very aware of the difference between their vulnerable situation and the apparent invulnerability of the great industrial union. It is not an easy thing for workers in such circumstances to bridge the gap created by material circumstance and traditional trade-unionism. In this case, the hesitancy of the socialists involved was sufficient to activate the fears and pride of the Schmidts picket captain. What saved the day at all was the pluck of one Schmidts worker, one of the few women and the only white person on the strike, who went to the UAW local, found several ex-West Virginians like herself, and, after putting everyone in a receptive mood by reminiscing about the coal fields, put forward the argument for union solidarity.

Hence, by early November the UAW's isolation had been breached, and Stockton agreed to co-sponsor the city-wide strike support rally. In addition, the UAW issued a press release calling for support for the rally and identifying the participants as trade unionists, students and unemployed (*Solidarity*, Dec. 14).

The Last Rally

The last strike support rally called by the BSSC took place on November 15th. The co-sponsors were the UAW, the Bakery Union and the BSSC. The anticipated success of the rally, largely based on the advance publicity and the expected full-scale participation of the UAW, at the last moment failed to materialize. Several complex factors contributed to the UAW failing to produce their expected numbers. The rally fell in the midst of the UAW national's negotiations with its locals that led to a general settlement of the UAW strike. At this juncture Stockton's enthusiasm for the march had waned in proportion to his accepting the course of the national settlement. Although his local was to reject the settlement, it had no inclination to fight on independently for outside support. Since there did not yet exist independent contacts between the BSSC and the caucuses within the UAW, the fate of any activity between the UAW and the BSSC was dependent on Stockton's leadership.

The rally suffered from other weaknesses. The increased concentration of BSSC propaganda at the UAW plant meant that other sectors of the potential political class-for-itself were not sufficiently mobilized. Thus the relatively large number of students who had made the October rally a success were not mobilized. In addition, the BSSC had not devoted sufficient time to planning and organizing its schedule of speakers.

If these were obvious shortcomings to the November rally, there were equally-evident proofs of its superiority to the earlier rallies. It was truly city-wide, held in the heart of downtown. It drew speakers from the Baltimore Teachers Union, local 1199, Schmidts and various support groups. It was covered on television. It was sponsored by the BSSC and fully expressed the program and approach of the class-for-itself organization, whereas previous rallies had been largely devoted to strike support propaganda.

The November 15 rally was the high point of the BSSC. Shortly thereafter the Schmidts strike was settled with complete union recognition being won; the Baltimore local of the UAW rejected the national contract; after national acceptance the local reached agreement locally as well. The BSSC was able to distribute a leaflet denouncing the national settlement, and an additional leaflet highlighting the importance of outside support. As a direct result of this work the Baltimore Labor Committee has made contact with a black caucus within the local and has discussed initiating educationals with them. It is also likely that educationals involving Schmidts workers will soon follow.

The Impact of the BSSC

Other results of the BSSC are reflected in Labor Committee work nationally. In Rochester, New York and Philadelphia similar organizations are in embryonic stages. In Baltimore, where the experience of such formations is concentrated, the Educational Alliance, a class-for-itself formation, including teachers, para-professionals, and unionists, has recently issued a newspaper. In fact, the impact on the BTU is the clearest evidence of the significance of the BSSC. During the past summer the BTU showed no interest in the perspective of a cross-union caucus. But during the fall newly-elected members of the union's executive board (including a Labor Committee member) participated in strike-support rallies and forums, and it was agreed to organize the Educational Alliance along the lines of the BSSC.

Hence, it is clear that the BSSC, small as it is, has cast ripples that are still spreading. It seems wise, therefore, to draw lessons from the experience. First, the conceptual understanding of the participants went through marked changes. As understanding increased, it became easier to handle more difficult problems of organization and leadership. Thus a clear grasp of the principles and nature of a class-for-itself organization is essential. Second, the objective conditions of the situation must be considered. In the case of the BSSC the most important factors were the unawareness of the UAW rank-and-file to their own backward attitudes; the limitation on the degree of understanding of the coalition's program and policies that Schmidts workers would attain and practice; and the incapacity of most students to relate to the union struggles or even conceive of

them as political. As a result it was impossible for the BSSC to attain an empirical success beyond a certain finite point. When one realizes, however, that a group that never included more than 5 or 6 active members organized two large city-wide rallies, involved the hierarchies of the Baltimore labor movement in their activities, actually mobilized student and worker rank-and-file to undertake advanced political activity, affected the

outcome of a strike, and did succeed in setting up a fully-functioning autonomous cross-union caucus, then even in terms of empirical measurement, the BSSC was a success. But far greater importance is its proof that by the correct application of theory based on real situations, and not on the fluctuating illusions of success or failure, a handful of socialists can create a class-for-itself organization in embryo.

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Developing Socialists: the Mass Strike

By T. PERLMAN

1)The Baltimore Strike Support Coalition is an institution of revolutionary socialist leadership, realization of Marx's discoveries concerning the deployment and development of cadres, which are also the policies of the Labor Committees since their formation. In its character as the vehicle of Marxist leadership in the mass-strike movement, the Coalition is a continuation of the Labor Committee policy which resulted in the formation of the expanded Strike Coordinating Committee during the Columbia strike of April-June 1968. In its role as a school for mass-strike leaders it is the successor to the Columbia Strike's Liberation School.

The most general significance of the Baltimore Strike Support Coalition is as a new and critical link in the conscious "reproductive cycle" of "true humanity," true humanity being the location of one's personal identity in one's positive contribution to humanity as a whole, and thus, in this period, the identification of one's own interests with the interests of the worldwide political working-class as a whole. That is to say that the formation and activities of the BSSC represent part of the deliberate means by which certain individuals characterized by their development towards "true humanity" go about developing a similar character in a greater number of individuals.

Put somewhat differently, the problem of revolutionary socialists, presently constituting well under 0.1% of the U.S. population, is how to produce more socialists like themselves. Even the best socialist propaganda, as mere propaganda, has never been found to fundamentally affect more than a tiny, if extremely critical, initiating intellectual layer. Karl Marx's definitive solution to this philosophical and sociological problem was his central contribution to the socialist movement: the concept of the "class-for-itself," the concrete historical realization of Ludwig Feuerbach's "active form of species-being." The BSSC is the

first consciously-successful application of Marx's "class-for-itself" concept to the American labor movement, not only since the start of the "sixties" radicalization and the present strike wave, but actually since Marx's own time.

The Quality of Leadership

It is entirely characteristic of this "reproductive cycle" that the relationship between the initiating socialists and eventual newly-developed socialist leaders of future mass struggles should be mediated by determinate forms of struggle-organizations — in this case, a cross-union caucus organically uniting leading representatives of students, black oppressed, and trade-unionists. This in fact was the fundamental dividing-line between Marx and pre-Marxian, utopian socialism. Pre-Marxian materialist philosophy, even in its most progressive forms (cf. Condillac) was never able consistently to conceive the relationship between the individual and the form of socialist organization as other than a variation on conditioning and the conditioned response or "conditional reflex." For all its optimism concerning the good effects to be expected from nurture (or "rewards and punishments") and training, in combatting the symptoms of sick, piggish, egotistical bourgeois self-identity, it was forced to regard the bourgeois ego and its fundamental drive (whether for self-preservation, self-aggrandizement, etc.) as a self-evident "given" entity in the manner of Kant's "thing-in-itself."

As the result, pre-Marxian socialism failed in its efforts to "educate educators," i.e. consciously develop high-level cadres. Thus even Fourier, for all his admitted genius, was, as Marx points out, unable to construct a social movement which could develop in others any of the positive features of a Fourier — only those of dogmatic parrots. Compare this record with, for example, Rosa Luxemburg's contribution to the development of scores of Marxist leaders, headed by Liebknecht, Tyshka, Paul Levi, Marchlewski, Janecki, and Dzerzhinski, through the "tiny" Spartacist and SDKPIL organization, as documented in Nettl's

biography. On a smaller scale, the ability of the Labor Committees to develop the individuals who could realize its strike support policy in 1970 (*Solidarity*, Sept. 7 and Sept. 25), proved that its previous formation of the leaders of the pre-planned Columbia, 1968, and U. of Penn., 1969, "student strikes" was no coincidence, but represented an appropriate degree of mastery of the laws of "subjective" development expressed in Marx's "class-for-itself" method of cadre education.

Since Hegel's shattering of the bases of classical materialism and logical positivism (in his **Phenomenology of Mind**), these natural and inevitable viewpoints of subjects of modern capitalism have been known to all philosophically-literate persons as "philistinism": actually the view that bourgeois institutions hold the solution to the philosophical problems of human existence. In socialist education, philistinism holds that the truths of Marxism can be grasped by members of local rank-and-file caucuses, single issue anti-war or New Priorities movements, parliamentary parties and pressure groups, etc., etc. Or in other words, that philistinism itself can in general be overcome without protracted, self-critical theoretical study within a **determinate social context**.

The Class-for-Itself

Marx's solution to the problem of the "self" was that man's self-identity and basic "philosophy" were an internalized function of his effective form of social organization. A false, alienated self-identity was the result of the division of labor, through its divorce of one's effective family, occupational, consumer or political organization from the greater, unself-conscious organization of social reproduction, presently comprising 2-3 billion people united in a totally-integrated and interdependent reproductive unit. Alienation was based on the **mediating** role of the local class-in-itself institution between its member on the one hand and self-reproducing humanity, and thus his own humanity, on the other. The active human race was hidden from the alienated individual, its threats to reveal itself producing fear and disgust. It could only be approached in religious or pseudo-religious guise (cf. Marx, *Fetishism of Commodities*). The only solution was the democratic control of productive life by all its participants, the conscious direction by united individuals of society's relation with nature — the

free association of producers or class-for-itself.

The Marxist world outlook is nothing other than the explicit world-outlook of the class-for-itself. Marxist revolutionary activity, particularly from the standpoint of cadre-development, consists in the theoretical development of the socialist world outlook in members and peripheries of organizations which approach the character of the class-for-itself, like the Baltimore Strike Support Coalition, or the organization of the Columbia "student strike" of April-June 1968, followed by the new contributions to the development of the class-for-itself by these new socialist individuals.

In contrast, we can trace the "reproductive cycle" of alienated individualism based on the division of labor in the particular form of the capitalist property-title, as follows. It begins in the family, when the infant must learn to control its parents, in order to obtain their favors, by operating upon its pre-existing social identity in the form of the family's pre-existing convictions as to the "rights and duties" and constitution of a child. Already we have a self-identity based on control over others for the sake of "individual greed," and already we have a "social repressed" (Erich Fromm), namely the whole story of the mediating role of the family and of the real (total) social process, which is the real object of feelings of filial devotion, etc. It is "repressed," becomes the object of disgust and fear, and is forced to appear only in religious or other irrational disguises, because it is a threat to self-identity defined, in terms of the family, just as the claims of minority-group and other unemployed workers are "repressed" as a threat to the skilled worker's self-image defined in terms of the craft group and union. Durkheim's **Suicide** showed conclusively that such a threat to one's social identity may be taken far more seriously than any threat to one's mere biological existence as such. Biological existence can have various emotional meanings, but a threat to social identity is a threat to the existence of that "everything" for which a child depends on its parents; that is, depends on his social identity as an object of parental attention. Small wonder that workers go through some rightward, even "law and order" turns, before grasping for communism.

As L.S. Kubie points out (**Neurotic Distortion of the Creative Personality**), the typical school situation is an artful caricature of the family in its most corrupt features, functioning as a transition to the alienated workplace. Parental authority is

replaced by the teacher, sibling rivalry by a scientifically-constructed series of competitive academic hurdles, and the exchange of familial love by an exchange of, generally, diligent busy-work transitional to the "cash nexus" uniting "adults." The "social repressed" is further buried. The student-identity bars fundamental criticism, that is, self-criticism, of the family and its effect on the individual, just as the family pattern rules out fundamental criticism of education. Of course this is repeated on the job, and in every form of even radical class-in-itself organization. As Kubie says, the rut is continually deepened and confirmed in its immunity to examination, criticism, and the positive redefinition of the individual, beyond parochial institutions, in terms of his positive contribution to humanity as a whole.

It should now be clear that the BSSC is, at least in its base form, an approximation to the Marxian class-for-itself, and thus a necessary tool in overcoming the process of alienation. The form, to repeat, is that of an organic alliance of radical students, black semi- or un-employed, and trade unionists, the three key sectors of the political working class, in behalf of shared common interests representing an appropriate approximation to socialist reindustrialization, the present historical form of the democratic control of man's relationship to nature. But this "base form" alone began the question of the coalition as an effective form of social organization, of its ability to realize its policies, without which it would be meaningless. This bare form no more constitutes the class-for-itself than formal agreement with Marxist conclusions constitutes Marxism. This is discussed below under the heading of the "mass strike."

2) Marxist tactics can never be either military drill or a symbolic exemplification of Marxist politics. Every legitimate tactical step of the Marxist vanguard or pre-vanguard is a concrete heightening and broadening of the organic unity of the sections of the political working-class.

All this follows from the view that consciousness is shaped by effective, rather than merely formal, forms of social organization; this is what is missed, in party, by Daniel DeLeon and every other socialist who equated the historically then-effective forms of class organization with their parliamentary shadows. Class-for-itself forms must demonstrate their superior ability to preserve the existence of their members.

The propaganda of Marxists states the goals and direction of the movement clearly and unequivocally at all times. They have absolutely no need or desire to "sneak anything in" symbolically under the guise of tactics. They know that if in most periods Marxism can only be grasped by a few people, it is not due to the form of words, but to the prevailing forms of social organization.

