

# The Union and the Company Shake Hands

by *Steeled in Struggle, the Party press at U.S. Steel South Works*

From the singing of the national anthem on Monday until the banging of the last gavel on Friday, the USWA 20th Constitutional Convention ran ever so smoothly to the tune of Lloyd McBride and the steelworker International.

This Convention demonstrated once again that the USWA has long ago become a part of the apparatus for governing and controlling the working class. On the convention floor, the most important struggle — against layoffs and plant closings — was confined to a brief discussion of Resolution 28, which blamed steel imports for the crisis in the American steel industry. Only three delegates were allowed to speak on the resolution. As usual, the serious discussion that was held among steelworkers from around the country took place outside the convention hall. Steelworkers facing a plant shutdown or massive layoffs are forced to seek solutions outside of the bounds of the USWA itself.

## USWA International: "Rely on Carter and the Capitalist Class"

The International's purpose at this convention was to establish union policy for the next two years, aimed at consolidating the "cooperative" relationship between the steel capitalists and the union. I.W. Abel was dragged out to warn the workers against taking an adversary stand against the monopolies.

The International seeks a say in the nature and allotment of Federal aid to bail out the steel corporations and a fuller role in the international capitalists' tri-lateral (made up of the capitalists, state and union) organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The result is the further integration of the USWA into the state apparatus.

As part of this effort, the union must take up the call of the steel capitalists. They yell that government-supported imports of foreign steel are unfair when the American steel industry is involved in modernization to become more competitive. This was the point of Resolution 28, entitled "Steel Imports and the Shutdown of Steel Plants". This Resolution called for 1) an industrial steel policy arrived at through the Steel Tripartite Advisory Committee of the federal government, the steel industry and the USWA; 2) government loan programs for modernization of the steel industry's existing facilities; 3) national government steel policy to address the problems of imports; and 4) legislation concerning advance notice of plant shutdowns resulting from restructuring.

All of these measures are aimed at giving the USWA a bigger say in the development of the steel industry. None of these measures do anything to increase the fighting ability or improve the fighting position of the working class against layoffs and plant closings.

Resolution 28 reflects the significance of this USWA convention: it successfully laid the groundwork for implementation of a plan for restructuring the steel industry, developed by the international monopoly capitalists, and confirmed the USWA's role in this restructuring process. This should serve as a stark example of the degree to which the union has become an extension, an arm of the state. This trade union has not just strayed away from militancy because of careerist leadership. It is clearly part of the apparatus that maintains the rule of the capitalist class. This is the basis of its failure to fight layoffs and plant closings in the interests of the working class.

## Sadlowski Fightback: Dead and Buried

The International's plans also succeeded because there was no organized opposition to them. Four years ago, at the 1976 USWA Convention, the movement for the right to strike and the right to ratify contracts led by Ed Sadlowski's Fightback, was a well-organized national rank-and-file opposition to the International. Two years ago, some remnants of the Fightback, mainly from the Homestead, Pennsylvania steel mill and Inland Steel in Indiana, attempted to wage a floor fight in support of the right to ratify our contracts.

This year, there was no "fightback" against layoffs and plant closings organized by the former Sadlowski supporters.

Instead, people who had once been involved in the Fightback were mainly interested in furthering their careers. Joe Samargia, President of Local 1934 in the iron ore range, and Ron Weison, President of Local 1397 in Homestead, refused to attend any of the strategy sessions called by Alice Peuralla, President of Local 65 at South Works in Chicago, who continued to pull together her "key" delegate supporters and advocated calling for nationalization.

These remnants of the Fightback, who once challenged the union bureaucracy, are now opposed to the rank and file. Maintaining their very positions in the bureaucracy opposes them to the interests of the masses of workers. That is why they refused to try to mobilize broadly against layoffs and plant closings, and attacked the people who did.

They were joined in these attacks against the rank and file by the National Rank and File Committee and Trade Unions for Action and Democracy.

In the face of massive layoffs and plant closings, the abandonment of the rank and file by the old Sadlowski camp comes as no surprise. These forces never fought the capitalists. They have never organized themselves or the rank and file to fight the policies of the companies. Their past protests, militancy and organization have always been focused solely within the confines of the USWA. They have fought mainly over internal control of the union apparatus.



## Report from the Steel Convention

### In Pursuit of the United Front of Labor

Standing in sharp contrast to the USWA International and the old Fightback supporters were the revolutionary workers of the Trade Union Action League (TUAL) and several militant local union presidents who are committed to fighting the layoffs and plant closings. The TUAL, through two leaflets and its latest issue of "Advance", newsletter of the National Organizing Staff, put out a call for all steelworkers to close ranks in building a united front of labor against layoffs and plant closings.

The TUAL initiated a meeting that brought together a wide range of steelworkers. Workers from basic steel locals in the Chicago/Gary area and Hamilton, Canada, exchanged views and discussed problems with steelworkers from Pennsylvania, Kansas, Ohio, Utah, Rhode Island and Oregon. Frank, open and serious discussions expressed a genuine desire to actively fight against both the attacks of the capitalists and sell-out unionism. Most of the militant union officials agreed to the necessity of organizing outside of USWA channels to hook up the people fighting layoffs, plant closings and runaway shops. This position is clearly based on the refusal of the International to fight these attacks. And so the call to build a united front of labor across industrial and union lines, was well received by many. Its strongest opposition came from Alice Peuralla, who publicly attacked the TUAL in front of the convention hall for calling meetings and distributing its literature.

