OCT.-NOV.

lotion Forward Motion Forward Motion

1985 A MARXIST MAGAZINE

$2.50

LABOR STRUGGLE IN THE REAGAN ERA

irish republicanism today

Vol IV, No. 5 176 October-November 1985

Contents

Dear Friends,

This issue of *Forward Motion* reports on some bright spots on the somewhat gloomy landscape of the U.S. labor movement. They involve some victories of the last year, victories which, though largely local in scope, may have a wider impact.

For a generation, unions counted on their own internal strength or their authority as the voice of working people to wage strikes—win or lose—on their own terms. When this began to break down in the 1970s, organized labor began to resurrect the theme of coalition-building. But as expressed in major events like Solidarity Day 1981, coalition-building has largely stayed at the level of denouncing the Reagan administration or other common enemies. Positive, action-oriented agendas do not naturally flow from this, as subsequent events have shown and will not bring the desired revival to labor.

Unions are still trading jobs for peace or the environment and are still more comfortable with justice as a global political concern than as an immediate workplace goal. And unions are still finding themselves susceptible to isolation and blackmail by threats to relocate plants, reduce public services, and so on. In the last presidential election, labor leaders spent more time huffing and puffing for Mondale and his sterile politics of corporate

growth than anything else. It was Jesse Jackson who articulated for that election the goals of jobs and peace and justice. A lasting contribution of the Rainbow politics may be to open the door for new leaders in the Rainbow mold to restate and broaden the labor cause.

Yet a growing number of local labor struggles, including some of the work described in this FM also reflect something new, something hopeful for unions in this country—the joining of union work with other progressive community forces. Running through these articles are successful examples of work with Black, women's, environmental, farm and even local business organizations. Here are union slogans which *include* the goals of other progressive social movements instead of efforts to trade support after-the-fact. And collaboration is less that of leaders expressing mutual admiration on speakers' platforms, but geared to winning practical political battles at hand.

Also in this issue is an in-depth look at the state of the Irish republican movement. In an interview with FM, Irish journalist and political activist Michael Farrell discusses the background to a turn toward political (as opposed to politico-military struggle) in Northern Ireland today, a change possibly of great significance for the years ahead.

Three other articles also help make this a special issue. "Macho Nerds for Reagan" will have to speak for itself. In a short personal account, Gil Fagiani goes a long way toward rescuing the reputation of the Bronx, NY, from its use as a symbol of decay. And this issue's LocoMotion takes a close look at the LiveAid concerts. ●

Forward Motion is a magazine of socialist opinion and advocacy. Editorial responsibility for *Forward Motion* is exercised by the FM collective.

Forward Motion welcomes letters and articles. All items submitted for publication must be typed, double-spaced, and signed as you want your name to appear. At this time, all correspondence should be addressed: Forward Motion, P.O. Box 1884, Boston, MA 02130.

The editors will read all materials sent to us and, to the extent possible, acknowledge them and let you know their disposition. We cannot, however, be responsible for the return of manuscripts unless you also send us a self-addressed stamped envelope. Letters may be edited for space.

Industrial Disease
Why Everbody's Getting It

Film Recovery Systems: Death By Murder

Every year 117,000 workers in the United States die as a result of their jobs, or one worker every five minutes. One of the most widely publicized of these deaths in the news recently was that of Stefan Golab, a 61 year old Polish immigrant who died of acute cyanide poisoning on February 10, 1983. On June 14, 1985, in what is believed to be the first case in this country in which corporate officials were charged with first degree murder in the job-related death of a worker, the president, plant manager and plant foreman of Film Recovery Systems, the suburban Chicago firm where Golab had worked, were found guilty of murder. They were later each sentenced to 25 year prison terms.

It was proven that these company officials were fully aware of the life-threatening conditions present as cyanide was used to recover silver from photographic film. Yet they failed to inform workers of these hazards, provided inadequate protective equipment, and improperly stored and mislabeled barrels of toxic chemicals. Nearly 20 of the plant's former workers, many of whom, like Golab, neither read nor spoke English, testified that they became ill every day because of the chemical fumes, and had not been told that they were working with cyanide.