It is the petty-bourgeois revolutionaries and semi-revolutionaries who can never suppress a tendency to use working people as symbolic counters, basing revolutionary policy on a false analogy with a false form of individual education, as Marx shows in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*. The only faction that can do this are those whose political views to be symbolized (or) summarized or "approximated" are incredibly simple and vulgar — like those enacted by the proto-fascist Weathermen in their (ironically so-called) "exemplary actions." If any of these "symbolic" adventurers should intrude into working-class struggles, they are going beyond their depth; the success of today's working class struggles in defending, extending and surpassing their legacy of organization will determine the future of humanity as either socialist transformation or fascism, "the destruction of all culture, and, as in ancient Rome, depopulation, degeneration, a vast cemetery." (Luxemburg)

3) The Baltimore Strike Support Coalition is an integral part, and a critical link, in the present pre-revolutionary mass strike process in the "advanced" capitalist sector, understandable in no other way. The condition governing the ease of formation of a national strike support coalition and its success in different phases and geographical areas are the same conditions which control the rate of advance of the mass-strike process generally, as outlined by Luxemburg and excellently depicted in Steve Pepper's article.

The Mass Strike

In 1907, with the example of the 1905 Russian Revolution before her, Rosa Luxemburg showed that the modern work of a pre-revolutionary period and the modern context for the emergence of relative class-for-itself forms of working-class struggle was the mass-strike process, which she defined as a continual, apparently-spontaneous transformation of economic into political struggles and vice-versa; and of local and limited struggles into political mass strikes (and vice-versa) potentially uniting through these ebbs and flows ever

larger parts of ever more sections of the political working class across trade-union and national lines in behalf of common goals.

The mass strike process is typically triggered by the ruling layers themselves, as they transform existing social institutions in the attempt to avoid economic collapse, thus transforming an economic into a general social crisis: witness the present discrediting of trade-unions, the Democratic Party and the government generally by capitalist wage-gouging. As early as 1957, when what was to become the Labor Committee political tendency foresaw the re-approach of economic breakdown crisis in the middle and late sixties, it foresaw also the emergence of the mass-strike process characterizing the 1933-37 period. In turn, the founding document of the New York Labor Committee asserted in the spring of 1968 that the simultaneous French General Strike and the proto-mass strike at and around Columbia University had formally inaugurated a new pre-revolutionary period in the "advanced" capitalist sectors.

More recently, *Solidarity* has shown that the difference between the Teamsters' national wage victory and the prior defeat of the General Electric workers, and the recent stalemate settlement in auto, was due to significant assistance rendered the Teamsters' struggle by the near-general strike in San Francisco and steps towards duplicating it around teamster wildcats in the Midwest.

In reality, as Luxemburg points out, the appearance of spontaneity is deceptive. Since the advance of the mass strike is carried over every local hurdle by the enthusiasm and newly-enhanced insight of numberless radicals and socialists, the guiding role of a Marxist party or proto-party, exercised through these individuals, is decisive, both in the **preparation** of an upsurge, its general leadership in the field, and in consolidating its gains as the phase of direct mass action begins to ebb, and the process relapses towards almost-invisible "molecular" organizing activity.

The cross-union caucus formed in Baltimore can only be grasped as one determinate link among many in this process. Specifically, it is on the one hand the mass strike potential in the surrounding environment which gave the Baltimore caucus the power to win the Schmidts' strike: the Coalition was threatening, not the mere stopping of production here or there, but the coalescence of an inchoate alternative institution to capitalist rule. It is this characteristic alone, its potential contagion, that made the BSSC an effective social organi-

zation — indeed, that made it more powerful than trade unions one hundred times its size. Its program represented the felt needs of every part of the political working-class and its allies, and when these popular groups looked towards the Coalition, they found themselves represented there by people like themselves. In this period, and especially in the Baltimore situation, that is quite sufficient to deepen the channel towards a mass-strike upsurge.

From the point of view of a Marxist party of pre-party, such a cross-union caucus is **both** the appropriate **medium** for the exercise of Marxist leadership in the mass-strike process, **and** the best educational environment in which to capture the distillate of mass-strike leaders who may be able to start a development towards fully-conscious revolutionary leaders and party comrades. The view that the cross-union caucus represents the only form of intermediate leadership free of the propensity of the simple trade-union rank and file caucus to distort socialist policies into class-in-itself forms, represents a continuation of Rosa Luxemburg's arguments, as against Lenin, or the subject of the founding of the Third International.

In place of the rapid consolidation of Communist parties from among petty-bourgeois ultra-lefts and other uncritical devotees of the Russian Revolution, Luxemburg recommended just this socially-defined distillation of mass-strike leaders, claiming that Lenin's plan would result in a systematic distortion and perversion of the policies of the Russian center. This was proven to be the case in many important instances — notably the "dual union" issue in the U.S.A., where American Communists tried to abolish their "dual unions" in deference to the "united front" policy of Lenin's "Left-Wing Communism." Their so-called "dual unions" had been their most effective tool in organizing just the type of cross-union-caucus-like "united fronts" which Lenin recommended.

Conclusion

4) Although indisputably a realization of expressed Labor Committee policy (e.g. *Solidarity*, Sept. 7 and Sept. 25), the Baltimore tactic was not and could not have been abstracted from any formula prepared in advance. Rather it depended on the prior self-critical theoretical development of its handful of initiators, as they had been aided by Marxist institutions of cadre-development. Thus the BSSC's existence is itself a testimony to the effectiveness of the cadre-building policies it embodies.

From Revolution to Reuther

By Ed Spannaus

Carol LaRouche

Recently, the Rank and File Conference for Trade Union Action and Democracy, organized mainly by the Communist Party, decided that it would not initiate public activity in support of the United Auto Workers' strike against GM until the leadership of the UAW requested it. Among the reasons given for this are that the UAW leadership might not want the GM strike tainted with radical or Communist support.

The great irony in this is that the present UAW leadership was initiated in struggle by fighting alongside radicals and communists; in fact, it can be accurately stated that the UAW is only what it is today—a liberal, "progressive," militant union in comparison to most other former CIO unions—because of the essential role that "reds" and radicals played in building it during the 1930's and 1940's.

Trade-Unionism or Revolution?

Prior to the 1930's, attempts to organize auto workers were generally unsuccessful. It was not until the revolutionary mass strike wave of 1933-37 that production workers in the automobile industry were able to be organized. What they were organized for turned out to be capitalist trade unions, not an end to capitalism itself and its replacement by socialist government and management of the economy.

Although the revolutionary potential of the 1933-37 upsurge was aborted—for reasons beyond the scope of this article—the organization of the CIO was, unquestionably, a great historic advance for the American working class. The formation of industrial unions of production workers in basic industries meant that these workers were able—in normal times—to defend their standard of living, to secure a measure of human dignity, and to ease some of the most brutalizing features of modern capitalism.

As we follow the organization of the UAW during the 1930's, we will focus on

two critical aspects of the strike wave and its product, the UAW. First, it was the strike wave that organized the UAW and the CIO, not visa versa. The organization of the mass of production workers resulted from strikes and militant actions usually initiated by a minority in the shops. The unions did not organize the strikes; a small cadre group usually led the strike, which attracted workers into the union.

Second, we will observe the decisive role played by radicals and revolutionaries in leading the strikes and building the CIO unions. Without the important contribution made by Communist Party cadres, Trotskyists, and other revolutionary socialists, the CIO could not have been the mass, militant organization that it was during 1936-37, or during the strike wave following World War II. (Of course, had these organizations and individuals played a different role, there would have been a socialist revolution, not 30 or 40 years of continued capitalist rule.)

Impact of the Depression

The auto industry was the showpiece of American capitalism even before the Great Depression. And the industry's most notable features were the Open Shop and the speed-up. "Detroit is Detroit because of the Open Shop," its Chamber of Commerce boasted. The open shop was maintained both by the company spy system (which reached its perfection at Ford), and by the brutalizing conditions of work on the assembly lines.

The speed-up, still notorious today, is as old as the assembly line. The line demanded (and still demands) unflagging speed, superhuman endurance, and the ability to withstand the deadly monotony. Men seldom lasted on the line past age 50, and it was not an infrequent occurrence for a worker to drop dead on the job.

The Depression hit the auto industry hard. In 1933, employment in the industry was less than one-half that of 1929. And for those working, wages were less than one-third of those paid before the Crash. In 1934, almost half of the auto workers

were still making less than \$1,000 a year.

Organizing the Unemployed

The organization of unemployed workers played an important role in the strike wave. In Detroit, over one-third of the labor force was unemployed. Public relief agencies just barely kept the jobless from starving; the employers did nothing. The Communist Party was active in Detroit organizing its "dual" union, the Auto Workers Union, and organizing the unemployed.

In March, 1932, hundreds of unemployed workers marched on the Ford plant in Dearborn, demanding employment or adequate relief. They were asking for bread, but Ford gave them bullets: four were killed and many more were wounded. Later, ten thousand marched to bury their dead, urging onlookers to join the Auto Union.

As the economy in general and the auto industry began slowly to recover from the Crash, demonstrations of the unemployed and hunger marches gave way to an outbreak of industrial strikes. Said one observer: "Early in 1933 hell began to pop. Strike followed strike with bewildering regularity..." Across the country, textile workers, garment workers in New York, miners, and thousands of others took to the streets. The total number of strikers jumped from 324,000 in 1932, to 1,168,000 in 1933.

The Toledo Auto-Lite Strike

The 1934 mass strike in Toledo, spreading from the Auto-Lite strike, was one of the decisive events in the organization of auto workers. Member's of A. J. Muste's Conference for Progressive Labor Action and Trotskyists (who soon fused into the Workers' Party) had been active in Toledo organizing the unemployed, who were also one-third of the workers in that hard-hit city. The jobless were organized to support strikes as well as to demand jobs and relief.

When workers at the Electric Auto-Lite Company went on strike and were restrained from picketing by the usual

injunction, it was members of the Unemployed League who first defied the injunction. When police and scabs attacked the picket line on May 23, the strike sympathizers fought back with bricks and stones. 900 National Guardsmen were rushed in, and fought a pitched six-day war with the strikers and thousands of their supporters, as a near-general strike existed in that Ohio city. Two strikers were killed in the battle, and many wounded, but probably even more Guardsmen were injured.

The Auto-Lite workers won wage increases and exclusive bargaining rights, the first real gains in the auto industry. Following the strike, thousands of workers came into the union. As a result not only Auto-Lite, but the whole Toledo auto parts industry was organized, setting the stage for the first successful strike against GM the following year.

Insurrection

The Toledo strike was part of a mass strike wave sweeping the country in the Spring and Summer of 1934. The other two major strikes were those in San Francisco and Minneapolis. The San Francisco general strike, led by Harry Bridges, communists, and former members of the I.W.W., involved 125,000 workers. It paralyzed this West Coast city for four days, during which strikers assumed many public functions and organized essential services.

The Minneapolis Teamsters' strike, led by Trotskyists, were among the fiercest strikes of this period. Tens of thousands of unemployed joined the drivers, building trade workers, and others to shut down and partially control the city of Minneapolis, in one of the most militant and bloodiest battles of the American working class.

The United States was in a partial state of insurrection in 1934, with workers and their allies shutting down and temporarily controlling a number of cities. The AFL was almost totally without influence in these strikes, and the CIO was yet to be born. The leadership of these strikes was in the hands of socialists, communists, and not a few former Wobblies. It was only in later years that these mass strikes came to be viewed as being fought for the purpose of organizing the CIO. When they actually occurred they represented a raw, revolutionary ferment which, if properly led and followed through to the next wave, would have resulted in a socialist revolution. Instead, the strikes were tamed by John L.

Lewis and the pro-Roosevelt policies of the CP, and were channelled into narrow trade unionism.

AFL in Auto

The AFL leaders played a thoroughly rotten role in this strike period, attempting to restrain, hold back, and if necessary crush the new wave of ferment. But even so, 200,000 auto workers, impelled by the strike wave, joined AFL "federal locals," directly-affiliated industrially-organized local unions. By March of 1934, the auto workers were awaiting a strike call from the AFL, the particular grievance being the NRA code for the auto industry with its notorious open-shop "merit clause" (which was, by the way, personally approved by FDR). AFL head William Green managed to postpone the threatened industry-wide strike, then called it off altogether. In disgust, thousands of auto workers tore up their AFL membership cards. As evidence of their anger, 134 representatives of federal locals, meeting in Detroit in June, voted to keep all AFL organizers off the conference floor. However, the lack of any real alternative organization made it possible for Green to call a founding convention of the UAW, to be held in 1935.

1935 Toledo GM Strike

The first successful strike against General Motors was conducted by workers in the Chevrolet transmission plant in Toledo, who ignored the NRA Auto Labor

Board and William Green, conducting the strike on their own. The Toledo strikers, guided by the leaders of the 1934 strike, sent organizers to GM plants in Detroit and Flint, Michigan, and Norwood, Ohio, distributing copies of their strike newspaper and urging other workers to join the strike. They also sent telegrams to all GM locals throughout the country, calling for a national conference in Toledo. Green's representative Francis Dillon, who had by then arrived in Toledo trying to cool things down, vetoed the conference and urged the strike committee to drop its demands for sole recognition and for collective bargaining throughout General Motors. Dillon was hooted off the floor at a mass meeting of strikers, but finally connived his way back into the meeting and, after threatening to withdraw their AFL charter, convinced the strikers to accept a settlement. The settlement fell far short of the original demands, but did provide for a wage increase and for GM to bargain with a rank-and-file committee.

The next day the strikers, realizing they had been sold down the river by Dillon, tried to resume the strike, but the momentum had been lost. The Toledo auto workers screamed for Dillon's head, and demanded of Green that a UAW constitutional convention be held.

The UAW's First Conventions

The UAW's founding convention was held in Detroit in August, 1935. Green maneuvered and railroaded his way through the convention, over-riding a vote



TOLEDO AUTO-LITE STRIKE, 1934: Ohio National Guardsmen fire on fleeing strikers, killing two workers. Toledo was the first major strike in the auto industry, and laid the basis for the emergence of the UAW.

for direct election of the union president and appointing Francis Dillon to the head post. The veterans of the Toledo strikes had formed themselves into the "Progressives," the UAW's first caucus. They presented a program for the new union which advocated a fighting, independent role for the UAW and a thoroughly democratic internal structure.

