

Newsletter  May 1978

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Buffalo

Workers'

Movement

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BUFFALO WORKERS' MOVEMENT

★★★Who We Are★★★

The Buffalo Workers' Movement is an organization of working people who are fighting to build a society based upon the needs of working people. We think the root cause of our country's problems is the system of capitalism - the system that makes decisions concerning the necessities of life according to the laws of profits only. The origins of layoffs, inflation, inferior schools, crime, etc. can be traced to this drive for profits. This country's most destructive people are the small number of men and women who make up the ruling class that makes the decisions that govern our lives.

We are committed to building a revolutionary movement to overthrow the present system and replace it with socialism. Socialism is the system where society is run by the working class and resources are divided according to peoples' needs, not for individual profit. We see capitalism as a system that is dying, and, as more and more countries realize this fact, they struggle to rebuild their societies upon socialist principles. Socialism is a living reality that works in such countries as China, Cuba and Vietnam.

We are part of the century-long tradition of socialism in this country. This tradition includes the fight for the 8-hour day and the struggles of the Wobblies. It includes the efforts in the 30's by the working class to organize unions, win social security and unemployment insurance, and defend its gains. This history also includes the fight against McCarthyism and the movement against the Vietnam war. The tradition is being lived out today in, among other struggles, the efforts to rebuild a strong Communist Party that can play its role in the working class's fight for power. Only with the formation of such a party can the potentially powerful but presently splintered and unorganized working class unite itself as a single force and win state power.

Our organization was founded by anti-war veterans, but rapidly grew to include many different people who realized that war is just one inevitable result of capitalism. In the struggles we have participated in, we have learned of the need to oppose political repression and fight racism and womens' oppression.



We are active in trade union work, in support of political prisoners, in defense of womens' right to choose and in support of third world liberation struggles. We are also part of a national trend to build a new Communist Party.

One key activity for our organization is the publication of a newsletter. Such a newsletter, which we hope to expand to a newspaper, will report news from a class viewpoint, give political direction and sum up political lessons, and act as an organizing tool for militants. To these ends and to the people of this city we dedicate this newsletter.

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PROFILE OF THE AMERICAN WORKING CLASS

Monday, May 1, is International Workers Day. It will be celebrated officially in the one-third of the world that is socialist and unofficially, with giant rallies and parades, in most of the rest. In fascist dictatorships like Chile and South Korea it will be banned. In this country, the government will ignore it, even though International Workers Day grew out of the great nationwide movement for an eight-hour day in the 1970's and 1880's.

Instead of celebrating it, the government here has designated May 1 as "Law Day." Instead of honoring the men and women who produce this nation's wealth with their labor and skills, it honors the law that breaks their strikes and keeps them unorganized. But history cannot be denied and every year more and more working people rediscover and celebrate their heritage.

These people are a diverse group, of course, but one thing binds them together. And that is that they are members of the same class. It is by looking at this class that the dynamics of their unity and their potential for political power can best be understood.



a working class majority

One way to see the untapped political and economic strength of the American working class is to see how large it is. The easiest way to do this is to take 1000 people as representing the entire population of the USA (really more than 220 million people). By this scale, about 575 people are of working age. Racially, the 1000 people break down into 825 white and 175 blacks, hispanics, and other minorities.

Of the 1000, only 13 are members of the capitalist class. Of the 13, 3 represent the handful of people who actually own our country's major industries and banks and effectively control our political and social institutions. The other 10 are the politicians, corporate executives, generals, and judges who directly serve their interests. Another 73 make up the middle class of professionals, managers, and business owners. About 75 are farmers, in the military, in prisons, and so on. Finally, 312 of the 1000 are workers, by far the largest group (really over 68 million people!) Add to this their family members and retirees and the working class makes up about 2/3 of the American population.

These 312 American workers include 150 women, 25 of them minority, as well as 30 minority men. By occupation there are 116 production workers, 86 office workers, 68 service workers and 42 semi-professional workers (such as teachers or nurses). The government usually breaks it down into blue-collar workers (production) and white-collar (the rest) in order to create the impression that white-collar workers are closer to the middle class, but the service and office sectors contain some of the lowest paying, most dead-end jobs. Of the 312 workers, only 85, including 14 women, belong to a union.

This holds true for women workers as well. They too go frequently unnoticed. The common myth is that women work for "pin money" while men work because they have to. That's also false - women make up almost half of all American workers and they are concentrated in the lowest paying jobs, predominantly in the service and office sectors. And for these women, work is a matter of survival. Currently, 2 out of 3 women workers are single, divorced, widowed or have husbands making less than \$7,000 a year. As times get harder, more women need to work - 49% of women with children under 18 work outside the home, up from 35% in 1965. But as the percentage of women in the workforce has increased in recent years, women's wages have been falling in comparison with men's. In 1955, women made 64% of what men made on the average; by 1975, this had dropped to 58%.

In addition, almost all adult women, whether wage earners or not, are saddled with the second shift of unpaid housework. This work is central to our economic system because it allows the capitalist class to get the benefits of two people's work for the wages paid to one.

a multi-racial class of men and women

The common image of a workers, thanks to the media, is that of a white male. But while there are more white males than any other group in the working class, it's a false image. Over 92% of all employed minority men and women are workers, compared to about 78% of all employed white (the rest are in the middle class). The ratio of minority workers is highest in the production and service sectors and they make up a significant number of the workforce in such crucial areas as auto plants and hospitals. Because of this concentration, minority workers have played key roles in many of the struggles of the American working class, yet they reap the fewest benefits from our social system. Black workers earn only 71% of what whites make - for a black women, the average wage is only 50% of what a white male makes.

Some liberal intellectuals would have us believe that minority poverty is the result of family instability or the existence of a "poverty culture," but that's a racist myth that covers up the exploitive nature of capitalism. This poverty results from the fact that minority workers get the lowest paying and least secure jobs and have the highest unemployment rate. A product of 400 years of racism in our society, this intense exploitation of minority workers perpetuates racism in the present. The existence of a large segment of the working class that is forced to work for lower wages and under worse conditions, depresses wages and weakens health and safety demands for all workers. In per-

iods of high unemployment, the resulting competition for jobs polarizes workers along racial lines, all to the ultimate benefit of the capitalist class.



Peg Averill, AFP/LNS

the insecurity of working class life

While the media often portrays workers as bringing home huge and inflationary paychecks, the reality is that the working class faces the constant threat of economic insecurity. Over 30% of working class families live on an income below the poverty level. Another 50% are barely able to make ends meet on a day to day basis - with inflation hurting them more every year. Between 1972 and 1974, weekly wages (after taxes) rose 8%. During the same period, consumer prices rose 16%, executive salaries rose 29%, and corporate profits (also after taxes) rose a whopping 54%.

Hand in hand with inflation is unemployment. About 1 out of every 5 workers will be unemployed for at least part of this year. And the length of unemployment is increasing - 30% of those unemployed will be without a job for 15 weeks or more. For older workers laid off because of automation or plant shutdowns, work is almost impossible to find. And for

young minority workers, the situation is even worse. Many can never get a job in the first place.

Another source of worker insecurity is dangerous working conditions. If you think there have been a lot more industrial accidents reported in the papers lately, your're right. The injury rate for work related accidents has risen 25% since 1960. Every day this year over 50 workers will die in work related accidents, 275 more will die from the effects of industrial diseases, poisons, and radiation - and another 8,200 will be disabled on the job. The main causes have been automation and speed-up. The US has the highest industrial accident rate of any industrialized nation. And racism takes its toll here too- Black workers have a fatality rate 40% higher than white workers.

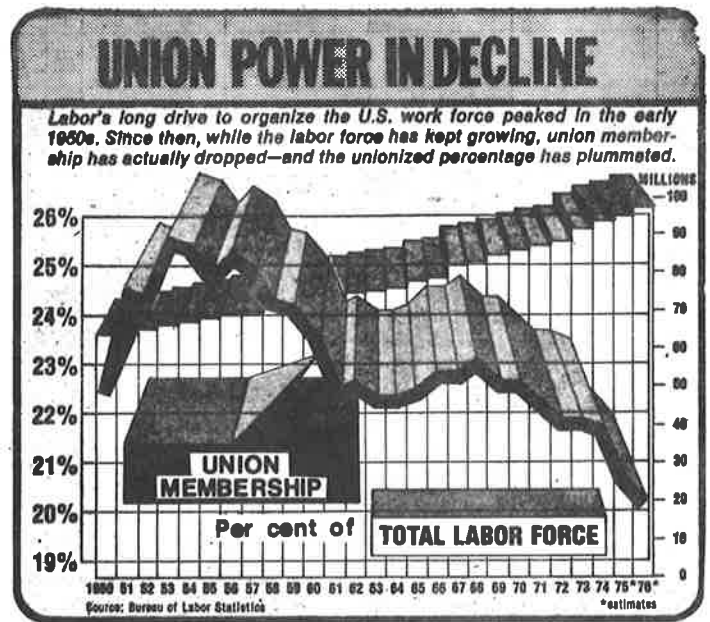
There are other, more subtle forms of insecurity which bear down heavily on the working class. A number of recent studies have shown a direct correlation between poverty and mental depression and between rising unemployment and an increase in heart attacks, suicide and spouse and child abuse. The point is clear. In the world's wealthiest nation, the people who produce that wealth get little back in terms of security and happiness.

workers and unions

Unions are the only genuine working class organizations in existence today. And contrary to the media image of power-hungry unions dominating the U.S. economy, they are weak and growing weaker. In 1977, only 20.1% of the workforce were in unions - a 4% drop in the past two years. That's the lowest percentage for any industrialized country. Only 12% of women workers, the most under-paid group in the workforce, are unionized. Their numbers dropped 10% in the past two years.

For black workers, however, the rate is higher. About 30% of all black workers are in unions. There are more blacks in unions, in fact, than in any other organizations except the black churches. While many unions have racist practices, some like the Auto-workers and the Teachers are probably the most integrated and democratic institutions, at least on their local level, in this country.

Unions are under attack today. Strikes are getting longer and winning less for the workers. Giant conglomerates and holding companies have monopolized industry as never before while unions have stayed static. The capitalist class, led by the right-wing National Association of Manufacturers, is organizing to bust unions (they call it a "union free environment") and rolling back estab-



lished rights such as safety inspections and family medical coverage.