Attorneys for the company stated they were "shocked" at the outcome of the trial, describing their clients' convictions as "a major league matter." They will appeal, based on the premise that Illinois' murder statute was misapplied by the prosecution.

After the trial, newspaper headlines dutifully made optimistic predictions such as, "Chicago Case To Have Impact On Safety Of U.S. Workers." But as we will see from examining the recent conduct of two other corporations, Union Carbide and Johns-Manville,there is little basis for such pronouncements. Today corporate enterprise is unabashedly disregarding the public health, aided and abetted by the Reagan administration.

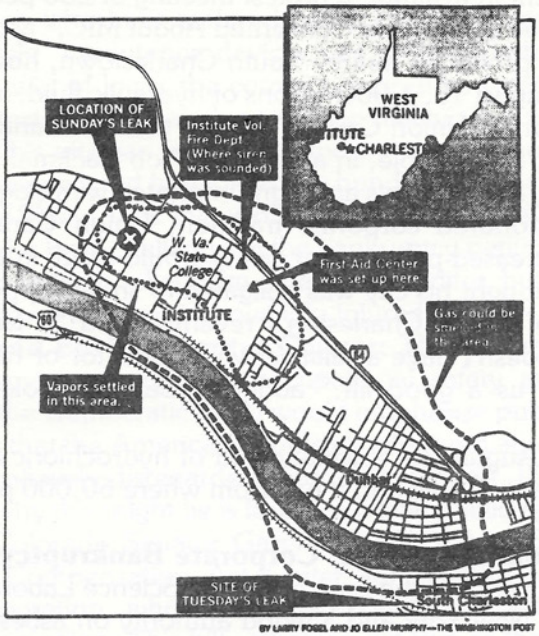
Film Recovery Systems closed its plant shortly following Stefan Golab's death after being fined approximately $4,000 by OSHA. But the debacle did not end with the death and injury of these workers. Some time later, 16 million pounds of cyanide-tainted film chips were discovered illegally dumped in various counties across Illinois, and to prevent injury to residents, these toxic sites had to be cleaned up by the state.

Union Carbide: Clouds

Since the worst industrial accident in history in Bhopal, India last December, in which at least 2500 people were killed by a leak of methyl isocyanate (MIC), Union Carbide's chemical operations in this country have come under closer scrutiny. A debate ensued over whether "it could happen here," in a curious way taking attention away from the fact that "it had already happened" to people in India. Union Carbide's

Institute, West Virginia pesticide plant, the only U.S. facility that produces MIC, was shut down after the Bhopal "incident," as it is now called. Five million dollars of additional safety equipment was installed to "make a safe unit safer," in the words of a company spokesman, and residents were reassured that in the event of an accident an alarm would warn them in time.

Nevertheless, on August 11 of this year the plant leaked a cloud of toxic chemicals, sending six workers and 136 nearby residents to hospitals with burning eyes, nausea, and breathing difficulties. Ten thousand people were warned to stay inside as a cloud of yellow gas passed over four counties of Kanawha Valley, West Virginia.



How did Union Carbide's vaunted alarm system work? The company admits delaying the alarm till 9:44 A.M., twenty minutes after the leak, which it said occurred at 9:24 A.M. However, residents of Institute reportedly began leaving their homes at 9:00 A.M. because of chemical odors. Rep. Robert Wise (D-W.Va.), who usually supports Union Carbide as one of his district's largest employers, said that the alarm was sounded only after local officials were alerted by nearby residents who awoke to choking fumes, not as a result of action by Union Carbide.

The chemicals in this leak included methylene chloride, a carcinogenic paint remover, and aldicarb oxime, which is combined with MIC to make the highly toxic pesticide Aldicarb. This was the pesticide found in watermelons in California this summer; over a million melons had to be destroyed after hundreds of people became ill.

The *Washington Post* described the Institute leak as "a serious public relations setback for Union Carbide." Indeed, the company could not very well blame this accident on "incompetent Indian managers" or "sabotage by Sikh terrorists." So it issued a statement about ruptured gaskets on a storage tank, and braced itself for another dip in its stock prices.