The 1936 convention, meeting eight months later in April at South Bend, Indiana, disposed of Dillon immediately and proceeded to elect its own officers, choosing as its president Homer Martin, a former Baptist minister and a fiery orator, who had been chased from the pulpit for his radical views. Ed Hall and Wyndham Mortimer were elected vice-presidents, and George Addes, a Toledo veteran, was selected secretary-treasurer.

The 1936 convention contained all the factionalism and fierce internal debate for which the UAW was later to become famous—or notorious, depending on one's point of view. Among resolutions adopted by the convention were a policy against the reelection of Roosevelt and in favor of formation of a labor party.

An important difference between 1935 and 1936 was that the Committee for Industrial Organization had been formed by Lewis, Hillman, Dubinsky, and other disaffected ALF leaders who knew which way the wind was blowing. Therefore the auto workers no longer feared losing their AFL charter, and formally affiliated with the CIO soon after the 1936 convention.

Sit Down!

The Flint sit-down strike, the best known of the '36-'37 strikes, was indeed the crucial battle of the whole sit-down wave. Flint likewise ranks with the Toledo Auto-Lite strike and the 1941 Ford strike as one of the decisive engagements giving rise to the modern UAW.

The sit-down strike was a world-wide phenomenon in the middle 1930's. In 1934, miners in Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Spain staged underground fighting for wage increases, and Greek tobacco workers installed themselves in their factory. In 1935 and 1936, sit-downs increased, led by Welsh miners, followed by miners in Scotland, Poland, and France, Polish rubber workers, and one million French workers in automobiles, textiles, and other industries.

From 1933 on, U.S. workers often resorted to "quickie" sit-downs, and auto workers frequently fought with the

"skippy," skipping every sixth fender or leaving every fifth bolt loose. The sit-down wave actually began with Akron rubber workers in November of 1935, continued through 1936, and increased following Roosevelt's reelection, which was interpreted by many as a victory for labor.

In the auto industry, sit-downs broke out in November at the Bendix brake plant of Midland Steel, a manufacturer of automobile frames. A spontaneous sit-down at GM's Fisher Body Plant #1 in Flint, Michigan brought thousands of workers into the UAW; left-wingers Bob Travis and Wyndham Mortimer were sent to Flint to organize for a strike against GM scheduled to begin in January.

The GM strike actually began with a sit-down at Fisher Body in Atlanta, followed a few weeks later by one in Kansas City. On December 28, a thousand workers organized by Mortimer sat down at the Cleveland Fisher Body plant, and on December 30—ahead of schedule—workers at Fisher #1 and #2 in Flint joined in, shutting down GM's major body-manufacturing plants. Within three weeks, fifteen other GM plants were closed by strikes, and by February almost all of GM's 200,000 employees were idle.

The auto industry was the heart of American capitalism; General Motors dominated the auto industry; and Flint was the nerve center of GM's far-flung empire.

Victory at Flint

The sit-downers sat firm, resting solidly on \$50 million worth of GM equipment. On January 11, Flint police attempted to cut off food supplies to Fisher #2. Pickets and supporters outside stormed the plant with provisions, and shortly thereafter the police attacked, in the only forcible attempt to remove the sit-downers. A fierce three-hour fight—known as "The Battle of Running Bulls"—ensued with strikers throwing bolts, nuts, two-pound hinges, and anything else they could get their hands on. As news of the fight quickly spread, thousands of supporters streamed into Flint to join in defense of the strikers. The police, possessing superior weapons but inferior in numbers and spirit, lost the battle, although they did manage to wound fourteen strikers with gunshot.

Governor Frank Murphy ordered 1,500 National Guard troops into Flint the next day, but never dared use them to dislodge the strikers. Flint remained in a tense state of insurrection, with the government incapable of imposing its will or

enforcing its injunctions.

On February 3, when it appeared that troops would attempt to capture the plants, thousands of workers and supporters from as far away as Pennsylvania poured into Flint, armed and ready to do battle. Murphy backed down; had he attempted to use troops against the strikers, the country might well have been plunged into a revolutionary civil war.

As it was, on February 11 GM capitulated and agreed to sign a six-month contract, to reemploy all strikers, and to grant a five percent wage increase. Jubilant and triumphant, the victorious sit-downers evacuated the plants, after 44 days of occupation. But even the new union contract couldn't totally contain the resentments and discontent of GM workers: over 200 wildcat strikes occurred between February and June of 1937.

The Sit-down Explosion

Sit-down strikes spread like wildfire across the country—in almost every industry, in the workshops and factories, in the mines, on steamships, in stores, restaurants, and hotels. The sit-downs occurred mainly among the unorganized and the newly-organized; in industries with long established union sit-downs were rarer, for example there were none in the garment industry, and only a few in mining.

The usual pattern of the sit-down was that a militant minority would initiate the action, then the majority of workers in the shop would rally to its support, if not actually joining the sit-down. The success of the sit-downs of course depended on the support and sympathy of the mass of workers in the particular shop, as well as the general climate of broad support prevalent in late 1936 and early 1937.

A typical example of this process was the sit-down strike led by Walter Reuther at the Kelsey-Hayes Wheel Company plant in December 1936. Reuther, then a militant Socialist, was a delegate to the 1936 UAW convention from a local consisting of at most 15 members. Upon his return from South Bend, he amalgamated six locals into Local 174, the Detroit "West Side Local." The new enlarged local now consisted of 78 members. With this cadre, they led the Kelsey Hayes sit-down; as a result, the local soon recruited 30,000 members.

End of the Sit-downs

After March, the sit-down strike wave began to ebb, and it came to a grinding halt with the crushing defeat of the "Little

Steel" strike in May and June. When contrasted with the struggles in auto, the reasons for the defeat of the steel workers becomes obvious. The leadership of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee were Lewis, Phillip Murray, and other old-line mine union leaders. Rather than relying on the combined strength of the strikers and their outside support, the SWOC leaders—aided by their Communist Party foot-soldiers—preached reliance on their "friends" in government. Steel workers were told that Roosevelt and the NLRB would support them, that Governors Earle of Pennsylvania and Davey of Ohio, and Mayor Kelly of Chicago—all New Dealers—were on their side, and even that National Guard troops would protect the strikers. The outcome was a bloody defeat, with 18 strikers killed by police and vigilantes, culminating with FDR's "a plague on both your houses" epitaph for the victims.

Retreat and Consolidation

The recession which set in during late summer of 1937, which was characterized by the sharpest plunge in production in the nation's history, sent the whole CIO into retreat. The auto industry was hit particularly hard by the New Deal Depression, and by the winter of '38-'38 over half of the workers in the industry were unemployed, in Detroit 200,000 out of 300,000 workers in the industry were out of work.

By the time the recession set in, the UAW had made tremendous gains, having organized Chrysler and most of the rest of the industry, with Ford being the notable holdout. The sit-downs had impelled hundreds of thousands of new members into the UAW; the union had grown within a year from 35,000 to 350,000 members, making it the third largest in the CIO, and its most democratic and dynamic union.

Politics of the UAW 1937-47

Liberals were fascinated by the late Walter Reuther, praising him as a "progressive," a "man of vision," and a far-sighted leader who rose above bread-

and-butter trade unionism. But those who compare Reuther with the likes of George Meany miss the point: the UAW, because of its militant traditions, its democratic and dynamic character, and its left-wing leadership, could not have given rise to a George Meany or a David McDonald. The choice in the UAW was never between "social vision" and pure-and-simple trade unionism; the choice was as to the kind of social vision. The question in the UAW was always what kind of politics would prevail, not whether or not politics would be combined with trade unionism.

1937-39

The UAW, flushed with its victories in the sit-downs, met in convention during August of 1937, after the strike wave had ended and as the New Deal Depression set in. The convention immediately split into two main contending factions, the Progressive caucus and the Unity caucus. The Progressives, who took over the name of the original Toledo-based Progressives, were led by UAW president Homer Martin and Richard Frankenstein. The Unity caucus consisted primarily of the Socialists, led by the Reuther brothers, and the much stronger Communist group, led by Bob Travis and Wyndham Mortimer, the latter usually being identified as the leader of the Unity faction.

Martin, who was under the guidance of ex-Communist renegade Jay Lovestone, had already begun to purge Unity caucus members from organizing posts even before the chaotic 1937 convention. When Frankenstein joined the Unity caucus in April 1938, Martin removed him from his posts as assistant president and director of the Ford organizing drive. Two months later, Martin removed five Communist or pro-Communist members of the executive board; six other executive board members, including Walter Reuther, walked off in protest. So-called trials of the suspended officers were conducted, and George Addes, Mortimer, Ed Hall, and Frankenstein were expelled from the union, even though their caucus had the support of 80% of the union membership at the time.

At the request of a group of local leaders, John L. Lewis intervened; his settlement provided for the reinstatement of the expelled officers, and the referral of disputes to the CIO. Martin at first resisted Lewis' directive, but soon he surrendered and followed Lewis' orders.

However, in January 1939, Martin suspended 15 of the 24 members of the Executive Board, and attempted to take over the union machinery. A ferocious battle for control of the UAW broke out, with local meetings turning into brawls and guns occasionally being drawn. The opposition was considerably stronger than Martin, and it had the support of Lewis and the CIO. Thus it was able to drive Martin, the Lovestoneites, and their followers out of the union. Martin led a small band back into the AFL, from whence he was to unsuccessfully challenge the UAW-CIO during the next two years.

Depression and Decline

The UAW and the whole labor movement had been thrown into retreat by the 1937-38 recession, losing membership and money. But as war production rose after 1939 and unemployment eased, strikes and wildcats increased in frequency, reaching a peak in 1941.

The organization of Ford was the most pressing item of unfinished business facing the UAW. As we have noted, they had organized most of the rest of the automobile industry in the wake of the sit-down strikes. After organizing GM and Chrysler, the union had tried to organize Ford in 1937, but the strike wave was on the ebb by this time, and the organizing drive at Ford floundered against the systematic terror and espionage used against Ford employees.

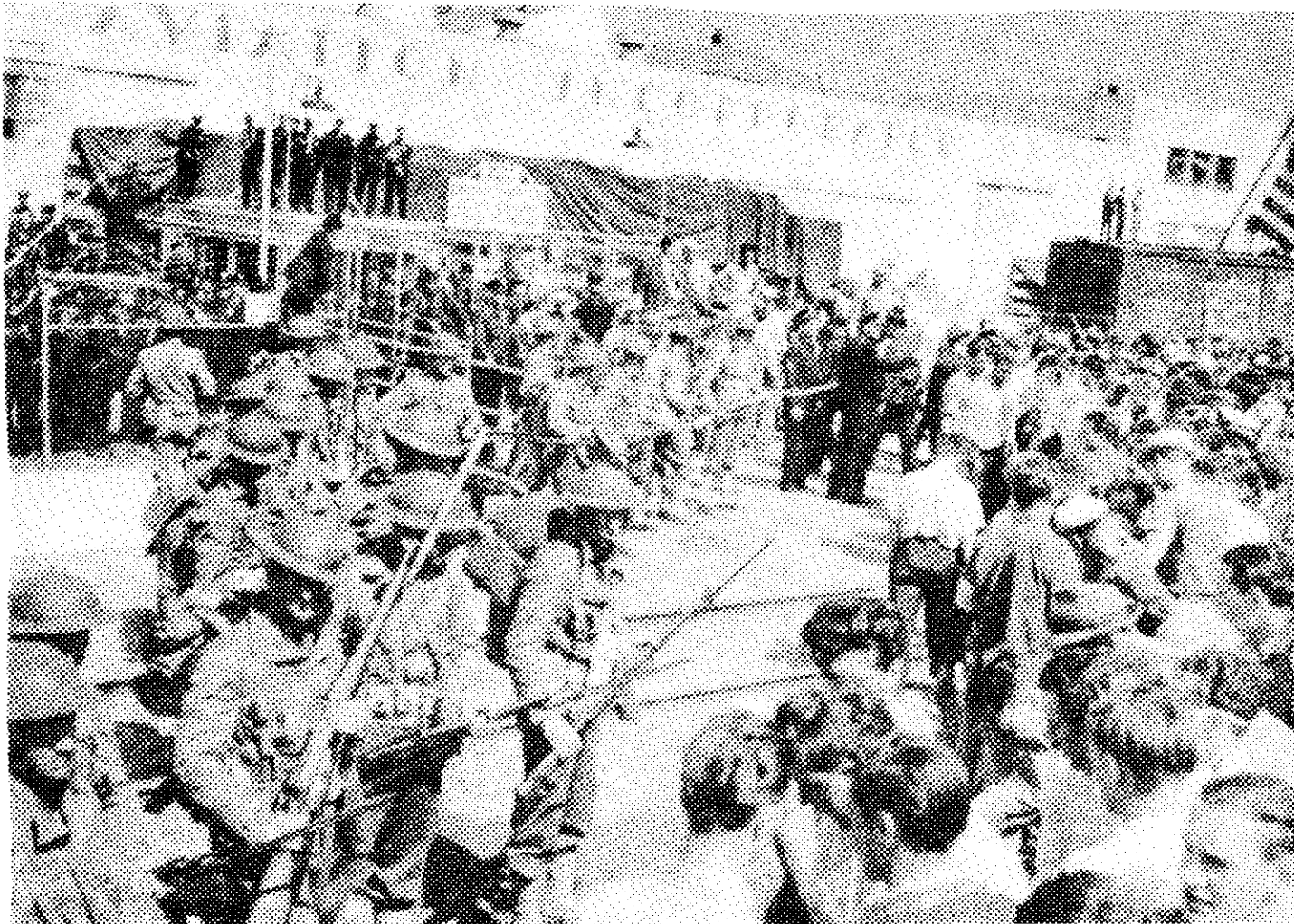
The Organization of Ford

Ford local 600 had remained only a cadre grouping since 1937, but early in 1940 the UAW stepped up its Ford drive and the plants became "afire with unionism." Spontaneous sit-downs and strikes had broken out in December, and on April 1, 1941 a strike broke out at the giant Ford River Rouge plant, unbeknownst to the UAW leadership. The strike spread from department to department, shutting down almost the whole plant. That evening, the UAW leaders made the strike official.