This puts unions at a cross-roads. They can continue to lose members and influence or they can move forward. Rank and file militance, particularly over issues of internal democracy and working conditions, is at its highest point in years. Three of the largest and most powerful unions - the Steelworkers, Miner and Teamsters - contain broadly based insurgent movements. In addition, the old cold-war hawks in the leadership of the AFL-CIO, like Meany and Abel, are retiring and dying off.

Many of the emerging leaders see the need to organize on a class basis, and not just on an industry by industry basis, to effectively fight the concentration of economic power held by the capitalist class with its diversified, multinational investments. A coalition of over 25 unions is currently developing to fight for a 35 hour work week and full employment. And more emphasis is being put on organizing non-union workers than in the past, especially in the Sunbelt "right to work" states.

There are some things wrong with unions, for sure, but without them, life for the working class would be far more insecure than it is today. The next few years will be crucial ones not only for organized labor, but for all of us. Any rollback of the rights and privileges, won by the labor movement will seriously affect the rights and privileges, as well as the economic well-being, of the vast majority of the American people.



towards working class unity

One striking characteristic of the American working class is the degree to which it is unaware of its size and potential power. Mass media and culture-for-profit have a lot to do with this by the way they shape our view of the world. So do the FBI and other police agencies in their effort to control political dissent and repress progressive movements. Another factor is the reactionary wing of the labor movement itself - especially the corrupt labor bureaucrats who sell out American workers to the mob and foreign workers to military dictators, the CIA and the multinational corporations.

They all exploit the deeper and more ingrained divisions caused by racism and sexism to achieve their ends and keep the working class fragmented and powerless. Racism and sexism have been the main props of capitalism for centuries and it is only by fighting their effects

that the working class can build a strong and lasting unity. This unity is essential for the working class to defend its present standard of living against corporate attacks. And it is only through the process of building this unity that we might finally look forward to the day when racism and sexism can be eradicated.

The essence of a strong and lasting unity is class consciousness. That is, that the millions of unique and diverse individuals who make up the working class recognize that they are members of a class and that it is through the activity of that class that their hopes and aspirations can best be fulfilled. Right now, American workers have developed a stronger class identity than at any time in the last quarter century. With this identity comes a greater awareness of the bankruptcy of capitalist solutions to our social and economic problems, a recognition of the need for the labor movement to regain political independence and an increased interest in socialism.

It is not a utopian pipedream to look forward to the day when millions of American workers will reclaim their heritage and celebrate International Workers Day as their own. It won't come easy, but then nothing worth fighting for does. And when it happens, the American working class will have taken a large step towards creating a society where human needs and potential are the central concerns and where exploitation and misery will be but distant memories.

The major sources for this article are The Working Class Majority by Andrew Levison; Class Analysis of the U.S. in the 1970's by J. Hill; U.S. Census Data; What's Happening To Our Jobs & Why Do We Spend So Much Money by Popular Economics Press; research by the author and articles from the Guardian; Dollars & Sense and the HealthPac Bulletin.

The information in the article profiles the U.S. working class on a national basis. Since population and industry are disproportionately distributed in the country, local realities vary. In Buffalo, as a highly industrialized Great Lakes city, we find a higher percentage of minority workers, a larger industrial sector, more unemployment and so on.



ELECTRICAL WORKERS

LOCKED OUT

Puerto Rican Labor



Just before press time we learned that the UTIER has voted to end the strike by signing a 4-year contract, accepting the WRA's last offer of \$50/month (\$.31/hour) raise the first year, then \$45, \$50 and \$55 per month in succeeding years. Union president Lausell termed this "an economic defeat, but a political victory" since the government had failed to achieve its main goal of destroying the union.

On December 27, 1977, 6,200 members of the Electrical Workers Union (UTIER) of the government-owned Water Resources Authority (WRA) in Puerto Rico went on strike. The strike came after 6 months of negotiations, which had left the union and management far apart on the only outstanding issue for the new contract - wages. On March 21, 1978, the workers voted to go back, but leaving the money issue for further negotiations. They were met at the gates by management and a heavy police cordon. The WRA justified the lockout saying they had to protect public property from the workers.

The last few months have seen a sharpening of the struggle of the Puerto Rican workers movement and of colonial repression. The present governor Romero Barcelo promised during his campaign in 1976 to guarantee collective bargaining for public sector workers, but his recent actions clearly expose his intent to bust UTIER. The electrical workers, highly skilled and performing dangerous work, are among the highest paid workers in Puerto Rico. Yet their average

annual earnings of \$7,000 are only about half that of comparable workers in the U.S. The same holds for P.R. wages in manufacturing - they are half those of the U.S. average, despite the fact that the cost of living is higher in P.R. Such low wages are only one of the reasons why 70% of P.R. families are on Food Stamps.

When negotiations began UTIER sought a \$1.69/hour raise. WRA offered \$.18. An independent commission studied WRA's books and Sanchez Vilella, a former governor and a member of the commission issued the dissenting report which indicated that the WRA could afford an \$.89 increase. With this WRA went up to \$.31 and UTIER down to \$.89.

While WRA claims it can't afford decent pay raises, they have spent over \$200,000 in the past few months on a massive publicity campaign to slander UTIER. In addition, they continue paying high interest to bond holders (such as the First Boston Corp), while ignoring a major source of their financial problems - low rates to industrial users. Most of these are owned or controlled by U.S. capital, which directly benefits from P.R.'s colonial status. The WRA attempts to portray the UTIER workers as overpaid, but this has been rejected by a broad range of labor organizations who recognize UTIER's historic 35-year role as a pacesetter in pushing for gains for all P.R. workers. For example, municipal bus drivers, who are also on strike, have sponsored joint actions with UTIER. It is because of this strength and militancy that WRA and the government want to bust UTIER.



the rest of P.R. workers. The strike is an opportunity for workers, many of whom do not yet share the view that their interests demand independence and socialism, to learn this from their own experience.

WRA's smear campaign also includes intense red-baiting of UTIER president Lausell, a member of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP). While there is a wide range of political affiliations among UTIER members, the vast majority support and respect Lausell's leadership. Recognizing their common interests and common enemy, the UTIER members have united in taking a militant approach to the strike despite political differences. Many who supported Romero for governor have witnessed the anti-union tactics of their supposedly "pro-labor" PNP party of Puerto Rico.

WRA also accuses UTIER and its supporters among the independentistas such as PSP of sabotage of facilities. Much of the power failures are due to the inability of unskilled, scabbing WRA supervisors to maintain the facilities, although certainly some workers have

taken direct action. On February 10, police, attempting to escort scabs into the plant, fired on strikers. Shots were returned and the police were driven off.

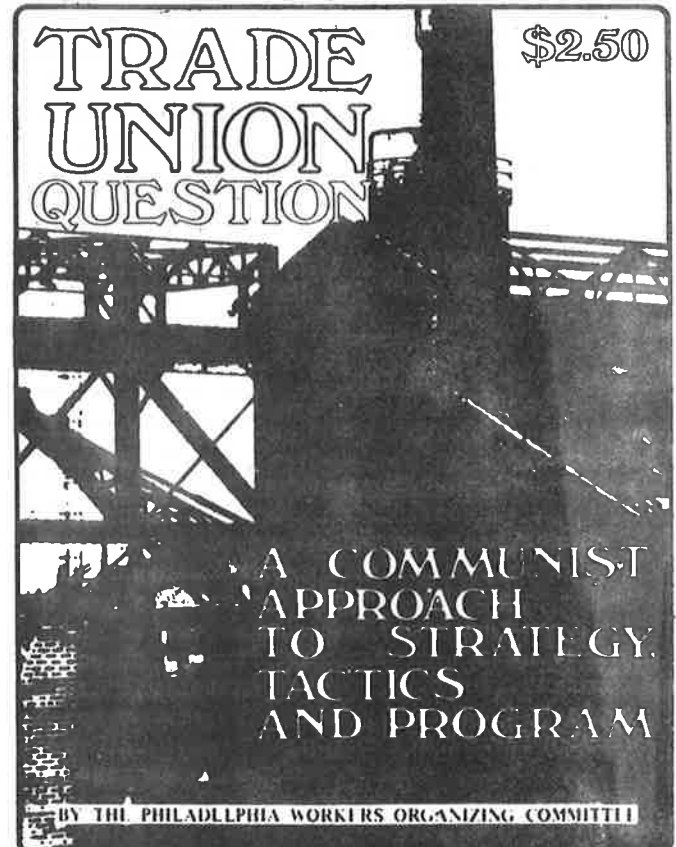
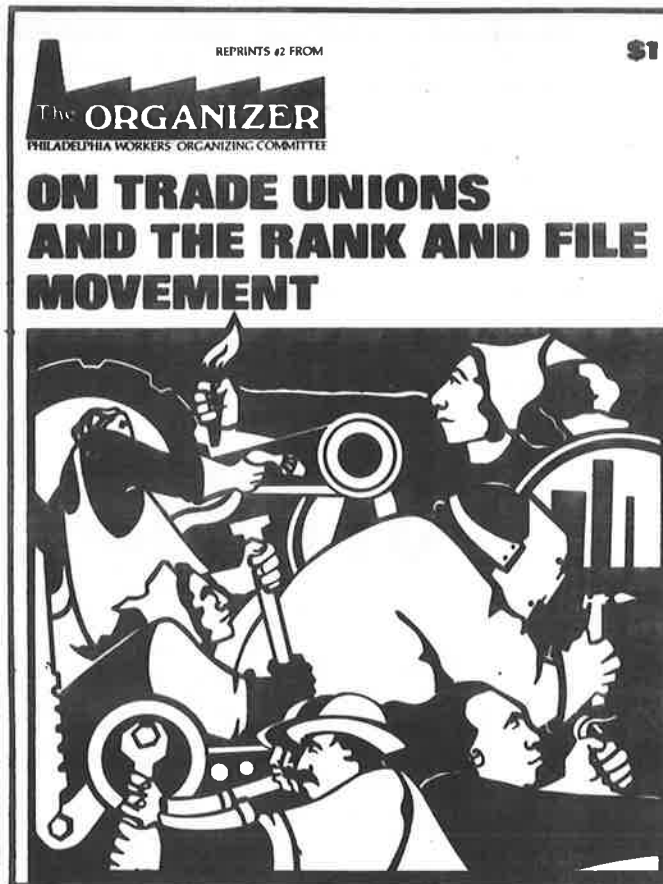
The UTIER has filed charges against the WRA for the illegal lockout. UTIER argues that the old agreement should stay in effect while negotiations continue of the wage issue. WRA, on the other hand, insists that the workers must accept their insultingly low wage offer and a three year contract.