Both the Soviet revisionists headed by the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) and the Chinese revisionists of the Communist Party/ML (CP/ML) and the League for Revolutionary Struggle (LRS), refused to unite with or organize anyone to fight layoffs and plant closings.

Their revisionist betrayal was sharply expressed by a distributor of LRS's newspaper, "Unity", Rick Jurgens, when he addressed the militants and union presidents at the TUAL meeting. He called

on people "to work only inside the union because its better." This view calls on the working class to rely on its very enemies to defend and protect it. It calls on us to ask the wolf to guard our chicken coop. Both the Chinese and Soviet revisionists believe that the trade unions are independent of the state. They promote the view that the imperialist state is neutral and can be used by either the capitalist class or the working class. They oppose militant rank and file actions, independent of both the union apparatus and the electoral/legislative process. Taking their cue from either the revisionist Soviet Union or China, they distort and destroy the revolutionary role of the working class.

Because of their revisionist view of state monopoly capitalism they hold out the false illusion to the working class that political power can be gained by working solely within the union or in a country, by peaceful, polite elections. This is why the CPUSA called on the Los Angeles police to "protect and defend" them from attacks by the International's Texas goon squads. The CPUSA relied on the police for protection, but slandered the TUAL which organized self-defense. The Daily World attacks the TUAL as "phony leftists."

### The Revolutionary Road Of Struggle

The USWA convention demonstrated once again that steelworkers cannot rely on the sell-out bureaucratic unionism aimed at the further integration of the USWA into the state apparatus, and cooperation with the steel capitalists. The road forward, the road of class struggle, is to build real revolutionary unions to organize the revolutionary trade union movement. The pace of success of this movement will be based on the degree to which Marxism-Leninism becomes the guiding science of the struggle.

The Communist Party U.S.A./Marxist-Leninist clearly understands the necessity of this leadership. That is why our Party, too, went to the USWA convention. We sought to actively support militant unionists and the TUAL in the call to build a united front of labor. But we also participated at the convention through the distribution of UNITE!, a special convention edition of our shop paper at U.S. Steel Gary Works, "Steel City Organizer", and by bringing the call for a No Vote in November to the attention of steelworkers. The CPUSA/ML was the only organization at the convention arguing against support for the capitalist electoral circus or for any capitalist or revisionist politician.

Our Party sought to provide leadership and education openly through our press and in active support of the trade union militants. This convention confirms our view of the trade union movement in this country. While a break is emerging with reformist leaders, there still is no broad break with reformist ideology. Therefore, this convention once again confirms the need to carry out bold, militant actions inside and outside of the USWA in order to educate, organize and lead the fight against the capitalists' attacks on our living standards and democratic rights. We work to insure that the hundreds of thousands of dissatisfied steelworkers take up revolutionary aims and actions in opposition to U.S. imperialism. ■



## In Struggle

Chicago — 200 Wisconsin steelworkers and supporters, some carrying copies of their "rubber" paychecks issued by the now shut-down company, chanted "Jobs, Not Conversation", and demonstrated in front of International Harvester headquarters here. The plant, which had employed 3,500 workers, abruptly closed its doors, devastating the surrounding community in South Chicago. The marchers walked through downtown to the Federal Building waving placards calling for a united front of labor and for jobs. The demo was organized by a Save Our Jobs Committee at the plant, and was supported by the Trade Union Action League. Many participants also marched a month earlier in support of the laid-off workers at U.S. Steel Southworks.

Hollywood — The slow circle of a picket line is not as exciting as the dramatic entrances and exits on the TV screen but this month such actors as Ed Asner and Henry Winkler hit the bricks representing some 65,000 actors, musicians and screen writers on strike against the studios for better wages. Although perfectly capable of producing such reactionary figures as John Wayne and Ronald Reagan, Hollywood has also proved fertile ground for such progressives as Bertholt Brecht and Albert Maltz. It is this tradition, a tradition in service to democracy, socialism and the struggle of the working people, which needs to be strengthened in the culture of our country.

San Francisco — At press time the strike by 6,000 Hotel employees against the Employers' Associations' attempts to bust their union had just been settled. After long weeks of resisting the companies' proposal, consisting mostly of takeaways, the strikers held firm in their demands for greater union representation, affirmative action and improvements in working conditions. Although some promoted the illusion that "liberal" city Mayor Diane Feinstein would step in to protect the rights of workers, this strike has been a glaring example of how the state machinery works in the service of the employers, the capitalist class and their corporations.

While threatening to arrest "law-breaking" strikers, the Mayor (who owns a hotel herself) said nothing of the fact that hotel employers hired large numbers of city police, who beat and injured strikers on several occasions. Yet the strikers, mostly women, held firm and tried to build a broad united front effort among others in the California labor movement.

Oakland, California — A militant picket and press conference by the Charles Briscoe Committee for Justice protested Alameda County DA Lowell Jensen's decision not to file charges against El Cerrito police officer Nascimento in the death of Valrie Melson. Melson, a Black man, was shot and killed at point-blank range. Nascimento claimed self-defense even though no weapon was ever found. The DA's decision is a clear attempt to justify this shooting, along with numerous others which have occurred in Oakland in the last 18 months. The CBCJ has united in a coalition with other groups to march in memory of fallen brother Charles Briscoe on September 6. The coalition is demanding an end to police attacks on national minorities and all working people, and to bring police officer Fredericks, Nascimento and Tomek (all involved in shootings of innocent citizens) to trial. Near the end of the picket, a police officer escorted a bureaucrat through the militant lines, and an enraged protestor chanted, "Protect the Rich and Kill the Poor, That's What the Police Are Really For!"