The whole Detroit labor movement pitched in to support the Ford strikers, who set up an impenetrable barrier of men and massed automobiles, thus completely controlling the whole area surrounding the Rouge plant. Ten days later Ford gave in, agreeing to an NLRB election which the UAW swept.

Strikes In The War Industries

As war production was stepped up,



Strike breaking: Federal troops were sent by President Roosevelt to break North American Aviation strike with the support of UAW leadership.

(particularly of armaments for Britain) the UAW turned its attention to the aircraft industry and organized a number of large plants. Meanwhile, Roosevelt, the "friend of labor" had been elected for his third term and began to intervene openly against strikes through various government agencies, particularly the Defense National Mediation Board, and the Office of Production Management (OPM) (of which CIO official Sidney Hillman was a co-director).

Two strikes at war plants were of particular importance to the labor movement generally and also to the internal factional life of the UAW. The first broke out on January 22, 1941 at the Allis-Chalmers plant near Milwaukee, Wisconsin; it was an extremely solid and effective strike, with 5000 of 7500 workers in the plant on the picket lines. Whipping up a virulent anti-labor atmosphere, Roosevelt tried to intimidate the strikers by threatening to operate the plant with scabs. After over 70 days of striking, the picket lines were attacked by police and state militia; the strike was soon after settled by the Defense Mediation Board on the basis of "maintenance of membership" (a watered-down version of the closed shop).

While the UAW leadership had reluctantly backed the Allis-Chalmers strike, they came out openly against the strike which

broke out at the North American Aviation plant at Inglewood, California on June 5. Frankenstein, the director of the UAW aircraft division, first supported the strike, then opposed it at the direction of UAW headquarters and was almost run out of town by the strikers. He then dismissed the UAW international representatives on the scene, including Mortimer, and revoked the local union's chapter. With the tacit approval of the UAW leadership, Roosevelt broke the strike with the use of 2,500 heavily-armed federal troops, who attacked the picket lines with fixed bayonets.

These two strikes, which were both led by persons in or close to the Communist Party, were to become a key issue in the union's 1941 convention.

The Early War Years

With Homer Martin out of the picture, the Communists were in a position to completely dominate the union, but chose not to exercise their potential power at the behest of Murray and Hillman. Instead of putting their preferred choices of Addes and Mortimer into the two top offices, they agreed to support the neutral R.J. Thomas for the presidency, with Addes becoming Secretary-Treasurer. It was during the next two years—the 1939-41 period—that Walter Reuther first emerged as a contender

for leadership in the union, and delivered to the CP its first real defeat in the UAW.

The CP, after the Hitler-Stalin pact of August, 1939, had abandoned its previous "anti-fascist united front" and "collective security" positions, making its slogan "The Yanks are not coming." Its isolationist position became increasingly unpopular, and Reuther took advantage of the situation to build his position at the 1940 convention.

In late 1940, to project himself as a national leader in national politics, and to capitalize on the CP's isolationist policy, Reuther made public his plan for converting idle automobile capacity to the mass production of military aircraft. Called "500 Planes a Day," the plan was rejected by the government as being "from the wrong source," (but was later implemented piecemeal anyway). The main effect of the plan was to project Reuther into the national spotlight and to provide him with a good deal of prestige during the "conversion layoffs" of the winter of 1941-42.

The 1941 Convention

By the time the UAW convention met in August, 1941, the CP had become fervent supporters of the war effort, after Hitler's invasion of the USSR on June 21, 1941. The CP thus made only half-hearted attempts to counter the arguments of Thomas, Reuther and others that the Allis-Chalmers and the North American Aviation strikes had interrupted vital defense production. The CP's flip-flop on this issue was disorienting to many of their followers, and the Reuthers played it for everything it was worth. As a result, Reuther pushed through the convention an anti-communist amendment to the UAW constitution. R.J. Thomas was reelected president and George Addes was elected Secretary-Treasurer over Reuther's choice Richard Leonard; however the Reuther caucus picked up strength on the executive board.

No-strike Pledge

Immediately after Pearl Harbor and the declaration of war, the top labor leaders, with the UAW in the lead, offered Roosevelt a "no-strike" pledge for the duration of the war. In April 1942, the UAW leadership proposed its "Equality of Sacrifice" program, which banned premium pay (time-and-a-half and double-time) for overtime and weekend work.

The no-strike pledge, preposterous as it may seem today, was feasible for a number of reasons. Primarily, it was an unspoken agreement between the union leadership and government. The deal was that the trade union bureaucracy would police the working class, guaranteeing "class peace" and uninterrupted production. Thus the CIO completed the trend begun in 1937 toward becoming an arm of the capitalist government; it now directly assumed responsibility for disciplining and controlling its membership—a role which Taft-Hartley only re-enforced later on.

In return for playing the policeman, the trade union bureaucracy was allowed to exist unhindered during the war, and to strengthen its hold on the working class through the "maintenance of membership" provision. The circumstances which made the no-strike pledge generally tolerable in the labor movement were the wide popularity of World War II, and the general increase in living standards (compared to the Depression years) which prevailed for most of the working class.

The UAW Leadership Unites

The UAW leadership was virtually united during the war years. The two major caucuses, the Frankenstein-Addes-CP bloc and the Reuther caucus, saw eye-to-eye on the no-strike pledge and the "equality of sacrifice" program, and only fell out temporarily when Frankenstein and Addes picked up the CP's proposal for piece-work and incentive pay in 1943, (which the UAW had successfully fought to eliminate years earlier), while Reuther wisely opposed it.

Throughout the labor movement there developed considerable resentment against the no-strike pledge, and opponents of the pledge were strengthened by the four strikes of the miners in 1943. These strikes were carried out in defiance of Roosevelt and the whole CIO leadership, and cracked the war-time wage freeze.

In no union was the no-strike pledge debated more vigorously and continuously than in the UAW. At the 1942 convention, when the UAW for the first time represented over a million members, the delegates were grumbling and unhappy about the loss of premium pay and the wage freeze, and expressed it by voting down a series of resolutions presented by the leadership, including dues increases and salary increases for officers.

After being forced to say that the UAW

would only give up premium pay if all unions did the same, the top leadership—Thomas, Addes, Reuther, and Frankenstein—went to President Roosevelt asking him to ban premium pay for all workers. FDR gladly obliged them a few days later.

The Fight Against the No-strike Pledge

In 1943, a number of important locals adopted resolutions calling for the no-strike pledge to be rescinded. A Michigan state UAW conference agreed, and also called for a break from the Democratic party and the formation of a labor party; much of the Reuther caucus—minus Walter—had supported these moves. At the UAW's 1943 convention, the no-strike opposition movement—much of which was spearheaded by the Socialist Workers Party and the "Shachtmanite" Workers Party—remained within the Reuther caucus; they supported Reuther against the Addes-Frankenstein-CP faction.

The strength of these two major caucuses was about equal in 1943. Reuther defeated Frankenstein for the first vice-presidency, but Reuther's man Leonard was then defeated by Frankenstein.

During 1944 the no-strike issue came to a head. A wave of wildcat strikes swept through the auto industry, setting a record of 244 strikes during the year. Most of these strikes were defeated with the encouragement of the union leadership, which supported company "disciplining" of strikers and which put a number of locals into receivership.

The "Rank and File Caucus"

Following a Michigan CIO conference, which asked for the revocation of the no-strike policy, the no-strike opposition formed into the "Rank and File Caucus." The SWP, the Workers Party, and many elements of the Reuther caucus were prominent in this movement.

The 1944 Convention was "the most turbulent convention ever held by the UAW." Three resolutions on the no-strike issue were presented: a Thomas-Addes resolution for reaffirming the pledge, a Reuther minority resolution for maintaining it in war plants, and a "super-minority" resolution for rescinding it altogether. After long, vociferous debate, all three resolutions were voted down, with Reuther's "fence-straddling" position being the most roundly defeated. This left the UAW with no position at all.

After a series of complicated maneu-

vers, it was decided to put the issue to a membership referendum within three months. In the referendum, about a third of the membership defied all their top leadership and voted to revoke the no-strike pledge.

Reuther lost heavily to the new Rank and File Caucus and was also defeated by Frankenstein for the first vice-presidency. He salvaged the second vice-presidency with the support of the CP, whom top CIO leaders had urged to support Reuther in order to avoid a serious split in the UAW. Said a CP leader, "We hate this little redhead sonofabitch but we hate Hitler worse."

Reuther Recovers

By all accounts, the 1944 convention was the low point in Walter Reuther's career. But within two years, Reuther had become president of the UAW, and within three years he was the virtually unchallenged ruler of the auto workers. What initially enabled Reuther to accomplish this was his effort to outflank the Communists on the left during the 1945-46 General Motors strike.

The Post-War Strike Wave

All the pentup anger and grievances of the working class came pouring out as the war in Europe came to an end. Strikes and wildcats increased in frequency, even though the no-strike pledge was still officially in effect. As war production tapered off, plants were closed down and workers laid off; between V-E Day (May 2) and V-J Day (August 14), a million workers were laid off from defense plants. Massive demonstrations of the unemployed were held across the country, and even CIO president Murray called for government operation of shut-down plants.

The strike wave which broke out in September of 1945 was the largest strike wave in U.S. history: in the year following V-J Day almost five million workers went on strike. (In 1937, "only" 1.8 million workers had struck.) The big issue was wage increases to catch up with war-inflated prices; the key element in the strikes were returning veterans who were in no mood to be pushed around by anybody.

The longest and hardest fought of the '45-46 strikes was the 113 day strike against GM, which began on November 21 and involved 225,000 GM workers. The strike was led by Walter Reuther

(who had been named GM division director in a deal with Hillman in 1939). In January, the GM workers were joined by the electrical, steel, and packinghouse workers, putting almost 2 million workers on strike at the wave's peak in January.

"Ability to Pay"

The GM workers demanded a 30% wage increase, with no increase in prices by GM. A prominent demand of the strike was "Open the Books of the Corporation", which had originated with the SWP and WP. The "no price increases" demand was Reuther's answer to the demand for a cost-of-living escalator clause, which had come from the same source.

Reuther took these far-reaching demands over, but his particular formulation of them was GM's "ability to pay." This became the major issue in the strike, with Reuther and the GM workers being praised and damned for their "interference" in GM company affairs. Reuther set up a committee of prominent public citizens such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Henry R. Luce to publicize his "ability to pay" demand. GM, in turn, ran newspaper ads which asked, "A 'peek at the books'—or a finger in the pie?"

Reuther's position was that the GM workers wage increase should be tied to the employer's ability to pay. Reuther stated, however, that the workers didn't want a wage increase if it meant that GM would have to raise prices! He told GM negotiators, "If you can prove we can't get 30%, hold prices, and still make a nice profit, we will settle for less than 30% . . ." (The "ability to pay" is also the rationale for the ILGWU's refusal to fight to increase garment workers' wages above the starvation level.) Nonetheless, Reuther's stand against price increases won wide public support for the GM strike as it dragged on.

"Reuther's Strike"

The GM strike immediately took on a factional coloration. Reuther was attacked openly during the strike by the CP (and implicitly by others) for "jumping the gun" and not waiting to strike jointly with the steel workers in January, and for leading the strike in order to groom himself for the UAW presidency. As the GM strike wore on, he was accused of keeping the GM workers out unnecessarily long in order to aid his own career. The main substance of these accusations was that the GM workers eventually settled for what the steel workers and the electrical workers had won in much shorter strikes.

Reuther was just as quick with his countercharges. He blasted Murray for not fighting on the issue of price increases in the steel strike, and accused the CP-led electrical workers (UE) of "double-crossing" the UAW GM workers because the UE had "secretly" negotiated a separate settlement with GM and sent its GM members back to work while the UAW was still on strike.

The GM strike—now more of a lock-out than a strike—came to an end on March 13, with the UAW settling for an 18 1/2 cents an hour increase (about 16%), which was what the Ford and Chrysler workers had been granted earlier.

Reuther's Bid for Power

Ten days after the GM strike was settled, the UAW opened its convention in Atlantic City. Here Reuther made his bid to defeat the CP, but was only partially successful. He narrowly defeated R. J. Thomas for the UAW presidency; Thomas was then elected first vice-president. Leonard (who had switched to the Thomas-Addes side) got the second vice-presidency, and Addes remained secretary-treasurer. The Thomas-Addes-CP faction also took a majority of the Executive Board seats.

The program of the GM strike was a major underlying issue in the convention, but it was not formally debated on the convention floor. Reuther's attack on the CP bloc was based on their espousal of incentive pay during the war, their backing of FDR's plan for labor conscription, and UE's early settlement with GM. The CP, in turn, blasted Reuther for his conduct of the GM strike, and accused him of conspiring with Dubinsky to take the UAW back into the AFL.

The Anti-Stalinist Left

The Rank and File Caucus, which had played such an important role toward the end of the war, had evaporated as the no-strike issue disappeared. Reuther was enthusiastically supported by most of the elements in that caucus, including the SWP and the WP, who had abandoned any revolutionary role for an accommodation to the trade-union "rules of the game." (Emil Mazey was the "hooker" who kept the SWP and the WP from straying too far from the Reuther caucus.)

The unbridled anti-Stalinism of these two groups over-rode any possibility of their playing an independent role; Reuther was against the CP and so were they even if this put them into bed with the likes

of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, who played an important role in Reuther's victory. (Not that the Trotskyists' Stalinophobia did not have roots in reality: they had watched Stalin butcher the whole Bolshevik leadership, they stood by helplessly as he betrayed revolution after revolution, and they had been hustled off to jail in 1941 as the first victims of the Smith Act, while the CP vigorously applauded this government persecution of the SWP leadership.)

Purge

In the year and a half between the 1946 and the 1947 UAW conventions, an all-out battle raged between Reuther and the Thomas-Addes-CP group. The Thomas-Addes majority on the Executive Board was able to block a purge by Reuther, but every issue in the union quickly became a factional battleground—the 1946 negotiations, the Allis-Chalmers strike, the Ford pension plan, and a proposed merger with the Farm Equipment workers union, reaching a climax over the question of compliance with the Taft-Hartley non-communist affidavit. At the same time, Philip Murray was breaking his informal alliance with the Communists and came over to Reuther's side in the UAW fight.