The UTIER strike is a significant battle for both the labor movement and for the independence movement. P.R.'s status as a colony of the U.S. is the main cause of P.R.'s economic stagnation, 40% unemployment and forced migration. The official parties are untied in their desire to crush UTIER as an example to the rest of Puerto Rican workers. The strike is an opportunity for workers, many of who do not yet share the view that their interests demand independence and socialism, to learn from their own experience.

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THE OLD TRICK

RED BAITING

"Don't vote for those people on the rank and file ticket. They're just commies out to disrupt our industry. They'll lose you your job. They're doing the dirty ground work so the Chinese and Russians can come over here and take your freedom away from you."

between male and female workers. And just in case we might get it together in spite of those obstacles, they are always ready with their final weapon - the great red scare.

the red issue - a dangerous diversion

How many times have we heard accusations like these just when it seemed a group of workers was getting it together to offer a new kind of leadership to our locals? Whenever workers talk about the need for democratic elections, or when they want a new contract to be a real improvement over the old, very often the first response of the union leaders is to red-bait. And in the

What is red-baiting all about? Are those who use it really doing their patriotic duty and protecting us? Actually, when red-baiting goes on, communism versus capitalism isn't really the issue. Sometimes the workers being attacked do believe that we need a new system which distributes the wealth of our land equally among all the people. But most often the workers really haven't given our economic

HOW ANTI-COMMUNISM IS USED TO DIVIDE AND DESTROY THE RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT



past, such red-baiting has been followed or accompanied by government hysteria investigations, public "trials" and national hysteria.

If the red-baiting is successful, the outcome of all this is always the same: the old leadership stays in control, the bosses get a contract on their terms, and the workers lose out, holding the empty slogan of "patriotic security" like an ice cream cone without the ice cream.

Unions are built on the understanding that "united we stand, divided we fall". But we workers aren't the only ones who know that our strength lies in our unity. The bosses know it too, and so do those union bureaucrats whose jobs depend on their cozy relationships with the bosses. And that's why both on the shop level and in the government they spend so much energy trying to split us up. They encourage race hatred and they encourage mistrust

system that much thought. They're just trying to build a stronger union.

It would be just as relevant for the bureaucrats to call the opposition mother-rapers or child molesters, or atheists, or whatever. The main purpose behind red-baiting is to divert attention away from the real issues - like union democracy or the need to fight rate cuts - and get everyone worried about some shapeless terror lurking behind every proposal for change.

In the late '30's, the United Mine Workers' John Brophy, director of the CIO, said, "Redbaiting, lies, slander, raising the cry of 'Communist' against militants and progressive union leaders, is nothing more than a smoke-screen for the real objective of the people that use them. The real objective is to kill the CIO, destroy collective bargaining, destroy the unity of the organized and unorganized that

the CIO is building throughout the nation".

We've all been brainwashed from the time we were small children into fear of communism. We've been told that liberty is being allowed to work all our lives for peanuts while a few capitalists rake in the big money and that freedom is being able to choose who will tell us to tighten our belts from the White House. We've been convinced that the pursuit of happiness is being allowed to spend our hard-earned money on short skirts one year and on skirts below our knees the next. We've been told that communism will bring chaos into our lives and turn us all into machines. So as soon as someone is labeled a "red" we instinctively shut our ears to what he or she is saying and run for the safe cover of the exploitation we're familiar with.

who are our real enemies

But who is really threatening our well-being? Is it the rank and file groups that demand fair elections and an end to discrimination, and better working conditions? Or is it the union leaders who railroad through rotten contracts and hand-pick our stewards according to their ability to kiss up to the boss? The true disrupters are those who red-bait their opposition rather than deal with the real problems facing the membership. The real subversives are those who lead witchhunts within the union, those who try to suppress the ideas and rights of their opposition. These are the real enemies within our unions because they are representing the interests of the capitalists and not of the workers.

No one likes to be attacked or to be called a traitor. And so the effect of red-baiting is often to convince honest union members, those who believe in socialism and those who don't, to keep their mouths shut. And who benefits, besides the few bureaucrats and flunkies hanging on to their positions? It's the manufacturers who win out. Because red-baiting scares people away from sounding radical. And radical means anyone who wants a fighting union. So when red-baiting takes hold in the union, then the companies are assured of a union which will tow the bosses' line, sounding good and "American".

It's not too hard to see why red-baiting militant workers who never gave Communism a second look is dirty business. But what about red-baiting workers who do believe in socialism? Is it OK to bait for-real reds?

Baiting, no matter who it's aimed at, is name-calling in an appeal to peoples' gut emotions rather than their minds. The point

SO WHAT ARE YOU COMPLAINING ABOUT... YOU'VE GOT DEMOCRACY... HAVEN'T YOU?



Fred Wright, UE News

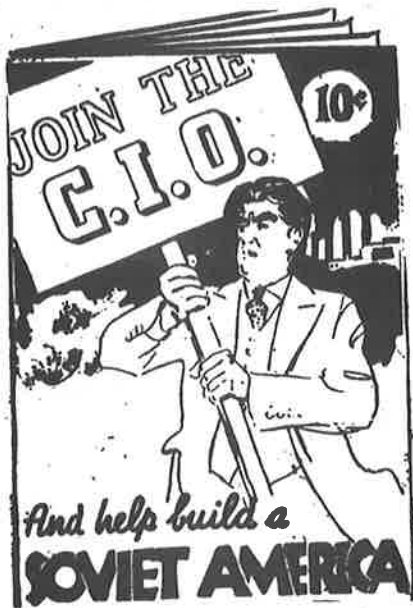
of baiting of any kind is to get everyone so worked up that they stop thinking. We can't ever let ourselves be fooled by such bully tactics. We can't let our misleaders get us fighting among ourselves over phoney issues or else they'll always be able to control us and choose our leadership for us.

If today a militant can be shut up for believing in socialism, then tomorrow any worker can be intimidated into silence for believing in trade unionism. If a worker is pushing the membership to fight a wage cut then that's the issue we deal with - not whether he or she spends Sundays at Mass or in meetings. Every member of our union must be guaranteed the right to speak his or her mind without fear. We must defend everyone's right to present their views, even if we disagree with them.

communists - a force for trade union progress

Finally, red-baiting real communists hurts all of us in another way. The whole point of communism is that it explains the nature of our daily oppression at work and in our communities. Communists understand that our society is divided into two classes, capitalists and workers, that capitalists exist to exploit workers, and that therefore there can be no peace between the two. Because of their understanding of society, communists are able to develop a consistent and militant trade union policy. Communists know that no good can come of making deals with the bosses and they know the need to develop a strong, united and conscious working class. So communists aren't likely to sell the rank and file out.

If red-baiting is allowed to take hold, then the majority of the workers will be cut off from the best leadership available to them - in fact, the only leadership which can lead the working class struggle out of its present vicious circle of dogfights with various manufacturers. It's not just a coincidence that manufacturers' associations and the governments have always taken special pains to destroy communist influenced unions like the Fur and Leather Workers, UE, and much of the early CIO movement.



In 1938, alarmed by the rapid growth of militant industrial unions, Big Business tried to destroy CIO organizing drives with a well-financed red-baiting campaign. Two million of these pamphlets were published and distributed to workers throughout the nation by the National Association of Manufacturers. The workers weren't fooled, and the CIO kept going.

The capitalists know who their real enemies are, and who the best friends of the workers are. And when our leaders bait communists in our unions they are playing out the bosses hand. They are allowing the bosses to pick our leaders for us and allowing them to veto those who really would represent us.

The history of our own unions can teach us in the clearest possible terms how disastrous it is for the masses of workers to allow themselves to be scared away from communist leadership. Our history also teaches us the central role that communists played in building the labor movement. One of the best examples of the contribution of communists can be found in the birth and development of the CIO.

CIO and anti-communism

When John L. Lewis punched Bill Hutchinson of the Carpenters' Union in the jaw at the AFL convention and stalked out to form the

CIO, he was simply acting out the last symbolic gesture for a movement which had been built by thousands of organizers for many years. John L. Lewis was no lover of communists. And yet, in 1935 he knew that he owed much of his success to the tireless work of communists, socialists and other militant workers during the difficult and depressing years of 1933 and 1934. It was the communists who refused to give up in 1933 when the AFL did everything it could to discourage workers from organizing into necessary industrial unions.

Communists had understood the importance of industrial organizing for decades, and they were not sidetracked by the treachery of the bureaucrats of the AFL whose privileged jobs depended on being able to control the militancy of the US working class. When the AFL betrayed the early attempts of the auto workers to organize, the workers built bonfires with their AFL membership cards. But the communists continued to organize, and when Lewis prepared to help the organization of auto workers he found communists like Wyndham Mortimer and Robert Travis in their leadership.

It was no secret to anyone that the communists were a driving force in the development of the CIO. When Lewis finally brought the Chrysler Corporation to its knees, Walter Chrysler said to Lewis, "Mr. Lewis, I do not worry about dealing with you, but it is the Communists in these unions that worry me a great deal". But when he was accused of having communists in his organization, Lewis said, "I do not turn my organizers upside down to see what kind of literature falls out of their pockets".

the case of the electrical workers

The working class has paid and is still paying the high price of falling for red-baiting. One of the best examples can be found in the history of the UE and the formation of the IUE.

In 1947 the Taft-Hartley Law was passed, pushed for by the National Association of Manufacturers and supported by the AFL leadership. Along with a great many other union-busting measures, the Taft-Hartley Bill institutionalized red-baiting. It required all union leaders to swear to "non-communist affidavits" in order to be able to use the National Labor Relations Board, or appear on the ballot for union recognition. This provision was meant to start witch-hunts within the unions, and established the basis for legal discrimination against union militants. It was no longer enough for a leader to be legitimate member of the union. Now his or her political beliefs were to be controlled and investigated.

At first the majority of the CIO refused to co-operate with the bill. But as the national political climate became more reactionary and as the pressure by the government and manufacturers increased, one by one the CIO unions fell in behind the repressive bill. The UE was one of the few unions to stand firm on the rights of union members to be free from political persecution.

