

A History of the Progressive Labor Party

The San Francisco State Strike

(continued)

From the earliest mass meetings of the strike PLP had advanced a two-pronged strategy for victory: (1) to organize masses of students at State to fight militantly to really shut down the school around the general line of fighting racism, and to build support at other Colleges; (2) to develop an anti-racist worker-student alliance in support of the strike. An Outside Strike Support Committee was formed to carry this out and the PLP led this committee's work.

While the majority of students supported the proposal for a WSA as part of the strike's strategy, few really believed it would develop on the scale that it did and make a vital difference in the strength of the strike. By early December, the one-month-old strike had become the main social-political issue in Northern California (if not California as a whole) and was dominating the front pages of the press, T.V., etc. **The strike and its focus against racism were being discussed and debated by tens of thousands of workers in S.F. alone.** Tremendous support began to develop in the working class for the strike. This was particularly true amongst minority workers in the black and Latin communities where anti-racist consciousness was obviously qualitatively higher. **But the strikers made a very serious effort to reach white workers as well around the issue of racism.** During November and December, every day after the massive rallies and confrontations were over, the Outside Strike Support Committee organized squads of students to leaflet workers as they got off work. **Over 100,000 leaflets were given out to workers** throughout the city. In addition, the students went on T.V. and radio talk shows to explain the issues of the strike, held forums in the communities, organized community rallies, etc. When the AFT received official strike sanction (which Alioto tried desperately to prevent), this opened up even wider opportunities for the strikers to approach union general membership meetings for support.



San Francisco strikers move forward in defense of their strike

Some of the highlights of the WSA as it actually developed during the Strike included:

(1) **Third World Community Day:** As support for the strike mushroomed among black and Latin workers and their families, large contingents were organized to come out to the campus. On Thursday, December 5, nearly 150 black working-class strike supporters arrived in three busses and joined the noon rally. Many of these were the parents of student strikers. They received thunderous applause as they joined the students. Words cannot describe the effect this act of solidarity had on those of us who were striking. **The ruling class was terrified of this anti-racist worker-student alliance.** Hayakawa went on TV and read a state law prohibiting non-students, i.e., workers, from being present on campus. He pledged to arrest any working-class supporters of the strike who came on campus again. In response to his threat we called for a Third World Community Day on Monday, December 16. Hundreds from the black and Latin working-class communities were planning to defy the ruling class' threats and come to State to help shut it down. Also, the high schools were to let out for Xmas on Dec. 13 and hundreds promised to join the Strike. Now, Hayakawa had sworn daily he would never admit defeat, that the campus would be kept open for business at all costs. **But the threat of several hundred and possibly thousands of minority workers and working-class youth joining the several thousand strikers forced him and his ruling class masters to eat their words.** At noon on Friday, Dec. 13, Hayakawa announced over the loudspeakers he was closing the school a week early. The solid strength of the strikers plus tremendous working-class support proved to be more than the state apparatus could handle. It should be noted here that there was a struggle within the TWLF between a nationalist line and a class line on the question of who to seek alliance with in the black and Latin communities. The right-wingers wanted to rely on black businessmen and politicians like Carlton Goodlet and Willie Brown. PLP and some other forces pointed out how Goodlet et al would be used to sell out the strike and that the only road to victory was an alliance with minority workers and their families.

(2) Several community support rallies were held at City Hall, the first on Dec. 16. **Over 1,500 people, about half workers, came out to express solidarity.** Similar rallies were held throughout the strike.

(3) **A Community Coalition of over 100 groups was formed to support the strike.** These included Mission Strike Support Committee, Noe Valley Strike Support Committee, Marin Strike Support Committee, Rally of Afro-American Parents, Concerned Chinese for Action and Change, United Parents Committee and many others. They gave out leaflets in their neighborhoods and helped to raise bail money for the hundreds who were arrested.

(4) The AFT and various locals supporting them called a mass indoor labor rally at the Labor Temple to support the strike. **Twelve hundred union workers turned out for this rally** on a Sunday afternoon. Besides the AFT and other union spokesmen, two strike leaders from the TWLF addressed the rally, one of whom was a PLP cadre. The PLP speaker attacked racism sharply and called for a massive worker-student alliance against it. This call for an anti-racist WSA received outstanding applause from the assembled workers.

(5) **Community Mobilization Day, January 6:** With the tactical shift to mass picketing to close the school, hundreds who had planned to come Dec. 16 arrived on January 6 to join the mass picket lines. The mass picketing usually numbered 2,000 at its peak but **that day the many supporters swelled the line to over 3,000.** A similar Community Mobilization Day took place again on January 30.

(6) **Significant segments of white workers began to support the strike.** Several locals endorsed the strike after the AFT went out: Painters local, ILWU No. 6, Richmond Oil Workers local, and several AFT locals. Moreover, many rank and filers organized carloads to come out to State on January 6. Among these were eight auto workers who drove up from Milpitas and a group of 15 phoneworkers from S.F. There were many, many others who came anonymously in groups of two and three.

(7) **The overwhelming majority of campus workers supported the strike.** When the AFT put up its sanctioned pickets the cafeteria workers (Local 411) walked out, shutting down the main student cafeteria. The dormitory dining hall workers honored the picket lines, thereby closing down the two dorms. Clerical workers and TA's in Local 1928 walked out in support of the student demands before the AFT struck. The students had made no reprisals against campus employees who walk out part of the amnesty demand from the beginning of the strike.

Herrnstein Stopped from Speaking at M.I.T.

BOSTON, Mass., Feb. 11—Exactly a week after members and friends of PLP helped break up the organizational meeting of a racist "Non-Black Student Union" at M.I.T. (see Challenge-Desafio, Feb. 6) Richard Herrnstein came to M.I.T. to speak.

Herrnstein is the creep who introduced the idea of class into Jensenism. He agrees with Jensen that black people are "genetically inferior" to white people in "intelligence," but he adds that workers in general, white or black, a "genetically inferior" to bosses.

This was the first time in a long time that Herrnstein had dared to come out in public, as far as we know, so some members and friends of PLP went to the event to help chase him back into hiding. Admittance to his speech was restricted to faculty members who had made arrangements in advance to attend, but about 40 students also showed up to see if they could get in. A number of us were all set to disrupt the talk, but it turned out that we didn't have to. One of the faculty members inside raised his hand and suggested that a vote be taken on whether or not to allow the students to come in. On hearing this, Herrnstein just got up and left. He was so scared of the militancy that students all over the country have shown in attacking his racist neo-nazi theories that he couldn't bring himself to even discuss letting the students into the room!

The fact that Herrnstein seems to live in terror of his own shadow is a good thing. The new racists have got to be shown that workers and students will not stand up for a repetition of the atrocities of their nazi predecessors. The task now is to make Herrnstein's worst fears into a reality. We have to continue building the PLP to guarantee the growth of a mass movement against racism that really will drive him and his racist "colleagues" off the face of the earth forever.