At the 1947 Convention, the Thomas-Addes-CP group had moved leftward under the press of circumstances, but by this time the logic of the situation was running against them. Because of their opposition to the ruling class' major post-war policies—the Marshall Plan and the Cold War—the CP's presence in the trade union bureaucracy now impeded the government's maintenance of the trade unions as the willing arm of the government.

The Labor — Democratic

Alliance

In the late 1940's, one widely circulated list of the ten most influential men in the world ranked Walter Reuther with Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin. From an obscure secondary leader of the UAW, Reuther became a man whom historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. would describe as "the extraordinarily able and intelligent

leader of the United Auto Workers (who may well become in another decade the most powerful man in American politics.)”

Schlesinger's prediction was not borne out: Reuther chose instead to become a docile instrument of the Democratic machine. This is the role for which he was groomed by his now-eclipsed predecessors Sidney Hillman and John L. Lewis. To understand the role of Reuther in his leadership of the UAW and the CIO, we must first examine the foundations of the labor-Democratic alliance. More specifically, we must examine the origins and the formation of the coalition between the CIO and the Democratic Party.

Lewis and Hillman

During the thirties, awe-struck speculations were rife about the aspirations of CIO-power brokers Hillman and Lewis

nothing. And the reporters, probably to a man, asked themselves whether this vast and glowering Welshman would really wind up in the White House.”

It is clear from his subsequent history that if Lewis really hoped to sit in the White House it was with the support of Roosevelt, not at the head of an independent Labor Party. Lewis broke with Roosevelt in 1940, but fearful of aligning himself politically with the Communist Party, he gave token support to the Republican candidate Wendell Wilkie. Hillman, however, was less of a maverick. He held the line for Roosevelt during that campaign, and was successful, with the support of leading AFL and CIO bureaucrats, in getting out the labor vote for the Democratic Party.

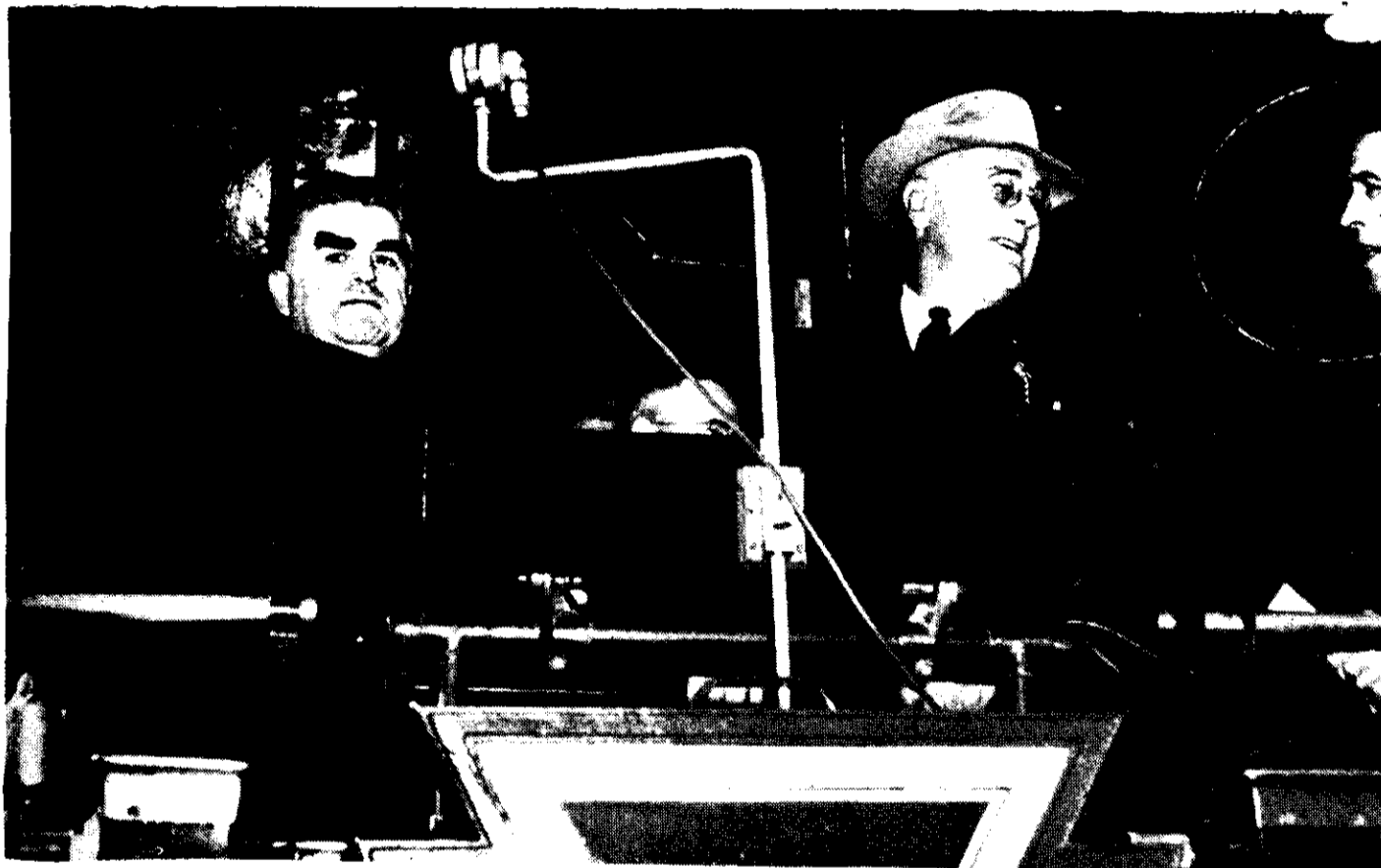
During the heated struggle Lewis was silent. This made him attractive to Samuel Gompers, who was looking for a “token miner” to absorb into his machine in order to forestall further militancy by the miners. Thus, Lewis became a field representative and legislative agent for the AFL. In 1916 he was appointed vice-president of the UMW, but since the president was an alcoholic, Lewis assumed that office in effect, and was elected president in 1920.

During the 'twenties Lewis consolidated a powerful machine within the union. He was able to do this by “mediating” the conflicts between local union leaders, by revoking local charters, and by sending his own men as appointed administrators. At the same time, he constantly compromised the militant struggles of the miners.

One example is the 1920 strike of 6,000 West Virginia miners, who formed an armed and disciplined “citizens’ army” which battled effectively with 2,000 armed strike-breakers. Three days later the U.S. Army moved in, and the UMW capitulated. Once the union was weakened by defeat in the struggle against the operators, Lewis suspended the district’s autonomy as a disciplinary measure.

While Lewis thus gained personal control of the union, he undermined the very base on which he sat. Coal operators in West Virginia and throughout the South were able to successfully underbid unionized Northern operators, because Lewis was constantly removing local militants. In this way the union bargaining position was weakened. Dues-paying membership in the UMW dwindled from 400,000 in 1920 to 60,000 in 1930. By 1930 Lewis was advocating that Northern mine owners introduce labor-saving devices, in order to compete more efficiently with Southern operators!

During the thirties Lewis underwent a metamorphosis. From a typical and not-too-successful AFL business-unionist, a trade-union hack, he became co-architect with Hillman of the New Deal’s labor planks. From a vicious red-baiter who suppressed all militancy within the UMW, he became founder and president of the CIO, a mass struggle organization which welcomed and co-opted the participation of communist and other militant organizers. And in the 'forties, true to the tradition of independent trade-unionism espoused by Gompers, he alone among top labor leaders, opposed the Democratic machine. He broke with Roosevelt successfully, defied the no-strike pledge, and refused to sign the anti-communist oath demanded by the Taft-Hartley Law. It is the Lewis of the 'thirties that Reuther succeeded. But it is Sidney Hillman whom Walter Reuther emulated.



Lewis accompanies FDR on 1936 campaign tour, before break.

In the October 1936 issue of *Fortune* magazine:

“When the Washington labor correspondents filed into the headquarters of Labor’s Non-Partisan League on the fifteenth of last July, they were welcomed by Major George L. Berry, Sidney Hillman, and John Llewellyn Lewis. Major Berry, the President, announced the news. The league had decided to perpetuate its existence beyond its current support of Roosevelt. It looked for a realignment of political forces before 1940 and wanted to have a hand therein. Yes, in New York State the league was already backing a pure labor ticket. Whereupon the reporters all looked at John L. Lewis, who rotated his cigar and said

Until the 1930’s Lewis was a typical business unionist. Originally a militant from a coal mining family tradition, after being defeated in his effort to become mayor of a small town in Iowa, he decided to turn his political talents to the labor movement. With the help of a mini-machine organized by his five brothers, he became president of a small local union in Illinois. His talents brought him to the attention of district officers of the union who appointed him as state legislative lobbyist.

In 1910 the UMW and the Western Federation of Miners were engaged in the tenth year of a struggle within the AFL to gain charters as industrial unions. Turned down for the eleventh time, they threatened to secede and form an independent union; they got their charter.

Hillman

Sidney Hillman immigrated to the U.S. from Czarist Russia in 1907, where he had been an active member of the Jewish Bund. The Bund was a social-democratic organization to the right of Martov, Plekhanov and other Menshevik leaders, the extreme right-wing of the "economist" tendency attacked by Lenin in *What is to Be Done?*. (The term "economism" referred to the practice of a section of the Social Democracy which subordinated the political class struggle to the day-by-day "practical" trade-union struggle over economic issues of immediate concern to workers in the shop.)

In 1911 Hillman was working as a cutter for Hart, Shaffner and Marx, the famous Chicago men's clothing shop, when he was abruptly swept into the midst of a wildcat strike of garment workers. The United Garment Workers Association, which held nominal jurisdiction over these workers, had done little to organize or represent them. Active unionists such as Hillman were forced to hold their small local meetings secretly.

The strike began when a small number of seamstresses walked out because of a reduction in the piece rate. Some of the workers in other shops refused to handle work finished by those who remained in the department. Gradually other workers began walking out. The cutters, Hillman included, treated the whole thing as a joke at first. After several days of heated discussion, the cutters' local to which he belonged failed to come to a decision whether or not to support the action. Finally two of the bolder members put down their work and called upon their fellows to follow them out of the shop. Hillman put down his tools and joined them. Soon 8,000 Hart Schaffner and Marx workers were out on strike and thousands in other plants were joining them.

The strikers were able to win liberal support. John Fitzpatrick, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor, was drawn in and ultimately Thomas Rickert, president of the UGWA, was forced to represent the workers. Predictably, enormous pressure was brought to bear on the workers to compromise their struggle without winning real gains. The ultimate settlement offered recognition to workers at Hart, Schaffner and Marx and nothing to the remaining 25,000 strikers. Hillman lined up with the compromisers in opposition to the militants who were represented in the struggle by IWW organizers. After the strike Hillman gave

up his job to become business agent for the Hart, Schaffner and Marx local.

During the strike he had made the acquaintance of a number of the liberal professionals who were sympathetic to the workers. As business agent he gained prestige in these circles for his pioneering efforts in introducing a system of arbitration to the company. His fame spread and in February of 1914 he was hired by the ILGWU to administer their "industrial charter of peace," a similar system for arbitration.

The Amalgamated Clothing Workers

Prior to the strike, the New York men's tailors, though better organized than the Chicago locals, had been held back by the conservative Rickert leadership. In December of 1912 the local union leadership forced a strike against the wishes of Rickert and his cohorts, and won sizeable concessions by March, 1913. In retaliation, Rickert sought to disenfranchise them at the 1914 UGWA convention. He used the pretext that they had fallen in arrears on per capita dues payments after the financial drain of the previous year's strike.

When Rickert's machinations were successful (because of the over-representation of small locals), the dissidents, who then represented three-fourths of the membership including the Chicago as well as New York locals, met separately. So the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America was formed as a "dual" union outside the precincts of the AFL—Sidney Hillman was drafted to be president of the new union.

More militant members of the new union were willing to accept Hillman as president because they valued his prestige outside Amalgamated circles. They correctly foresaw that he would be able to muster liberal support in the jurisdictional feud between the Amalgamated and the UGWA.

The Amalgamated became the important union in the men's clothing field. The UGWA was restricted to the organizing of work-clothes factories. On several occasions they followed the typical AFL practice in the case of "presumptuous independents" and sought to organize "sweetheart" agreements behind the back of the workers who in general supported the Amalgamated. These tactics usually failed.

Hillman ran a clean internal-union operation. Unlike Lewis he allowed dissent to flourish within the union and used his talents as an arbitrator within his union as well as with management. In every

struggle he counseled moderation but where he was outvoted, he carried out his followers' mandate honestly. Undoubtedly, the conditions under which his union was formed discouraged any other course.

In 1924 the union supported LaFollette for president, in keeping with the socialist traditions of a large section of the membership. Hillman had to wage a hard fight against these old socialists in order to bring them into the Roosevelt camp. The so-called "labor party of the future," Labor's Non-Partisan League and its New York State affiliate, the American Labor Party (ALP), were established in 1936 to deliver just such previously socialist labor voters to the Democratic machine.

The 1920's

Throughout the 1920's, the anti-labor injunction was a convenient weapon used by employers against the union. Despite this, the Amalgamated was able to maintain and expand its position; unlike the UMW, it did not face serious competition from southern producers. While its semi-skilled labor force rarely organized with the militancy shown by West Virginia miners, they were able to conduct relatively successful "guerrilla" forays in their more organized and liberal Northern circumstances. Hillman's growing reputation as a labor leader who deplored strikes, who favored arbitration, and who was able to control his members, encouraged employers to deal with the union.

Just as Lewis encouraged mine operators to mechanize production, Hillman sought to rationalize production in the garment industry. He encouraged the formation of local and national organizations of men's clothiers. He offered friendly employers professional management consultant services and encouraged his followers to raise their productivity. So by 1926 he had forced New York locals to accept the piece-work standards prevalent throughout the less organized sections of the country.