As a result of the UE's refusal to buckle under, they were unable to use the machinery of the National Labor Relations Board. Taking advantage of the fact that the UE couldn't appear on ballots for union recognition, other



CIO unions began raiding UE locals. After numerous protests the UE withheld their dues to the CIO, and was finally expelled from the CIO in 1948. Another organization, the IUE was formed on paper by the CIO leadership.

Of course, this was exactly what the manufacturers wanted. In 1949, GE and Westinghouse performed for new elections, for here was their golden chance to get a more co-operative union and "to get out from under the domination of the left-wing UE", as one GE personnel officer put it. The Taft-Hartley Bill was clearly paying off. The manufacturers did all they could to help the CIO destroy the UE. As a top GE lawyer told a Senate committee in 1952, "We took Mr. Carey (head of the new IUE) off the hook by filing our own petitions for an NLRB election. This, under NLRB rules, made it unnecessary for the IUE and the CIO to show any membership at all".

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experience shows who gains from red-baiting

It didn't take long for the workers to realize that all this red-baiting was helping no one but the manufacturers. In 1950 the vicious joint campaign of GE and the CIO led to the election of the IUE over the UE in the GE plant of Lynn, Mass. Within 3 years, conditions had degenerated so much that the workers themselves petitioned for a new election. Up until 1948, the militant UE represented electrical workers in a united body and had won some of the best conditions in the country. After the raids and the formation of the IUE, electrical workers were stripped of their most important weapon, unity. The IUE locals lost many of the former UE provisions, and slowly, during the 50's, electrical workers fell economically far behind workers in auto and steel.

The costs of division are seen most clearly at GE where the employers have consistently taken the most hardline negotiating position. GE's take-it-or-leave-it habit at contract time, known as "Boulwarism" is made possible by trade union disunity and the isolation of militant leadership.

Class conscious workers must stand firm against any attempts to whip the working class into the hysteria of anti-communism. Not only can we not afford to have our ranks broken by mistrust and internal harassment, but we also cannot afford to lose the leadership of Communist workers, who offer to the working class the most consistent program for the development of the workers' movement.

Reprinted from On Trade Unions and the Rank and File Movement, reprints from The Organizer, Philadelphia Workers' Organizing Committee; available at Unity Books, \$1.00.

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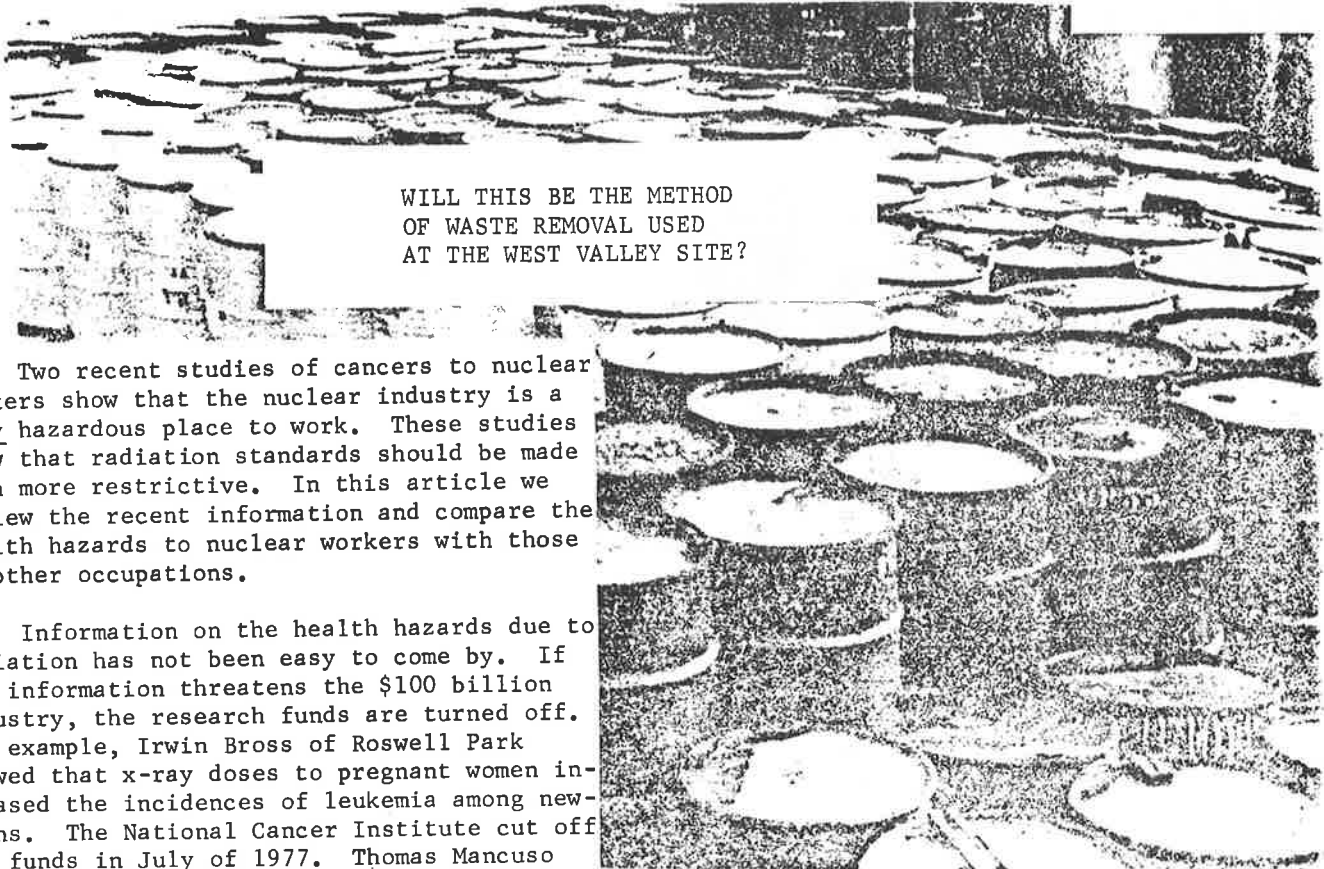
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CANCER IN THE NUCLEAR INDUSTRY



WILL THIS BE THE METHOD
OF WASTE REMOVAL USED
AT THE WEST VALLEY SITE?

Two recent studies of cancers to nuclear workers show that the nuclear industry is a very hazardous place to work. These studies show that radiation standards should be made much more restrictive. In this article we review the recent information and compare the health hazards to nuclear workers with those in other occupations.

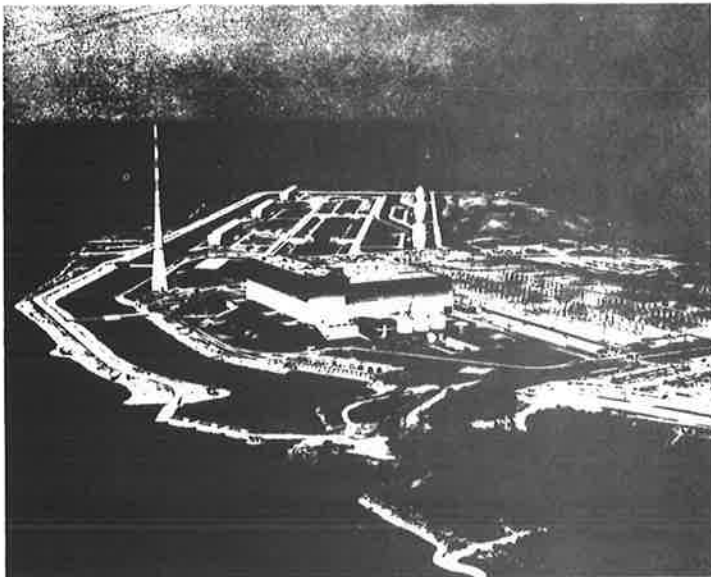
Information on the health hazards due to radiation has not been easy to come by. If the information threatens the \$100 billion industry, the research funds are turned off. For example, Irwin Bross of Roswell Park showed that x-ray doses to pregnant women increased the incidences of leukemia among newborns. The National Cancer Institute cut off his funds in July of 1977. Thomas Mancuso showed increased incidences of cancer to nuclear workers at the government defense plant in Hanford, Washington (T.F. Mancuso, et al, Health Physics 33, p. 369 (1977), hereafter called the "Mancuso Report"). His Department of Energy grant was cut off in July of 1977. The latest report of cancers among nuclear workers at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyards in New Hampshire by Thomas Najarian of the Boston VA Hospital was recently written up in the Boston Globe. Many more cancers were observed than were predicted by the nuclear industry. Najarian still has his job, but there's hardly time yet to give him 30 days notice.

how radiation effects us

What is radiation? How does it affect humans? Radiation Takes two forms; either high-speed atomic particles or electromagnetic radiation, which is similar to light and TV signals. It is colorless and tasteless and cannot be detected by our senses. When radiation hits us, cells are deranged. Cells may

begin to multiply, may die, or may be repaired by the body. The more radiation which strikes a person, the more likely it is that a cancer or a genetic effect (birth defect, leukemia, spontaneous abortion) will occur. Unlike most chemicals, there does not appear to be a lower threshold level for radiation damage. Even a small amount of radiation increases the probability that a cancer or genetic effect will occur. We are subject to a daily bombardment of background radiation which comes from natural causes and bomb tests. This amount is equal to 0.125 units of radiation damage to tissues, which is called 0.125 rems. In comparison, a tooth x-ray is 0.045 rems, a chest x-ray 0.5 rems. The allowable yearly radiation dose to nuclear workers is 5.0 rems, or 40 times the background radiation dose. Of course, the radiation that nuclear workers receive on the job is in addition to x-rays and background.





The Tennessee Valley Authority's Brown's Ferry plant is the largest electric generator in the United States. A 1975 fire at this northern Alabama facility nearly caused a catastrophic nuclear accident. The resulting 17-month outage cost TVA consumers \$240 million - mostly for replacement power.

won't know exactly how serious these results are until we know how much radiation dose was received by the shipyard workers. Under Congressional pressure, the Navy has just turned over the radiation records to the Center for Disease Control, and they are now being analyzed.

comparison with other industries

To compare the hazard of the nuclear industry with other industries, we have listed the yearly fatality rates in the table below. The table assumes a cancer rate given by the industry and therefore underestimates the hazard to nuclear workers by a factor of 10 to 100. As the table shows, the nuclear industry is the second most hazardous industry, next to mining. With the Mancuso results, the nuclear would be the most hazardous.

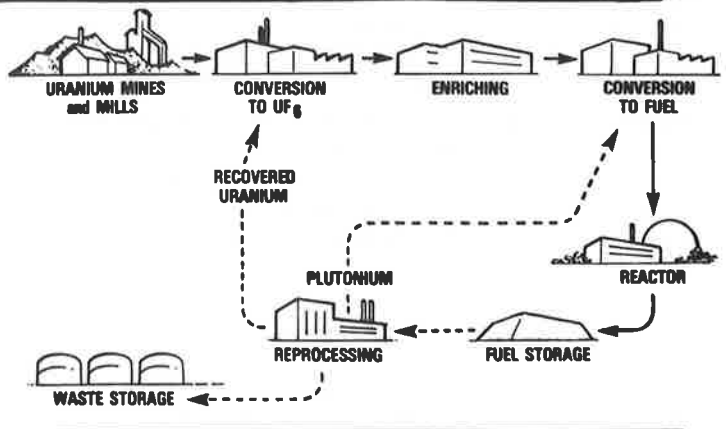
new research exposes dangers

The last time standards for radiation doses to workers were set was in 1959 - before the radiation studies had been performed. The Mancuso Report is the first comprehensive study of occupational hazards in the nuclear industry. Over 30,000 nuclear workers were followed for a 29-year period in the study. Even though the average dose to nuclear workers at Hanford was only about one to three times background radiation, the results showed a startling 26% increase in cancers over the national average. These results are 10 to 100 times greater than previous industry predictions. As one example of what these numbers mean to nuclear workers, the Mancuso Report predicts 8 additional cancer deaths for each 1,000 rems exposure. A large nuclear reactor exposes nuclear workers to 1,000 rems yearly. Therefore, the Mancuso Report predicts 8 additional cancers for each year's operation of a large nuclear reactor. There are also deaths due to mining uranium and handling nuclear wastes which must be added in to exposure and death figures.

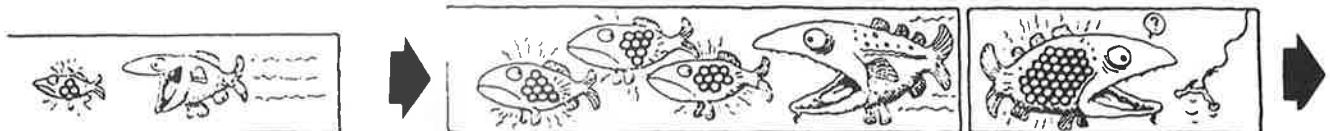
As bad as the predictions of the Mancuso Report are, the actual results at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard are even worse. Cancer rates there are twice the national average. While nationally about 18% of deaths are cancer-related, at the shipyard 38.4% of the deaths to nuclear workers were caused by cancer. We

TABLE. FATALITY RATE BY OCCUPATION

Occupation	Yearly Fatality Rate
Radiation worker	1 in 1000 to 1 in 2600 ^a
United States (1973) ^b All industries	1 in 6000
Mining & Quarrying ^c	1 in 800
England & Wales ^d : all Occupations (males)	1 in 5000 to 1 in 10000



URANIUM

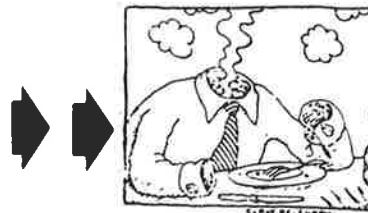
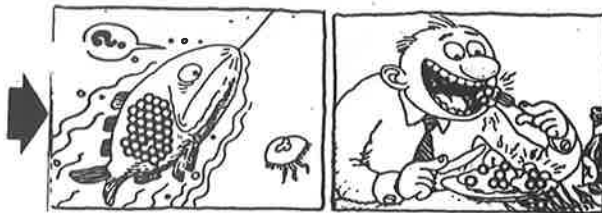


the government's role

Despite such facts, government agencies have traditionally dragged their feet when dealing with occupational radiation exposure. For example, it took 20 years before the Atomic Energy Commission enforced ventilation standards in U.S. uranium mines. This came only after considerable evidence was presented relating uranium mining and cancer rates suffered by the miners. A Public Health Service study found radiation levels in U.S. mines from 20 to 230 times greater than internationally accepted levels. A former administrator of the agency estimated that, "Of the 6000 men who have been uranium miners...600 to 1100 will die of lung cancer in the next 20 years because of radioactive exposure on the job."

The U.S. government is a major user of nuclear materials, particularly the Defense Department. The Atomic Energy Commission has traditionally served as the government's promotor of nuclear energy and nuclear technology. The \$100 billion nuclear industry is well represented in these and other related government agencies. It follows from this that the Department of Energy and National Cancer Institute would cut funds for research which is threatening to their interests. However, labor unions, community groups and other organizations have been pressuring the government and corporations to clean up their acts. It will be through this pressure that the hazards are eliminated.

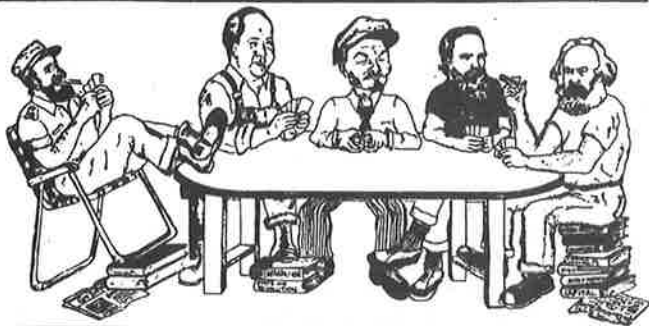
With the operation of 250 large nuclear plants as proposed by President Carter, the annual generation of long-lived radioactive wastes would be the equivalent of more than 5,000 megatons of nuclear fission bombs. By comparison, all U.S., U.K., & USSR atmospheric testing amounted to 250 megatons--and this alone led to thousands of stillbirths and infant deaths.



NOTES

- ^a Due to cancer induced by worker whole body exposure at 5 rem/year.
- ^b National Safety Council, Accident Facts, 1974 Edition, p. 23.
- ^c A Time to Choose, Energy Policy Project of the Ford Foundation, Ballinger Publishing Co., 1974, p. 183, Table 35. The yearly injury rate in coal mining is 1 in 8.
- ^d Decennial Supplement for England and Wales, Registrar General's 1949-1953. Occupational mortality. Part II, Vol. 2 HMSO London (1958) as referenced in ICRP Publication 8, p. 60.





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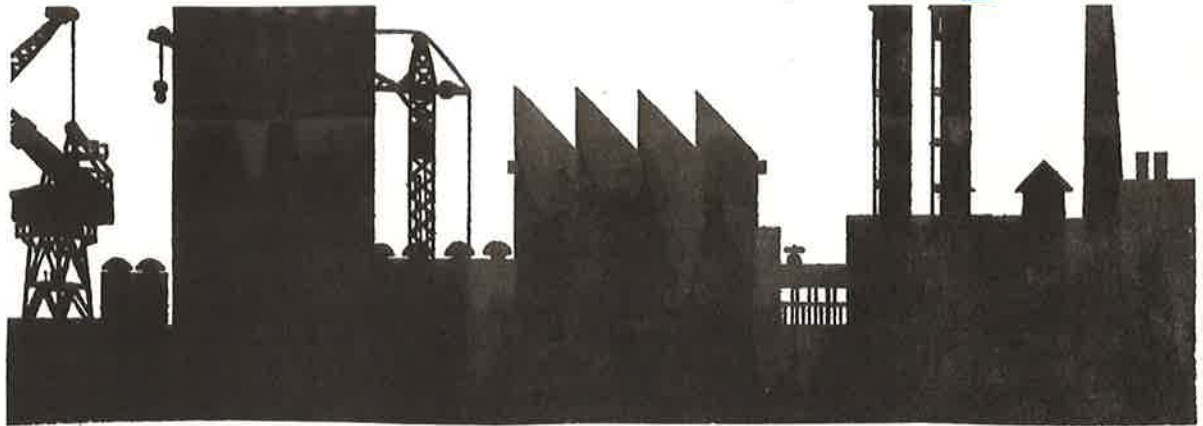
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★ FROM THE NEWSLETTER OF BUFFALO WORKERS MOVEMENT

★INSIDE★

Labor History in Buffalo
The Coal Strike: Our View
History of May Day
Health and Safety
Labor Notes

Introducing the Labor Round-Up

The Labor Round-Up is a bi-monthly feature of news and commentary on the struggle of Buffalo's working people. This column is produced by a joint effort of the Buffalo Workers' Movement and worker correspondents who are either in the shops or by friends who are close to the shop struggle. We want to utilize our resources and through a unified effort stimulate and strengthen the growing militancy of our rank and file movement in the workplace.

We think that the bulk of the trade unions in the U.S. have to be rebuilt from the bottom up. At present, they are dominated by bureaucrats who do not fight for the needs of their members, but instead co-operate with big business, the bosses and government to stifle labor militancy. Labor mis-leaders such as Meany, Fitzsimmons, Lloyd McBride and locally George Wessel are typical of these business unionists. Their weak-kneed, collaborationist approach to trade unionism is the reason why our unions

are in the deplorable condition they are today losing membership with only 23% of all workers organized. Women and minorities face discrimination and are forced to take the lowest paying jobs daily without an adequate response from our unions. Unemployment for these sectors are in the double figures. Speed-ups, forced overtime, lay-offs, runaway shops, declining wages, coupled with rampant inflation are the order of the day, and the "misleaders" sit on their hands and "hope" for a change in the economy, channeling labor's militancy into endless lobbying efforts, pressuring politicians who are controlled by the wealthy in the U.S. We think that this approach to struggle within the trade union movement has to change, and it's up to us militants in the shops to do it. This sorry situation in our movement has brought us to the state we're in. We can't even defend our basic livelihood, as well as take the offensive against the forces of capital. We have to remember that monied

interests in our country are united in their efforts to take as much from our labor in the form of profits as possible. It is for this reason that we work for a united workers' movement that has as its foundation strong and fighting trade unions.