His union was active in the field of social welfare; it built cooperative housing for the workers, ran two labor savings banks (which did not collapse with the depression) and won employer-financed unemployment benefits for Amalgamated workers. Despite this, the depression hit the union hard. The garment industry was running at only thirty percent of capacity and the union lost 50,000 dues-payers within a year, while depression conditions encouraged employers to disregard union contracts.

The New Deal and the CIO

"Section 7A"

By the time of Roosevelt election in 1933 it was clear that the country faced the possibility of revolution if something was not done quickly to revive the economy. Lewis and Hillman faced this challenge directly in their confrontation with communist trade union organizing in the needle-trade and coal industries.

Although the communist "dual" unions were still small and relatively ineffective, their potential was obvious. Wherever militant workers went out on strike they called in the communists to organize them. Just one example occurred in the 1930 Fisher Body No. 1 strike, which the communist Auto Workers Union was called in to lead.

Not surprising, under the circumstances of the depression Lewis and Hillman went to Washington. Through their lobbying efforts they were able to convince a significant section of Roosevelt's "brain trust" of the necessity for a labor plank in the 1933 National Industrial Labor Relations Act (NIRA): thus "Section 7A" was born. This plank gave workers the right to organize into unions without employer harassment; although "7A" was never seriously enforced.

Equally significant were the wages and hours codes included in the act. It was at this time that overtime rates were established for Saturday work in an effort to spread employment. The aspects of the same NIRA which abrogated anti-trust laws in establishing industry-wide price agreements accorded with the past practice of both Lewis and Hillman. Both had sought to "regularize" their industries in order to prevent competition from non-unionized shops.

By coming to terms with scores of dissident militants who had been thrown out of the UMW, Lewis began a massive organizational drive in the coal mines. His slogan was "The President wants you to join the union." With the help of the NRA codes which put a floor on prices and prevented southern operators from underselling those in the north, he signed his first Appalachian agreement, including both northern and southern coal operators. Thousands of miners swarmed back into the union and by 1935 membership had



1942—Reuther with R. J. Thomas of the UAW, Sidney Hillman, W. S. Knudsen of the Office of Production Management, and GM President Wilson.

swelled to over 400,000.

Similar organizing drives were conducted in the garment industry by the ILGWU and the Amalgamated.

The NIRA was declared unconstitutional in 1935, but the Wagner Act which offered workers not only the right to organize but the services of the government in conducting elections for bargaining rights was passed the same year. On paper, the Wagner Act was a significant advance for labor, since it certified the majority union in a shop as the sole bargaining agent. Yet many assumed that it would go the way of the NIRA. In any case, neither Section 7A nor the Wagner Act were effectively enforced by the government.

Organizing the CIO

Because of this ineffectiveness of the Wagner Act and "7A" before it, Lewis and Hillman understood that labor would have to be effectively organized to maximize its gains. At the crest of the 1933-37 strike wave, they organized the CIO to do this job.

Both recognized the political character of the period. They saw the need to organize labor on as wide a base as possible in order to command the muscle necessary to implement the labor-Democratic alliance. Their success in organizing the CIO undoubtedly exceeded their most sanguine hopes, but by 1937 the alliance was in trouble.

The first hint of trouble with FDR came with the sit-down strike in auto, when Roosevelt sought to pressure Lewis to evacuate the strikers from the plants without an agreement. Hillman wanted to capitulate, but Lewis perhaps remembering the disastrous results of his capitulations in the 20's, resisted Roosevelt's persuasive efforts.

During the wave of sit-downs that shook the nation in early 1937, Roosevelt demanded that Lewis discipline his forces, and halt the sit-downs with their open challenge to "private property." Lewis did so, and the bloody defeats of "Little Steel" followed.

Although U.S. Steel had privately reached an agreement with Lewis and signed a CIO contract without a strike, Bethlehem and others of the smaller steel firms refused to settle with the union, and a strike followed. Following Lewis and Philip Murray (who were banking on their alliance with the Democratic Party), the strikers did not sit down, but instead conducted a "conventional" strike. Democratic officials sent in police and national guard troops, who fired into unarmed crowds, killing 18 and wounding scores more. The strike ended in failure. When Lewis appealed for help, Roosevelt's reply was "A plague on both your houses." While Lewis was willing to discipline his followers, the courtesy was not reciprocated by "Friend of Labor" Roosevelt.

From the beginning it was clear that Roosevelt was not an enthusiastic "labor" president. In fact, according to Lewis' biographer Saul Alinsky, Lewis had entered into an agreement with a sympathetic White House assistant to change the President's correspondence to include endorsements of Section 7A. Roosevelt would scan the letters and sign them without noting the additions. Lewis used these sections when lobbying senators for passage of the Act. Lewis cynically built up Roosevelt's reputation as "friend of labor," in his efforts to use that reputation. In the end Lewis suffered the fate of countless "practical" politicians before and since. He was outmaneuvered.

In 1936 the United Mine Workers gave \$500,000 to the Roosevelt campaign. According to Lewis, the money was demanded by the White House and the union was given only 48 hours in which to raise it. Additional funds were spent by the UMW to finance Labor's Non-Partisan League and in the campaign of 1938. Yet, by 1939 the administration had moved so far away from labor that Presidential Aide Harry Hopkins vehemently opposed Lewis' proposition that the CIO be permitted to organize WPA workers.

Lewis thought that he was controlling Roosevelt, but by September 1940 he realized that it was Roosevelt who had been gaining control of the CIO behind his back. The appointment of Sidney Hillman to the National Defense Council without Lewis' prior knowledge was just one example of Roosevelt's seductions of key CIO officials to government positions.

Lewis, realizing his isolation, voluntarily relinquished his position as president of the CIO to his aide Phillip Murray—leaving the workers to Roosevelt.

Ironically, at the time of the formation of the CIO, Roosevelt feared the militancy of the new organization and pressed for its reunification with the AF of L. In 1942 Lewis sought to engineer a fusion in order to enhance his own position since a section of the AFL bureaucracy was tied to the Republican Party. Roosevelt did not wish to lose control over his CIO base and, through Hillman, sabotaged the plan.

By 1942 Hillman had received a lesson in the political fate of the "practical" man in politics. He was unceremoniously dropped from the government after he had successfully lined up labor behind the no-strike pledge. But Hillman, lacking the backbone of Lewis, never failed to do Roosevelt's bidding. So, in the N.Y. 1942 gubernatorial campaign Hillman swung the Amalgamated in line behind an obscure Democratic Party hack against the candidate of his own political party, the ALP.

The CP and the Alliance

Any picture of the labor-Democratic alliance would be incomplete without reference to the role of the Communist Party which played an absolutely crucial role in constructing the coalition. In the early years of the depression, the Communist Party actively opposed the Democrats, and functioned outside the AFL with its "dual" unions of the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL). When the CP went over to the tactic of the "anti-fascist" popular front in 1935, the independent TUUL unions went into the AFL, and simultaneously the CP sent hundreds of cadres into the CIO organizing drives. (The CIO was not expelled from the AFL until 1936.) These communists played a militant and vital role in building the CIO, rising to secondary posts in most CIO unions and effectively controlling a number of CIO unions, including the electrical, maritime, and transport workers, and the West Coast longshoremen.

After 1935, the CP offered only token opposition to the Democratic Party (except during the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact, 1939-41). From 1941 to 1945, the Communists were super-patriotic flag-wavers, to the point of repudiating the party organization and becoming the "Communist Political Association"—in the interest of "national unity." Within the labor movement they were generally to the right of Reuther-type militants during the war.

The Communist Party was tolerated by the Lewis-Murray leadership of the CIO mainly because the actual policies of the CP coincided with that of the labor-Democratic alliance—support for the New Deal (long after it was dead and buried), enthusiasm for war-time anti-labor measures, and holding labor within the Democratic party camp.

In the post war period, the CP was victimized by the growing tide of conservatism and anti-communism. As the CP began to oppose the Cold War policies of the government, it became an impediment to maintaining the labor-Democratic alliance, and thus was no longer needed in the trade union bureaucracy.

Because the CP had built up no base within the CIO independent of the Democratic party, it was vulnerable to the anti-communist purge which followed the defection of liberals from the fellow-traveller camp. The key in pulling liberal intellectuals away from the CP, and in registering the transformation of non-communists into anti-communists, was the founding of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) in early 1947—in which a

leading role was played by none other than Walter Reuther. It was Reuther's solid anti-communist credentials, along with his progressive militant image that made him especially attractive to the Democratic politicians of the post-war period.

The Domestication of Labor

In 1945 the number of strikes in the United States almost doubled the strike figures for 1937—the epic year of the CIO's rise. In 1946 there were 4,985 strikes, involving 4,600,000 strikers, with a loss of 116,000,000 days of work. For every year since 1946 the strike figures have been higher than the 1935-39 average. These statistics demonstrate the growing potential of the working class as an organized force, but belie the qualitative difference in the two periods.

The Thirties

The CIO was born in a mass-strike period. In a nascent and fumbling way workers expressed their understanding of class-for-itself organization. Steel and rubber workers rushed to man the picket lines in Flint when the sit-down strike was periled. Employed and unemployed workers joined together in Toledo. Yet without serious revolutionary leadership, without socialist program, this awareness by workers of the class-as-a-whole slowly began to fade.

The CIO would not have been organized without the ferment which swept this country in the aftermath of the depression, but ferment provided only the pre-condition. As the first article in this series showed, it was the conscious efforts of militants placed strategically throughout the mass industries which were the essential elements. The Communist Party (and to a far lesser extent, the Socialist and Social Workers Parties, and independent groups such as the Muste-ites) was decisive.

As the preceding article demonstrates, the CIO was not organized in opposition to the government and was not even organized in opposition to the existing trade-union bureaucracy. The AFL bureaucracy split to form the CIO, and

it was a traditional business unionist—John L. Lewis—who assumed the presidency.

None of the “left-wing” groups offered effective opposition to the Hillman-Lewis bureaucracy. The Communist Party, the hegemonic “revolutionary” group at that time, instead consciously sought to insinuate itself into secondary leadership positions within the CIO through bureaucratic deals. Only for a brief period, in 1939-41 during the Hitler-Stalin pact, did the CP offer other than token opposition to the labor-Democratic alliance.

It is impossible to know what might have resulted from the revolutionary potential of the period, if the masses of workers had been offered effective revolutionary leadership. As it was, the combined Hillman-Lewis/CP leadership was an American brand of the pre-World War I German Social-Democratic trade unionism. A vague promissory note to some time in the future build a labor party was the U.S. substitute for the German Social Democracy’s Sunday Socialism.

The lack of effective alternative revolutionary leadership meant that the dynamic of organizing was confined to trade unionism as such and did not overflow into an attack on the Roosevelt machine and independent political action. Until 1938, despite its bureaucratic nature, the Hillman-Lewis bureaucracy and its CP supporters did seek to build the CIO—as an effective labor base from which they could operate. From 1938 on, and particularly during World War II, the bureaucracy (with the exception of Lewis) was willing to sacrifice its own labor base in order to solidify its position as a separate formation. It is this which explains the willingness of the bureaucracy (again excepting Lewis) to accept the No Strike Pledge. In return for relinquishing the opportunities offered by a full-employment war-time economy, union leaders were offered the maintenance-of-membership clause (guaranteed gate receipts).

The strike wave of the immediate post-war period represented enormous worker militancy. But this militancy was already channelled into trade-unionism-in-itself. Firmly-established political machines controlled each CIO union.

During the war the bureaucracy was able to abort wild-cat strikes by appealing to wide-spread patriotic sentiment. Obviously after the war they could offer no such excuse to restrain workers who, having failed to maximize their position during the war, faced now a cut in real income. So instead, bureaucrats were

forced to lead strikes, but in the style of traditional business union negotiations.

Walter Reuther and the GM Strike

The UAW strike against the General Motors Corporation was only an apparent exception. Reuther advertised his “statesman-like” qualities by pegging UAW wage demands to GM’s “ability to pay,” offering to forgo an increase if GM was able to demonstrate that it would have to raise consumer prices in order to safeguard profits. Since the strike was begun during a period in which war price-and-wage controls were still in effect, his anti-inflationary concern is less than remarkable. Most significant: Reuther conducted the UAW strike against General Motors as a parochial affair. He was never willing to turn his fight against inflationary trends into a fight against the Truman administration, to make it political. Never did he waver in his basic loyalty to the labor-Democratic alliance.

Taft-Hartley

Lewis and Hillman had relied upon Section 7A and the Wagner Act in order to organize the CIO, implicitly accepting the principle of government regulation of unions. Hillman and the rest of the CIO leadership, this time without Lewis, had welcomed government regulation during the war. It is not surprising, then, that the same union leadership offered only token rebellion to the Taft-Hartley law which was enacted in 1947. Since the law, with its provisions for presidential anti-strike injunctions, enforced pre-strike “cooling-off periods,” prohibition of “sympathy strikes,” and secondary boycotts, was obviously anti-labor, any other pose but opposition was impossible.

In reality the law strengthened the hand of the union bureaucracy. A key feature was the requirement that unions sign written contracts so that they could be brought to court in breach-of-contract suits. A union national became subject to fine if one of its locals engaged in a wildcat strike. The onus in holding back militant strike actions now lay with the government.

Communists

The other key feature of Taft-Hartley was the requirement that unions file affidavits asserting that no union officials were members of the Communist Party or other “subversive” groups. Failure to comply with this procedure was penalized only by the withdrawal of NLRB services to the offending union. Yet,

again only with the exception of Lewis’ UMW, every “non-communist” union fell in line. Certainly for Reuther, who since 1939 had been involved as a leader of the anti-communist faction in his union, the law was a blessing. He immediately stepped forward as the leader of anti-communist forces within the whole CIO.

But for CIO president Phillip Murray and his supporters the situation was more complex. The Communist Party with its super-patriotic wartime policies had been for Murray a valuable counterforce to Lewis’ more militant role. The Communists became less necessary to him as Lewis’ militancy gradually subsided in the post-war period.