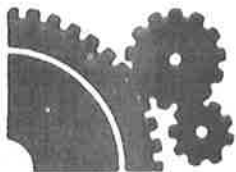
We work to build a strong trade union movement. The trade unions that we work in are our major organizations of defense from the onslaughts of the current economic crisis. But they should not be limited to the position of purely defensive organizations. They must be forged into instruments that take the offensive - that not only fight for our day-to-day interests - they have to fight for our futures. To do this, we must fight class against class, that is the interests of working people versus the interests of corporate bosses. Then we will build a trade union movement that fights in the real interests of all working people. The thrust of our fight has to be

aimed directly at the capitalist class for us to win. But to achieve class struggle unionism, we have to rid ourselves of the excess baggage of labor bureaucrats, racism, sexism and collaborationist trade unionism.

We present this round-up to you from this class point of view - the view of the working class. We see our tasks as getting news and information about working people in Buffalo as a way to help unify and focus the struggles of working people in this city. We will utilize our newsletter for these purposes. We encourage your responses and input.

Drop in and see us at our storefront at 426 Grant Street. We are open weekdays from 6 to 9 p.m., and our phone number is 882-8232. If you have an article that you would like to put in the labor round-up, contact us or send it to: Buffalo Workers' Movement, P.O. Box 6, Station G, Buffalo, New York 14213.

Letters to BWM



The Editorial Board encourages letters and comments from our readers. Material will be kept confidential and reprinted by agreement of the author (s) and the Editorial Board. We ask that letters be typed or neatly printed, double spaced and kept to 250 words or less. KEEP THOSE LETTERS COMING.

Following is an excerpt from one of the letters we received this month:

People -

We've been receiving your newsletter for a long time.... We started to take an interest together sometime in 1974, but somehow got buried in a house and babies...I wanted to thank you for keeping us on your mailing list. I really look forward to the newsletter - buried here in diapers for 4 years has kept me completely unaware of what's happening outside my front door. It's nice to know there are still real people out there trying.

Name withheld

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BUFFALO LABOR

A HISTORY OF MILITANT STRUGGLE



1877

Buffalo, a railroad boomtown, is paralyzed by the nationwide Great Railroad strike. 3,000 state militia and 1,000 police and deputized civilians are called out to break the strike. There are gun battles with both strikers and police being shot. The strike is finally broken, but the local militia is so sympathetic to the strikers that it is ineffective. The Connecticut Street Armory stands as a monument to the strike as militia units are reorganized statewide with armories in each city to suppress "civil disturbances."

1892

The Buffalo Switchmens strike. 8,000 troops are called out nationally to break the strike. Its loss provides the impetus for the formation of the American Railway Union led by Eugene Debs. The ARU was the first union organized along industrial lines in the U.S.

1906

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) leads the strike of Buffalo Tailors.

1920

Again the Buffalo Switchmen strike and again the police and militia come in - this time with the addition of 500 professional strikebreakers. Many of the workers lived in Cold Springs and on Masten Street where mounted city police were seen riding their horses right through the rooms of strikers' houses to terrorize their families. The actions of the police and strikebreakers so radicalized and embittered the workers that, 16 years later, it was possible to go door to door on Masten Street and recruit volunteers to fight fascism in the Spanish Civil War.



1930

Hundreds of unemployed workers crowd the Masten Armory to demonstrate for unemployment insurance and relief. It was one of dozens of demonstrations and rallies, involving over a million and a half people, led by the Communist Party across the country.

1934

A 1,500 person car caravan goes from Buffalo to Albany to demonstrate for unemployment insurance and relief. They are met at a bridge outside Albany by police and troopers and refused entry into the city. A 5 hour battle with the police ensues and the people are turned back. They camp by the road and meet in war councils and the next day march into Albany.

1936

When public works projects are threatened by a bill in Congress, an overflow crowd of 14,000 people pack the Broadway Auditorium to demand its defeat. Similar actions take place nationwide and the bill is defeated.

1937

The CIO comes to Buffalo. The Chevrolet plant on Delevan Ave. is the first plant in the area organized by them.

1937

Sparked by the cutoff of public assistance to one family and the possibility of cutoffs to

41,000 more people, two huge marches from Riverside and the East side converge in Niagara Square. After a pitched battle with police, they occupy most of the floors of City Hall for 3 days. The cutoff measure is defeated.

1938

13,000 steelworkers strike Bethlehem Steel's Lackawanna plant demanding union recognition. Members of 65 local unions of the CIO, as well as many members of the AFL, join the picket lines. They fight the police for a day and a half before both the police and the company give up. Not only was this the first time Bethlehem Steel had ever yielded to a strike, it is the first strike victory in any major plant of the steel industry.

WE MAKE THIS COUNTRY GO

Buffalo's working people, like the whole of the U.S. working class, have a long and proud history of militant struggles. It is a history not taught in public schools and mostly hidden from working people - a history untold. Instead we hear of the "philanthropy" of Seymour Knox and get the greatest hits of the Catholic hierarchy and a list of Buffalo's "important" people, buildings and presidential visits. Our lives are divorced from the struggles of our parents to work and survive and



ed Press International, Inc., photo.

make a living in the Queen City of the Great Lakes.

The elementary fact that working people's labor - the motor force of class struggle - produces everything we rely on to survive is shuffled under the rug by ruling class historians and liberal apologists. Because of this, we find it difficult to learn and assess our roots as working people. The Buffalo Workers Movement thinks it important that we understand our history and be proud of it; that we nourish our children's minds with it and enrich our own understanding of class, history and struggle.

Just because the tube tells us our lives will change if we smoke the right cigarette and drive the right car and use the right cogné, most of us are going to be working stiffs all of our lives. But we are what makes this country go - and as a class, we've had to fight for everything we get. The only things workers ever get for nothing are tax forms, headaches and lay-off slips. Because our history is denied us, we take a lot of things, like unemployment insurance and unions, for granted. These things only came about by hard work and harder struggles, by organizing and winning victories and by learning from defeat.

If we know our history, we can develop alliances and unity accordingly based on our grasp of our position in society as a class which has to struggle to survive and organize and fight to advance. This is the fundamental reason why working class history isn't taught to us - why "great" leaders get all the credit. Ruling class history glosses over class differences and ignores ideology in order to impose the ideas of the capitalist class on the exploited and oppressed majority of the people.

It is our task as progressives and socialists to bring this materialist conception of history to the struggles we participate in, to deepen our understanding of these struggles and to instill class consciousness in all working people. In future issues we will discuss the very real gaps in our knowledge and try to increase our understanding of where we have been and where we are going.



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finished
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Over whom
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He alone?
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by Bertolt Brecht

(Brecht was a German poet and communist who was active in the anti-fascist fight against Hitler in the 1930's. Exiled from his home, he lived in the U.S. until his death in 1958.)



HISTORY OF MAY DAY

May Day - May 1st - is the day when millions of working people throughout the world demonstrate their class solidarity. In Rome, London and Madrid, thousands march in the streets. In Havana, Peking and Moscow, hundreds of thousands rally to celebrate this day dedicated to workers. Yet in the U.S. not many people know about May Day. Most unions don't even mention it. The government has declared May 1st "Law Day" and more recently "Loyalty Day". At one time May Day was widely celebrated in the U.S. - in fact May Day was born here.

the 8 hour day movement

The year was 1886. The demand - an 8 hour workday with no reduction in pay. The movement for an 8 hour day had been building for some time and was now coming to a head. The focal point - Chicago, home of such big capitalists as Amour, Swift and McCormick. During March, dozens of locals pledged to strike on May 1st for the 8 hour day. In early April, 35,000 stockyard workers voted to join the walkout. On April 17, 21,000 workers held a militant mass meeting called by the Knights of Labor. A second rally 8 days later drew 25,000. By the end of April, 62,000 Chicago workers were prepared to strike for the shorter work day, 25,000 would support the demand but not strike and another 20,000 had already won the shorter day by threatening to strike.

May 1st Came. 30,000 workers marched through the streets of Chicago with 80,000 walking off their jobs. In New York, 20,000 rallied in Union Square. Across the country, 340,000 workers took to the streets to demand the 8 hour day. (Today this would be equivalent to more than 1½ million.) Over 190,000 went out on strike.

the Haymarket massacre

This militant show of strength and unity was met with increased repression in an effort to crush the labor movement. These stepped-up attacks were sparked on May 4th. As a rally of 3,000 workers in Chicago's Haymarket Square was breaking up, it was attacked by 180 riot police. Someone, most likely a paid agent, threw a bomb at the police and they opened fire on the workers. Over 10 were killed and hundreds more injured. The Haymarket Massacre set off a reign of terror against the labor movement. Although the real bomber was never found, 8 Chicago labor leaders were railroaded for the incident. Some weren't even at the

scene. 4 were executed and the rest recieved life sentences. (These were later pardoned by the Illinois governor who admitted that the trial was a blatant frame-up.)

Across the country labor leaders were rounded up, beaten and jailed. Union offices were ransacked and labor presses smashed. Laws were passed to curtail labor activity and the courts began to convict union members en-mass on trumped-up charges of conspiracy, intimidation and rioting. Employers, taking advantage of the situation, instituted widespread anti-union campaigns with Pinkerton detectives, lockouts, blacklists and yellow-dog contracts as their chief weapons.

international solidarity

Despite these setbacks the American labor movement was able to regroup and carry forward the call for the 8 hour day. In 1888, the new American Federation of Labor voted to continue the 8 hour movement, setting May 1, 1890 as the time for action. In 1889, labor leaders from around the world met in Paris to form an international association of working people. In view of the U.S. labor struggle, they voted to support the 8 hour day fight and designated May 1, 1890 as a day of international solidarity among workers. From that time on, workers throughout the world have celebrated May Day - the day born out of the struggles of the U.S. working class for the 8 hour day.

(Primary source: Labor's Untold Story by R. Boyer & H. Morais)



Peg Averill, LNS

HEALTH AND SAFETY

UPDATE

TEXACO FINED \$228,700 FOR SAFETY VIOLATIONS

Texaco, the giant oil corporation, has been fined a record-breaking \$228,700 by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. OSHA found Texaco guilty for a series of "willful and serious violations" of its workers' safety and health on the job. The fines are the result of the first step of a four-phase investigations of Texaco's refinery in Port Arthur, Texas.

In March, 1977 an explosion and fire at that refinery killed 8 workers and hospitalized 14 others. Texaco, of course, has challenged the fines and slick legal maneuvering is sure to follow.

The fines come in part as a result of pressures put on OSHA by the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW). They have been pushing OSHA to get rid of "incompetent" pro-company bureaucrats who are "consistently weak in enforcing the law, particularly health standards, and specifically against large corporations".

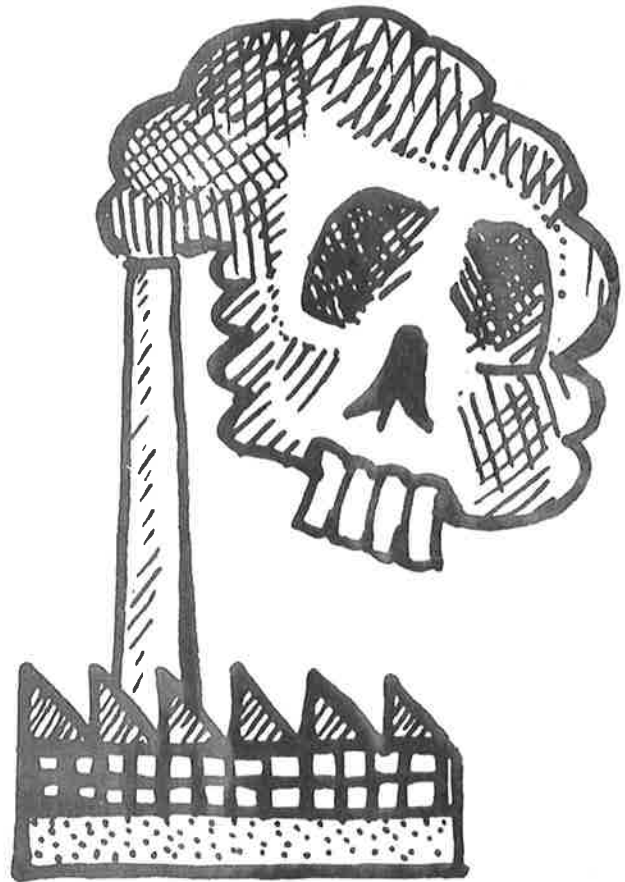
OSHA Houston area director Gerald Baty acknowledged that OSHA is conducting investigations of other Gulf Coast refineries, largely as the result of complaints filed by workers.

OSHA RAISES BENZENE EXPOSURE LIMITS

Benzene causes leukemia - cancer of the blood. Because of pressures from unions like the United Rubber Workers and the OCAW, The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has set new limits on the amount of benzene a worker may be exposed to on the job. The new limit calls for an averaged 8 hour level of no more than 1 part benzene per million parts of air (1 ppm). The absolute maximum exposure level has been set at 5 ppm. The previous limits were 10 ppm and 50 ppm respectively.

The new limits affect approximately 600,000 workers in over 150,000 workplaces. Last year 11 billion pounds of benzene were produced in the U.S. to be used in the manufacture of plastics, resins, drugs, disinfectants, fuels and various other products.

Meanwhile, the American Petroleum Institute, the National Petroleum Refiners Association and most of the big oil corporations have protested that the new standards are "far too rigid and unnecessary". They've hired a battery of expensive lawyers to fight OSHA in court rather than pay the money to clean up their operations.



OSHA UNDER RIGHT-WING ATTACK

The Supreme Court heard Arguments Jan. 9 on a case that could gut the already limited powers of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The case was filed by an Idaho business man and John Birch Society member who blocked an inspection of his plant by OSHA on the grounds that the agency had no search warrant.

Under the 1970 law that created OSHA, job safety inspectors were given the right to make unannounced inspections of suspected dangerous workplaces. If the court decides that OSHA must have a warrant for every inspection, job safety advocates say it would be impossible to enforce already weak job safety regulations.

A ruling calling for search warrants would cripple other regulatory agencies of the government as well, which similarly make inspections of have the power to subpoena company documents.

(sources: Chemical Week, 4/15/78; Plant Engineering 4/16/78; Guardian)

LABOR NOTES

WAGES - LESS IN 1977

Major industry contracts negotiated in 1977 won less money than the year before, the Labor Department reported in February. Union contracts in 1977 won an average increase of 5.8% as compared to 6.4% in 1976. The excludes possible gains from cost-of-living clauses. When these are figured in, presuming 7% inflation, the gains average out to 7.8% per year. Thus, the major contracts negotiated in 1977 will leave the rank-and-file worker with only a 0.8% gain in real wages. These figures do not include non-union workers, whose real income fell last year. The 1977 contracts continue a downward wage trend that began with the onset of the recession in 1975.

(source: Guardian, 2/22/78)



RACISM IN RETIREMENT

The average black worker receives half the Social Security benefits of a white worker, according to figures released by the Social Security Administration. Their study asserts that of those workers who retired between 1968 and 1970, twice as many blacks got the minimum retirement benefit. The report says that "Discrimination on the job in the form of lower pay, follows the black worker into retirement." (Pay rates are the basis of a worker's Social Security benefits.) 42% of black women received the minimum benefit of \$120 a month compared to 22% of white women and 2% of white men. In addition, only 2% of black women workers get pension benefits from their jobs.

(source: Guardian, 3/8/78)

STRIKES - FEWER BUT LONGER IN 1977

The number of strikes last year was less than in 1976, but there was a sharp increase in their duration - particularly in heavy industries. A Labor Department report shows 5,600 strikes and lockouts involving 2.3 million workers in 1977. This is a slight decline

from 1976. However, in 1976 most strikes were settled in one day. In 1977, the largest portion of strikes lasted 30 to 59 days. This reflects the especially hard fought strikes in coal and iron-ore. Of the 16 major strikes, these two sectors accounted for the most workers and longest walkouts, followed by aerospace, copper mining, construction and longshore. Most strikes (56%) were over wages. But walkouts over working conditions, particularly speed-ups, accounted for 22%. Some 47% of all strikes were in the manufacturing sector, 17% in mining, 8% in construction and 28% in the service sector.

(source: Guardian, 2/22/78)
BOSSES ORGANIZING TO BUST UNIONS

The National Association of Manufacturers has created a front group called the Council on Union Free Environment. According to NAM, it is the "only single-purpose organization devoted to the maintenance of a union-free environment in the U.S." NAM says the council is designed to "help employers develop and improve the abilities to earn employee loyalty and support." In other words, to find more sophisticated ways of putting the screws to workers while wearing a mask of sincere benevolence and concern.

(source: Courier Express, 4/2/78)



"So long, partner!"

UNION SAYS 'NOT FOR NAZIS'

The largest local in the UAW - the United Auto Workers - initiated a broad-based coalition to shut down a Nazi bookstore in a Detroit working class neighborhood. Local 600 took the lead in founding the Joint Committee for Community Action, made up of labor, civil rights and community groups. The theme of the anti-Nazi campaign is that there is no free speech for Nazis. The Committee's petition drive called for the Nazi's eviction and supported the setting up of a counter-bookstore. The Committee will now use the storefront to hold special classes on the dangers of Nazism and fascism.

(source: Guardian, 3/8/78)

MINERS' STRIKE BATTLES

THE COAL OPERATORS

The Coal Operators Want a Strike

The coal operators' plan was to completely defeat the union by way of a long strike, and force them to give up the job rights and benefits that the miners had won over the past 30 years of struggle. The Wall Street Journal in Nov. 1976, reported that "coal analysts" believed it would "take a supply-curtailling coal miners' strike... widely expected in December of 1977" to help "strengthen prices materially." The coal operators were not satisfied with their profits which had escalated from 39 cents per ton in 1970 to \$3.25 per ton after the energy crisis. The coal operators wanted to reduce the union, already divided internally, to a collaborating rubber stamp for their coal policies. During the early negotiations, they demanded the power to fire, fine and suspend union safety committeemen, and any miners who would act against the unsafe conditions. The coal operators wanted to dismantle the health and benefits package that was partially union-run. Finally, the coal companies' long term goal was to "discipline the laboring miner" to destroy the industry-wide solidarity of the miners and to reduce the miner to a dependent, defenseless worker from the hill country.

The Miners' Vote is a Divided House

On March 26, the coal miners voted 57% to 43% to accept a contract that represented a setback for the miners' struggle. They get a decent wage increase (\$2.40 over 3 years, with no Cost of Living) a small pension increase, a partially dismantled health and benefit plan controlled by private industry and no right to strike over local safety and health conditions. But the miners stood firm and fought back the overall attacks by the companies and government to bust the union. When the union voted down the first agreed-on company proposal after 3 months on strike, they showed their established collective strength and stopped the union dismantlement strategy cold. When Carter instituted the law of the land by way of the Taft-Hartley back to work order, only 100 miners out of 160,000 striking miners showed up for work. The next day even fewer miners obeyed the order from the United States Government. With these actions, miners have shown us all how to stand together and refuse paper laws which only serve large, monopoly interests.

It's true that many miners were 'starved out' to accept this contract. With the strike beginning on December 7th, the 90 day due period in March of '78 for all loans and mortgages payments had caught many miners overextended financially. The coal operators knew this and used their stalling in negotiations to the advantage. The miners felt that with the present leadership in the negotiations, that the present contract was the best that they could get.



Peg Averill, LNS

WHO ARE THE COAL OPERATORS ?

The daily press gives us the impression that the Bituminous Coal Operators Assn. (BCOA) is an anonymous group of mine owners who have banded together to maintain a stronger front against the UMW, an international union. The national press also characterizes this band of owners as sometimes backward and unlike the rest of our more "progressive capitalists". Who are the coal operators?

In fact, most of the contract bargainers of BCOA are representatives of some of the most giant corporate enterprises in America. Out of the top 15 coal companies, only 3 are not owned by larger corporations engaged in some other type of basic capital production. These giants include steel, oil, and utility monopolies.