Meanwhile, in 1945, the Communist Party shifted to the left. Earl Browder, infamous for his suggestion of a peacetime no-strike pledge, was replaced by the well-known labor militant William Foster. The Party began an attempt to re-establish its revolutionary image, to avoid being outflanked by “militants” like Reuther. Their new militant role made them a potential threat to the status quo in such CIO unions as Murray’s steel workers—a union to which Communist organizers had been welcome in the thirties.

Cold War

On March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill, speaking in Fulton, Missouri, announced the beginning of the Cold War to a shocked nation. The Truman administration of course expected its junior labor partners to fall in line. Murray, dragging his feet at the November 1946 CIO conference, arrived at a deal with the Communist Party, and the following Declaration of Policy was adopted without discussion: “We resent and reject efforts of the Communist Party or other political parties and their adherents to interfere in the affairs of the CIO.” It was passed unanimously—with the support of the CP! Murray’s diffidence at witch-hunting was also reflected that year in his failure to give open support to Reuther in his winning anti-communist campaign for the UAW presidency.

By 1947 the lines had clearly sharpened with the formation of the Progressive Citizens of America and the Americans for Democratic Action. The significant politics of the PCA (forerunner of the 1948 Progressive Party) were expressed by its titular leader and future Presidential candidate Henry Wallace in the statement: “I am not a Communist, I am not a Socialist, I am only an American capitalist—or as I told the House of Parliament in London—I am a progressive Tory who believes it is absolutely essential to have peace and understanding with Russia.”

In opposition, the ADA, of which Walter Reuther was a founding member along with Eleanor Roosevelt, defined itself as the liberal defenders of democracy against Communism, and supporters of the Truman "get tough with Russia" policy.

As always since the victory of Stalin in the Third International, the line of the American Communist Party revolved around the apparent foreign policy needs of the Soviet Union. Thus it was primarily over questions of U.S. foreign policy that the confrontation between the liberal Democrats and the CP developed. The timid response of the PCA forces to the increasingly open anti-communism of the Truman Administration was insufficient to blunt the drive either internally or externally.

The CIO Purge

While the CIO held itself officially aloof from either the PCA or the ADA, by the summer of 1947 Murray was relieving Communists of appointive posts within the hierarchy. Anti-communist opposition groups were formed within the CP-dominated Mine Mill and Smelter and the Electrical workers unions, in both cases leading to splits. At the same time, Transport Workers Union president Mike Quill began the parade of former Communists eager to confess their sins.

By 1948, Murray no longer even maintained the pretence of neutrality. After all, it was an election year and the Communists had committed the fatal sin. They were supporting Wallace in opposition to Truman. Before the CIO convention of that year, Murray disenfranchised the Wayne County (Detroit) convention, by calling a new convention with committees designated by himself. In New York City the CIO council, the greatest national CP stronghold, was placed in receivership with a Murray-appointed administrator put in charge. Murray opened the 1948 CIO convention with an attack on the Communist Party, and ended it with the assumption of further centralized powers which he might wield against recalcitrant unions.

By 1950 the anti-communist drive culminated in charges against ten unions. All but one were expelled. The basis for expulsion was formally offered by a constitutional amendment in keeping with the witchhunting spirit of the day: "No individual shall be eligible to serve either as an officer or as a member of the Executive Board who is a member of the Communist Party, any fascist organization, or other totalitarian movement, or

who consistently pursues policies and activities directed toward the achievement of the program or the purposes of the Communist Party. . . .(our emphasis).

Reuther's Reign

Not only was the anti-communist issue an essential part of Reuther's drive to defeat the Thomas-Addes faction in the UAW (see Part II of this series), but he used it to good effect against rival CIO unions. Thus liberal Reuther did not scruple to break the strike of an ostensibly communist-dominated union, the Farm Equipment workers (FE), with whom Reuther had had jurisdictional disputes. In 1948 when the FE called a strike at a large Caterpillar Tractor plant in Peoria, Illinois, the UAW along with three AFL unions moved in to claim jurisdiction. They used the fact that the FE was disqualified from an NLRB poll because of the refusal of its leaders to sign the Taft-Hartley anti-communist oath. The FE was smashed and forced to dissolve into the UAW.

The witchhunt also gave union leaders a ready weapon against militants within their own unions who refused to bow to the ruling clique. Reuther demonstrated this most ably in his fight against the Stellato-Ford Local 600 opposition, described below.

Dissension in the UAW

Since the 1946 113-day struggle against General Motors, Reuther had consistently held back the militancy of his followers. In 1948 he was offered and granted an escalator cost-of-living increase clause by GM, in exchange for extending the contract an extra year and accepting a penalty clause which would make illegal any resistance by the workers to speed-up.

An opposition newspaper *Auto Union Builder* described the situation in 1948: "Over 5,000 GM workers have been disciplined by layoffs of from three to 90 days and dozens more have been fired for attempting to resist the raising of production standards." The paper charged that Reuther failed to fight speed-up himself and "refused to permit the ranks to defend themselves against this evil."

In 1949 Reuther negotiated deferred wage payments in the form of meager pension plans for Ford and Chrysler workers (later extended to General Motors workers in 1950). The Ford contract was to impose a 17-1/2 month wage freeze

from July 1949 to January 1951 with no pension payments to begin until April 1950. While it was advertised as a \$100 per month pension plan, Ford was only required to make up the difference between this amount and social security benefits which workers already received. In violation of a resolution adopted by the UAW at its July 1949 convention, the agreement contained a company-security, labor discipline clause. Despite this clause, Ford workers struck for 24 days in protest against intense speed-up conditions. The 1950 five-year contract with GM continued this miserable pattern.

To make matters worse, Reuther sought and won a dues increase at the 1951 convention. By June 1951 mass layoffs began to plague the nation, despite increased war spending. Auto layoffs were especially severe, and speed-up was further intensified.

Stellato as Oppositionist

Carl Stellato was elected to the presidency of Ford Local 600 in 1950 as Reuther's man. However, he came within 500 votes of losing the election to a "radical" who campaigned on a two-point program: End the Korean War; Build a Labor Party. Now, responding to the pressure from members, Stellato and other Local 600 leaders broke with Reuther.

Under mandate from his local, Stellato had opposed the dues increase only to be branded an anti-union betrayer by Reuther and Emil Mazey. Stellato was stung to reply in the Local newspaper *Ford Facts*, and the fight was begun—initially against the lack of union democracy. The opposition group formed a Committee for a Democratic UAW-CIO which was headed by Stellato. The scope of the campaign was broadened to include demands for increased state unemployment compensation and a fight against speed-up. At the same time the oppositionists adopted the slogan long pushed by the Socialist Workers Party to combat unemployment—"30 for 40" (for a shortened work week with no reduction in pay).

Reuther responded by summoning Stellato and Local 600 vice-president Pat Rice to a hearing on charges of "publishing certain material in *Ford Facts* detrimental to the interests of the International Union." The unanimous support by Local 600 members forced Reuther to retreat temporarily.

In January 1952 the House Un-American Activities Committee conveniently decided to investigate "un-American" activities in the Detroit area. More than a hundred

members of Local 600 were questioned in preliminary hearings. On March 11 Elesio Romano, a paid UAW international representative, testified before HUAC. He claimed that Communists and their supporters were in full control of Local 600's General Council, its executive board and its weekly newspaper, *Ford Facts*, although he testified that to his knowledge, none of the local's four top officers, including Stellato, were members of the Communist Party.

Within four hours of HUAC's adjournment on the following day, Reuther ordered Local 600's officers to appear before the UAW International Executive Board to "show cause why an administrator should not be appointed to take charge of the local union." Within three days the local was placed under receivership. In July, when new elections for office (mandatory under the constitution) were held, the Stellato leadership was voted back into office in a sweeping repudiation of Reuther's red-baiting tactics.

AFL-CIO Merger

In 1953, after the death of Murray, Reuther became president of the CIO. His accomplishment in the CIO's last two years of independence was to arrange the merger of the AFL-CIO in 1955. From 1937, when the CIO had a larger membership than its parent organization, it had gone to a position of parity during the war years, and then at the time of unification had declined to less than one half the size of the AFL. Partially responsible for this decline was the departure in 1940 of the ILGWU and in 1942 of the UMW. The expulsions of 1950 further reduced the membership. By this time little difference remained between the two organizations, as the CIO lost impetus and the AFL, forced into competition, gave up some of its more anachronistic craft-union prejudices.

After fusion the former AFL chiefs retained key positions, and Reuther became just another vice-president. Reuther obviously hoped to succeed Meany as president of the united federation. Yet as the years went by it became increasingly obvious that he lacked the necessary personal support.

In his efforts to put himself forth as a public figure Reuther could only furbish his liberal image at the cost of his bureaucratic brethren. He made public his criticisms of expense account spending, Miami conventions and the like. He sided with government investigators in the so-called purge of racketeers from

the union movement. He attacked the building-trade unions for their efforts to maintain job control. Having isolated himself from a significant section of the AFL-CIO ruling clique, he found himself held back when he turned to the political arena.

In 1965 Reuther was in line to become a member of the United States delegation to the United Nations in payment for his support to Stevenson. But Kennedy, unlike Roosevelt in the case of Lewis and Hillman, checked it out with Meany first. Meany vetoed the appointment and that was that.

Reuther carefully stage managed his liberal image. He received the support of his ADA "liberal" friends and was highly touted as a leader of the new breed of "social" unionists. Despite the fact that Hillman in the twenties had pioneered in winning social benefit schemes for his union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, each paltry benefit negotiated by the Reuther leadership was hailed as a major innovation.

Wheeler Dealer

Nor was Reuther a pioneer politically. He merely took over the role of hatchet man for the Democratic Party bequeathed to him by Hillman. While Hillman and Lewis played a major part in shaping the labor legislation of the New Deal period, Reuther was never anything but a very junior partner who carried out orders.

In 1940 the phrase "clear it with Sidney" epitomized "labor's" voice in choosing the vice-presidential candidate (Truman). In 1960 a labor delegation led by Reuther called on Kennedy to discuss the second spot on the ticket only to be informed, despite their strong opposition, that Johnson was it.

Despite the lack of respect shown to him within the inner circles of the Democratic Party, Reuther was willing to carry out any dirty assignment. At the 1964 convention, when the black Freedom Democratic Party of Mississippi sent its alternate delegation to the Democratic convention, they demanded credentials along with the "official" delegation. They were represented by Joseph L. Rauh, Jr., who was also counsel for the UAW. Reuther was called upon by Hubert Humphrey on behalf of Lyndon Johnson, to pressure Rauh into forcing a compromise settlement on the delegation. Only two middle-class members of the delegation, chosen by Johnson, were to be seated. Rauh asked for time to convince Reuther and then told Johnson that the delegation would not accept one of these choices, a

white man, in place of Fannie Lou Hamer. With the same arrogance shown Reuther by his Democratic superiors, Reuther laid down the law to Rauh. No delay would be granted. The Freedom Democrats, showing more spine than the labor leaders in similar circumstances, refused to accept the compromise and staged a sit-in on the convention floor.

In 1965 Reuther lined up along with Meany to support Johnson's intervention in Southeast Asia. The UAW Board formally applauded the Johnson policy of "insuring against Communist military victory while holding forth the hand of unconditional negotiation." And these were no mere empty words. Reuther demanded that UAW California representative Paul Schrade cease publicly criticizing Johnson's Vietnam policy if he wished to continue working for the union.

He showed his non-partisan willingness to intervene in defense of New York City's Republican mayor John Lindsay, when he opposed the 1966 subway strike: "We cannot live in a situation where a few workers who are denied their equity can paralyze an entire community. Workers should be able to get justice in the absence of strike action." An incredible utterance by the head of the UAW.

Beyond the CIO

From the 1880's—the heyday of the Knights of Labor—until the close of the 1930's, Industrial Unionism was the rallying cry of revolutionaries within the trade union and socialist movements. Though this slogan, the nascent, if rudimentary, consciousness of the political working class was expressed. Yet, by the end of the Second World War, the CIO—the first successful industrial union movement in this country—had been housebroken. By 1955 all that remained to do was to quietly bury the corpse: the interment took place with the AFL-CIO merger.

Clearly it was not the form of industrial unionism which produced class-for-itself consciousness. Rather it was in the struggle for industrial unionism that this consciousness was born. The struggle for industrial unionism was a struggle against the parochial elitism of AFL business unionism. The CIO itself was organized out of a mass strike process which brought together employed and unemployed, skilled and unskilled, black and white. It is in the dynamic of that process, rather than in the forms which it left behind, that we must seek inspiration for the future.

Trade Unions Today

By CAROL LAROUCHE

Until just last year it was only die-hard "old lefties" who were predicting another working class upsurge. That kind of thing had gone out in the thirties along with such other anachronisms as depression. But this past year has seen the beginning of a wave of strikes which will no doubt top all previous periods in statistical indices — in number of stoppages, workers involved and man-hours lost.

The postal strike and the railroad strike have involved direct confrontations with government. And as the *New York Times* reported on Sept. 6, 1970:

More negotiated contracts have been turned down by the rank and file membership of unions during recent months than at any time in history.

Wildcat strikes have reached almost epidemic proportions after a period of years in which union leaders were able to enforce no-strike provisions in their contracts.

There has been more turnover in the elected leadership of unions at the local level than has ever been witnessed in the history of the labor movement.

Thus it is possible to assess working class ferment by qualitative as well as quantitative criteria.

Had this discussion been held last year, it would have been necessary to address two theses which reality has now effectively dispelled. These two would have been: 1) the white worker is no longer a potential revolutionary force; 2) the trade union has become simply another appendage of the bourgeois power structure. We can simply ignore these two false theses after the experience of the past year.

Our analysis of the trade union movement will presume the increased militancy of trade-union response to the worsening economic situation: that the coming period will witness an accelerated

tempo of strikes; that there will be splits within the trade-union bureaucracy so that a section of the leadership, particularly those closest to the local level, will be in the forefront of vigorous strike actions. That the precedent of government intervention set in the postal and rail strikes will set a pattern for government response in those situations where labor appears vulnerable. For a balanced view of the last preceding points it is significant that Nixon has not yet felt able to act openly against such unions as the UAW or Teamsters. And such may also be the case with a steel strike.