U.S. Steel and Bethlehem Steel are the sixth and seventh largest coal producers. Peabody Coal Company, the #1 coal producer, is owned by Kennecott Copper. Consolidation Coal, Island Creek Coal and Old BenCoal are all owned by oil companies. These oil companies each made 833% profit from their coal operations since 1970. One of these oil companies, Continental Oil, also interlocks with Tenneco Oil which controls National Fuel Gas here in the Northeast. If what we have experienced here locally with Bethlehem's gross inefficiencies and layoffs and National Fuel Gas's rate increases, then we can only conclude that the BCOA must be in the same bag: NFG. Power and Utility corporations like Duke Power and Georgia Power (Which also owns Southern Coal Company) also dominate the ownership lists of the coal mines. It is in their direct immediate profit interests to keep the miners non-union and the mines unsafe.

Nationwide Support for the Miners

Solidarity was raised in the union movement in support of the striking miners as never before in recent union history. The food, clothing and dollar bills from trade unionists began to re-cement the ties with working people across industrial divisions. Workers raised thousands of dollars, tons of food and clothing in the name of the just contract demands of the miners and in support of their fight against a crucial sector of capital-the energy monopolies. As soon as Carter inserted the state machinery into the miners and owners conflict, the striking farmers-many who are on the verge of bankruptcy-also threw their lot in with the miners. This served to horrify those who would lose the most by a re-creation of a farmers-workers alliance in this country. Farmers trucked the food from the southern states into the Kentucky back hill country where miners had not received as much material support as those closer to the Norther Industrial unions in Pennsylvania, W. Virginia and Ohio. The following is a listing of some of the actions of solidarity in support of the miners: (some of this information is supplied to us by the The Organizer)

***PITTSBURG: Over 400 working people came together for the Union Bowl, a marathon football contest. The event raised over \$1000 for the strikers.

***BUFFALO: Over 6.5 tons of food were collected

by local UAW and Teamster unions to send into the Pittsburg district area of the UMWA. This amount of food is said to be one of the largest from any one industrial town. Other Buffalo events included the Little Flags Theater performance where over \$700 for the Stearns miners was raised by the Students of UB. The Women United for Action sponsored two women from Stearns and \$600 for the striking miners. The National United Workers Organization raised over \$100 for the Miners' Right to Strike Committee, when miners spoke at the Anaconda Union Hall. The Buffalo Workers Movement also raised over \$100 for Stearns' miners when they sponsored the film, "Harlen County, USA."

***INTERNATIONAL UNIONS: The UAW gave two million dollars to the UMWA emergency relief funds. The United Electrical Workers, The Intrn. Union of Electrical Workers, The United Steel Workers, and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers also gave substantial funds to the miners.

***A Black Steelworkers social club in Baltimore held a disco to raise money. Francis Brown, of USW Local 2610, announced he was going to West Virginia because, "I don't think we should allow the coal miners' wives and kids to be starved out by the top people in this country...I've always been scared of hillbillies, but I'm going to West Virginia to help those hillbillies out, so that union busting won't wind up in the ghetto"



Marchers gather in front of Latrobe Steel for Labor Solidarity Rally organized by USW Local 1637 Executive Board and the Committee of Concerned Unionists.

How the Miners Were Able to Fight Back

The miners have had a long tradition of struggle to build their union. Their hard-won experience dates back before the 30's and the fights at Bloody Harlen, Kentucky. A core of 50 union organizers from the coal fields were instrumental in helping build the steel workers union in the late thirties. In more recent times, the Miners for Democracy and the Black Lung Association have forced one of the most progressive union health plans on the coal operators, and their radification rights for approval of the contract serve as examples for all trade unionists. The miners' struggle for internal union democracy

won a significant step when the Tony Boyle forces were thrown out of office and Arnold Miller was carried in by the Miners for Democracy Movement, in 1972. Miller was forced by the Movement to make the district representatives more representative to the rank and file. It is this International Executive Board (made up of the district reps) that overwhelmingly voted down the first proposed contract by the Coal Operators and the Miller forces on the Bargaining Council. 17 of the 39 members of the Executive Board voted against the final offer and a number of district officers actively organized opposition against the narrowly accepted contract.

if it wasn't for the reforms in the UMW, these oppositional forces would have never been able to stop Miller's "Limousine Leadership." During the absence of organized rank and file movement within the last few years, Miller's collaboration with the coal bosses has substantially increased. It hasn't been only Miller's health that has declined in recent times, so has his class attitude. At the end of negotiations, Miller was forced to hide in his lawyer's office, afraid to talk with his own union members; he and the conservative forces within the union are more concerned about the union going broke than building their union through new membership from the Midwest and Western regions.

The UMWA is in a state of division and open struggle which is characteristic of the rank and file rebellions within the Teamsters, the Auto Workers and the Steel Workers. Fortunately the

UMWA has more internal democracy to mobilize another rank and file movement. The International Executive Board has elected members who represent some of the oppositional forces who, for example, just reassigned Lee Potter, an anti-Miller organizer, to Stearns Miners who are escalating their fight to win union recognition. But the key to struggle in the UMWA is the organizing of a rank and file organization, separate from the established Washington leadership, with their experience in the mines, and their knowledge of the necessity of a national strategy and movement to organize a fight. Miller is not the issue; nor will his removal by the process of union democracy really move things forward. The real issue is can the miners continue the beginnings of a trade union movement, a movement that we can all begin to build.

PRIMARY ISSUES IN THE STRIKE

1. Wildcat Strikes

The operators didn't get the power to suspend or fire wildcatting miners. Nor did they get the \$20 per day fine against miners who threaten, participate in or otherwise encourage wildcat strikes. What they did get is a clause making all old arbitration decisions part of the new contract, including the decision ARB 108 which states.. "any miners' action, including distribution of literature or a conversation that can be construed as advocating a strike, can be penalized by dismissal."

2. Wages

The contract grants a \$2.40 raise over the life of the agreement-37% according to the UMW. Based on the average hourly wage, however, Coal Patrol calculates that the actual increase would be 30%. The cost-of-living allowance is eliminated, so inflation will be cutting into the wage increase.

3. Health Benefits

This portion of the contract was the major setback of the agreement. The agreement dismantles the industry-wide health plan, partially administered by the union, enabling each company to set up separate plans. Miners would have to pay deductibles of up to \$200 per year for their drug and doctor bills. Not clear if miners moving from one company to another would transfer health benefits with them.

4. Safety

The agreement permits "production incentive plans" that district officials believe would create "extremely dangerous" safety conditions in the mines. The Safety Committees have a limited right to stop unsafe operations. Trainee periods, usually used to promote safety consciousness, was reduced from 90 to 45 days.

5. Pensions

Miners who retired before 1974 would receive a \$40 per month increase in their pension checks of \$250. No equalization with miners who retired after 1974, who receive \$470 per month.

6. Hours

The agreement permits work on Sunday.

7. Union and job Rights

The contract establishes 30 day probationary period-no union protection- for new employees.

8. Non-Union Mines

The agreement removes royalty on non-union preparation plants, thereby increasing the competitive advantage of non-union coal operators.

9. Right-to-Strike

The contract grants no local right to strike, as previously voted by the 1976 UMW Convention as the priority issue for this contract.

MASS MURDER IN THE COALFIELDS

Despite improvements in the miners health benefit plans since 1974, which is now being disabled by the new contract's private insurance clause, the basic cause of miners health problems--working conditions in the mines--is growing more hazardous. Last year, 141 men died in US coalmines and 14,000 were injured. The safety provisions, the union control of mine safety and health committees and the local right to strike over unsafe working conditions were not won in the latest miners' contract.

The National Safety Council's 1977 Accident Facts provides us with the unmistakable facts of life and death in the coalfields. Between 1906 and 1976, 91,662 miners lost their lives in the production of coal. Had these casualties occurred in a war, that war would have ranked **third** in the number of American deaths behind WWII (407,316) and WWI (116,708).

Miners have sustained more non-fatal injuries during a period of 46 years (1930 to 1976) than all the accumulated injuries from all the American involved wars. Miners received 1,647,999 injuries during the mentioned period compared to 1,580,000 US soldiers who were wounded. Yet the greater

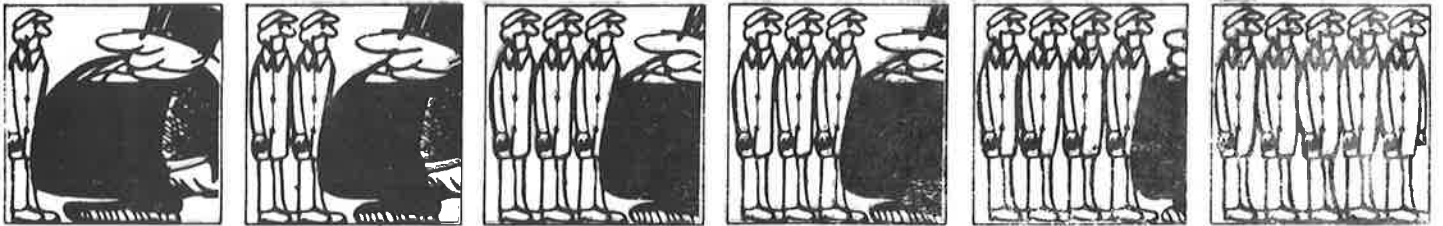
hazards in 'modern' coalmines are not even reflected in these accident and injury statistics.

The long term killer, Blacklung, produced by the inhalation of fine, abrasive coaldust is on the rise throughout the coalfields. The chief producer of this coal dust is the new mining equipment which is designed for speed and mass production of coal off the face of the seam (the 'face' is the front of the coal mine where most of the digging of new coal occurs). There was no consideration by the designers of these cutting machines of the miners who will have to breath the air. Most mine operators only keep the atmosphere inside a mine breathable when a Federal Mining Inspector calls in advance of his visit. Then, the owner only dusts the face and the belts with rock-dust (a material which adsorbs coal particles) in the one shaft that the inspector visits. Blacklung, the long-term strangler of coalminers, prematurely ends the life of many a pensioner. In all the public pronouncements during the bargaining sessions, Miller and his team did not once mention the extreme viciousness of these conditions which miners face daily and which the new contract should have rectified. The new contract does not force any changes in these working conditions.

WORKING PAPERS

If you are interested in the political activities of the BWM and our perspectives on such issues as women's oppression, trade unions, national oppression, party building and the international situation plus other major issues - our working papers are now published. At the present time we are only distributing them on a person to person basis; not through the mail. If you are interested write us: BWM, P.O. Box 6, Station G, Buffalo, N.Y. 14213 or call 882-8232, 6 to 9 pm weekdays. Give us your address and phone number and we will contact you.

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