The combined action of the two tendencies presently operative in the economy will determine the nature of the coming struggle. If the presently-spiralling inflation continues unchecked, we will see the Nixon administration attempt to impose austerity on the working class by direct measures — increased taxation, wage controls, anti-strike legislation, injunctions and the use of troops against strikers. If the trend toward depression with growing unemployment persists, austerity may be imposed by more indirect measures. In either case we may expect to see renewed interest by union spokesmen in labor-party politics.

The question then is — are the trade unions transitional organs of revolutionary struggle? Can trade unions become vehicles for revolution? Our answer to that must be an uncompromising "no."

How Trade Unions Develop

Trade unions arise out of great mass upsurges, as the residue of revolutionary or near-revolutionary social upheavals. Rosa Luxemburg described this process in her 1907 booklet, the *Mass Strike*. Bert Cochran, in *Labor in Midpassage*, demonstrated the existence of the same pattern in the United States. As should be clear to anyone familiar with the history of the 1930's, (and as was stated in our *Solidarity* series on the UAW and CIO, "Reuther to Revolution") trade union organization is a by-product of political ferment.

In periods of upsurge newly organized unions in particular may take on a revolutionary character as

centers of mass organization. It is necessary to distinguish the trade union as a continuing, institutionalized form, from the union at its moment of birth. It was the practice for workers in the thirties to go on strike and then call in radicals to organize them. Forms of organization which we shall define by the term "class-for-itself" were implicit in that period; when unemployed workers joined strikes on mass picket lines, when newly organized rubber workers made common cause with their brothers in auto, when students edited union papers, and when women formed defense guards. But class-for-itself forms, which unite the working class and its political allies, are ephemeral as are revolutionary periods. The residue, in the ebb of the struggle, are the newly-organized trade-unions.

These unions, by their very structure, become the institutions through which the class again fragments itself. The workers lose that momentary social vision attained at the height of struggle and settle down to another round of "normal" bourgeois relations. The union then best represents the workers' narrowed, parochial economic self-interest.

The hall mark of centrist and reformist "socialists" has been their failure to understand the episodic character of pre-revolutionary socio-economic conjunctures. These are fleeting periods, when all "normal" relations have been superceded. When the class with a decisive leadership is willing to take that daring leap forward toward revolution. If the moment is lost, then "normality" returns with a right-wing vengeance.

The reformist and his centrist apologist fail to understand that the class comes to socialism in great leaps, moments of heightened consciousness, when suddenly the most "abstruse" revolutionary programs become beautifully clear, when the alienated forms of ordinary life are brushed aside. Instead, the reformists misunderstand social progress as a continuous step-by-step process, a mistaken view best expressed in the famous quotation by Eduard Bernstein of the German Social Democracy: "The movement is everything; the goal is nothing."

If, as the reformist socialist contends, revolution is merely the culminating event in the organizing drive — more votes for socialist candidates, wider circulation of the press, more members, gate

receipts and so on, then we must seek the revolution in embryo in existing forms. Thence comes the myth of the trade union.

The Myth Exposed

Centrist and reformist Marxists have bowdlerized the Marxian conception of the proletarian revolution and in so doing, embraced the notion of the trade union as the transitional organ of revolutionary struggle. Thus the myth of the trade union bureaucrat is formed. It is the trade union bureaucrat who is holding back the working class. If only the bureaucrat could be replaced — then the trade union would in truth be a revolutionary organ of the class. Syndicalism represents the finished form of this reformist illusion.

In reality the conservative trade union represents the "normal" form of working class organization under bourgeois conditions. Not until the socio-economic conjuncture forces the average worker to question bourgeois ideology is he prepared to reject the narrow parochial practice of his union. Rank-and-file movements, such as that which recently supported Yablonsky of the UMW, express the workers' resentment of egregiously undemocratic and dishonest bureaucratic practice. But such rank-and-file caucus is similar to the good-government movement of the Progressive period. Inevitably they fall prey to the same influences that corrupted their predecessors and the same process of "bureaucratization" starts all over again.

The criminal nature of the trade-union bureaucrat as such, does not rest in his normal role as a union leader who runs a bureaucratic service organization for his members. Any rank-and-file grouping which assumes power in his stead would be forced to more-or-less similar practices because of the ordinary petty conservatism and backwardness of the average union member.

The crime occurs during those rare periods when the average union member is no longer conservative but suddenly grasps the promise of the future. It is in those periods when the average worker is capable of the most atypical sacrifice that the bureaucrat really sells him out. It is during such periods that labor leaders such as John L. Lewis in the thirties, who appear to represent the revolutionary aspirations of the workers, joined by

their reformist and centrist allies, commit the most monstrous betrayals of the working class. In these periods the labor leaders continue to follow the rotten bourgeois ideology which the ranks have already transcended.

Thus the “socialist” myth-maker attacks the bureaucrat at just those times when he most closely represents the aspirations of his members and fails to anticipate the moments of his greatest betrayals. Thus the myth-maker sees the class struggle in terms of a fairy tale in which the good guys defeat the bad guys.

The “Good” Communist

Obviously such a conception precludes the communist operating in the situation as a revolutionary. If building a rank-and-file “good government” caucus is a necessary part of making the revolution, then the “socialist” on the scene must conform to the bases worker prejudices in order to gain acceptance. It is a tragedy that hundreds of communist and SWP colonizers waste years of their lives in just such activity — talking baseball and drinking beer and never, never sounding too radical. (Of course, this does not refer to workers’ forced to keep their mouths shut in order to hold jobs necessary to the support of their families; it describes a deliberate mode of political activity.)

More sophisticated is the quasi-syndicalist ideology represented by figures such as Andre Gorz. Here the suggestion is to organize rank-and-file caucuses not around issue of union democracy and so on, but on shop issues relating to workers’ control of production. Starting with struggles around shop conditions, such as speed-up, these caucuses would seek to embrace more and more aspects of job control, hopefully branching out to management prerogatives of production and distribution planning.

Leaving aside the obvious economic fallacy in any such microcosmic approach to complex capitalist economy, it is the organizational approach which interests us here. These caucuses would organize the workers in each shop around **their** shop issues, in preparation for the ultimate, control of **their own** place of employment. This is only a more subtly vicious form of ordinary trade union parochialism.

It is the revolutionary “party,” the class-wide political formation, in antithesis to the trade union, which represents the repository of class-for-itself consciousness.

Understanding the Past

Up until and including the early period of the formation of the CIO, class-for-itself consciousness in this country was expressed in the call for industrial unionism. Thus for all its syndicalist tendencies (which ultimately destroyed it) the IWW was the highest expression of revolutionary consciousness before the formation of the Communist Party.

The development of the CIO, particularly after 1937, clearly demonstrated that class-for-itself consciousness does not reside in any particular form. While the industrial CIO unions brought mass-production workers together into the same bargaining unit and were therefore a significant improvement over AFL craft unions, the AFL-CIO merger testifies to the similarity of their functioning. Class-for-itself consciousness resided in the struggle against parochialism — just as the struggle to build the CIO was a struggle against the narrow craft prejudice of AFL unions. Particularly after 1937, the CIO unions succumbed to lesser parochialism, invariably becoming business unions in spite of the political pretenses of the leaders and rank-and-file militants.

The very act of organizing thy previously unorganized engenders revolutionary consciousness as it forces the workers out of their traditional, more narrow associations in search of allies. The organization of the previously-unorganized usually comes in waves because, as mentioned previously, it flows out of political ferment and because by the very process of organizing, necessary support for one strike flows into and stimulates another. At the same time newly-organized unions are usually freer ideologically and structurally because they are in process of formation.

The demand for the formation of a Labor Party as it was raised by Trotsky and the Socialist Workers Party in 1938 also embodied class consciousness to the degree that it directly attacked the labor-Democratic alliance being engineered by Lewis, Hillman and the Communist Party. At that time the demand for a Labor Party was a call for the class to organize itself politically

as well as industrially — through politics to express itself as a class rather than as an appendage of the bourgeoisie. The danger in this, as reflected in the present practice of groups which raise the slogan now, comes from reifying the process as an institution. A Labor Party, had it been formed, particularly had it been under the aegis of John L. Lewis with the support of the Communist Party, would more than likely have had a history similar to that of the British Labor Party.

Anticipating the Future

It is necessary to anticipate the developing socio-economic conjuncture by anticipating the class-for-itself forms of organization which must develop in order to actualize what will otherwise be only revolutionary potential. As the crisis sharpens, and particularly as the government intervenes in labor disputes, workers will be forced out of their ordinary mode of life. **Merely to defend their present standard of living, they will be forced into the sharpest conflict. It will be the role of revolutionaries to interpret the nature of the coming period, to sharpen the already-intuitive consciousness which the worker has that ordinary trade unionism will no longer suffice.**

The revolutionary must counterpose himself to the trade union bureaucrat, not by posing an alternative trade union leadership, but by demanding the transcendence of narrow trade union forms. He must pose the “soviet,” the political organization of the class-as-a-whole to the narrow form of the trade union.

In practice this will happen as it has in an embryonic way in Baltimore, by the joining together of rank-and-file and local groups from different unions and the ranks of the unemployed, with students and revolutionaries.

The trade union is not a transitional organ of struggle; likewise the rank-and-file caucus within a trade union is not a transitional organ of struggle. But the caucus as it goes beyond its union, the local union as it breaks away from the iron control of the national bureaucracy can become organically linked in class-for-itself forms of organization that superceded each particular trade union.

In the coming period those sections of the union bureaucracy which seek to follow the path of

Lewis and Hillman, will be the most deadly enemies of the working class. Where they organize the class-as-a-whole, it will be to attempt to tie it to the strangle-hold of bourgeois politics; where they fight militant union battles they will seek to confine them to narrow “acceptable” demands. When the working class is ready to leap, they will be the dead weight seeking to hold it back.

The Role of the CP & SWP

Knowing all of past history as they do, the Communist Party yet speaks of the future in the following way:

The growth of strikes, of contract settlement rejections and of turnovers of local union officers are all direct and mostly spontaneous expressions of the rebellious mood of workers today. There is the rise of the rank-and-file committees and caucuses, and the emergence of nation-wide and region-wide movements in the ranks, projecting positive programs and goals, seeking ways and means to strengthen their unions, to make them more effective, militant organizations. There is especially the rise of Black rank-and-file movements of all kinds, directed at racism and at expanding democracy on the job and in the unions. These are the developments which have produced a new, mass form readily accessible to workers' comprehension — a form for introducing the **conscious** element, the element of organization, purpose and direction, as well as a training ground for new, class-struggle leadership, into the spontaneous struggle. It is a form with potential for raising them to the level where a revitalized, democratized labor movement will have the power to bring about a qualitatively new day for the American worker.

In many ways, the situation today is comparable to the mid-thirties. Then too, there was a mighty rank-and-file upsurge and a massive unemployed movement (which is increasingly needed today), in which the Communists and the Left played a decisive role. Then, too, there was a crisis of class-collaborationist labor leadership which had proven its bankruptcy. It was in such circumstances that a number of labor leaders, led by John L. Lewis, stepped forward to form the CIO and make a break with the discredited policies of the old

craft union leadership. . .

These labor leaders who boldly challenge the Meany class partnership policies in all aspects have yet to appear on the scene. Signs are aplenty that there is movement in this direction. The potential for such developments, and the guarantee of its success, rests with the further growth and spread of movements such as the National Co-ordinating Committee for Trade Union Action and Democracy. *Political Affairs*, Nov. 1970 "Crisis of Collaborationist Labor Leadership," James West.

All these movements are essential for revitalizing organized labor and strengthening the leading role of the working class in present-day anti-monopoly struggles. Central in this process is the building of an organized Left current within the trade union movement and its alliance with the Center forces in struggle against the reactionary policies of the Right.

— New Program of the CPUSA, May, 1970.

The Socialist Workers' Party publication, *International Socialist Review* featured a series of articles all devoted to the subject "Prospects for the American Revolution" in its November 1970 issue. The only mention of the working class appeared in the article on the national question by Derric Morrison, "The Combined Character of the Coming American Revolution." Morrison writes:

The impact of nationalist consciousness on black workers and the unions has come through in recent strike struggles. In the postal workers' strike, the militancy and drive of the strike was provided by black workers. And there is no doubt that the militancy of the nationalist-minded black workers pushed the white workers to new levels of enthusiasm about the strike.

. . . Here we see nationalist consciousness shaking up the union, making them instruments of struggle.

Unlike some pseudo-Marxists and shallow-minded leftists, we see no contradiction between Black nationalist consciousness and class consciousness. In fact, the deeper the penetration of nationalism into the consciousness of Black

people, the better will be the development of the class struggle. . .

We therefore welcome and look forward to the independent mobilization and organization of Black people. The greater the independent organization of black people, the easier it will be for Black people to acquire socialist consciousness.

. . . various demands are arising from the struggle of Black caucuses in the trade union movement. But what is important is that, out of the struggle for Black control of the Black community, there will arise popular organs of struggle through which the masses can express themselves. And in the course of building those popular organs around the different aspects of Black oppression, the groundwork will be laid for the building of a Black political party. . .

At the last NAACP convention, that organization went on record for mass demonstrations at construction sites in order to get Black people hired into the building trades. The power of such mobilizations were revealed last year in Pittsburgh and in Chicago.

Thus the SWP has learned the lesson from the past. Trade union forms are narrow and parochialist; therefore support petty-bourgeois nationalist forms. Not only do they totally abdicate any serious claim to revolutionary leadership in the next period, but they line up now with the enemies of the working class who seek to use Black people in order to break the working class. Let there be no mistake. Trade union forms are narrow, parochial institutions of working class defense, but they must be destroyed only in so far as they are transcended. Any attack upon the trade union movement by the bourgeoisie must be vigorously opposed.

In Conclusion

In the next period either the trade union movement will be superceded by revolution or it stands in grave danger of being destroyed by fascism. The working class can no longer afford the mistakes of the past nor would-be leaders who insist in repeating those blunders.

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