Activism in Institute

Events of August 11th provided a boost to community activism in Institute. Institute is an unincorporated town of 500 residents, named for the West Virginia Colored Institute, which became West Virginian State College in 1929. The town has no mail delivery and no sidewalks. There is only one two lane road to take people in and out of the area in the event of an emergency. Activists like 70 year old Institute resident Sylvia Parker have been trying to get Institute, along with two other mostly Black communities, incorporated. Union Carbide, presumably in an attempt to elude corporate responsibility, is opposing efforts to include its plant in the proposed new town.

Following the accident in Institute, a protest meeting of 250 people at West Virginia State College, sponsored by "People Concerned About MIC," accused Union Carbide of sacrificing safety for profits. In nearby South Charlestown, however, events took a different course. On August 13, 1,000 gallons of hydraulic fluid, isopropanol, and sulphuric acid leaked from the Union Carbide plant in that town and sickened eight people. Yet on August 17, 400 people, in a tribute to "job blackmail," marched in a "We Love Carbide" parade, sporting hats and signs imprinted with slogans in support of the company. In a time-honored corporate tradition, Union Carbide had apparently floated rumors that increased pressure for safety would result in a loss of jobs. Mayor Richie Robb said he thought his city was obligated to show support since Union Carbide provided 60% of South Charleston's revenue, and "it would be hard find a household here that doesn't have a relative who works for or has worked for Union Carbide." "This gives us a good lift," added a Carbide spokesman watching the parade.

Nine days later, on August 26, a white cloud of hydrochloric acid leaked from the South Charlestown plant, a mile and a half from where 60,000 people were gathered to hear a rock concert.

Johns-Manville: Corporate Bankruptcy

Dr. Irving Selikoff, director of the Environmental Science Laboratory of the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York and a world authority on asbestos disease, has predicted that, of 21 million living Americans who were exposed to asbestos on the job between 1940 and 1980, eight to ten thousand will die each year for the next 20 years from asbestos-related cancer. This tragedy need not have happened. But for 40 years the Johns-Manville corporation, along with other asbestos manufacturers and their insurers, in a highly calculated and systematic manner concealed their knowledge of the hazards of asbestos, lied to workers and their families about the workers' health, bought off lawyers and politicians, manipulated scientists, and poured huge sums of money into legal defense so that they could continue to profit from the deadly mineral. (Anyone interested in this history can read Paul Brodeur's four-part "Annals of Asbestos," in *The New Yorker*, June 10 through July 1, which tells this story in hair-raising detail.)

On August 26, 1982, Johns-Manville, with assets of over 2 billion dollars, made history by becoming the first financially healthy corporation to use the U.S. Bankruptcy Code to protect itself from "future economic ruin." This action stayed the 16,500 personal injury claims pending against Manville brought by asbestos-related sufferers and their families, a number that is expected to grow to 50,000 by the year 2000.

It is not hard to figure out the thinking behind the bankruptcy strategy. After being forced to compensate asbestos victims who won through their lawsuits an average of $388,000 each in the two preceding years, Johns-Manville hasn't paid out a dime to afflicted workers since August 26 of 1982. Now, by establishing a "trust fund" for asbestos victims, the company will be able to settle claims for far less than awards made by judges and juries who heard irrefutable evidence of Johns-Manville's monstrous actions and saw the agony and suffering of its victims.

Johns-Manville, in its successful use of the Bankruptcy Code has provided a model for corporations put-upon by troublesome lawsuits and consumer complaints. Thus, it was no surprise when A.H. Robbins Co., which has been hit with 14,300 lawsuits since 1982 by women who have suffered pelvic infections, sterility and miscarriages from its "Dalkon Shield" intrauterine device, filed for bankruptcy on August 21 of this year. In a malicious twist of logic, the company's president stated, "It is essential . . . that we move to protect the company's economic vitality against those who would destroy it for a few." (This after an in-house attorney revealed in court in 1984 that in 1975 company officials ordered him to destroy hundreds of documents concerning the safety of the Dalkon Shield.) As the attorney for the National Women's Health Network, which has filed a legal challenge to the bankruptcy petition pointed out, "This is not a genuine debtor seeking relief from a genuine creditor, but a company that is trying to be protected from women it knowingly injured."

Occupational and Environmental Cancer: The American Way of Life?

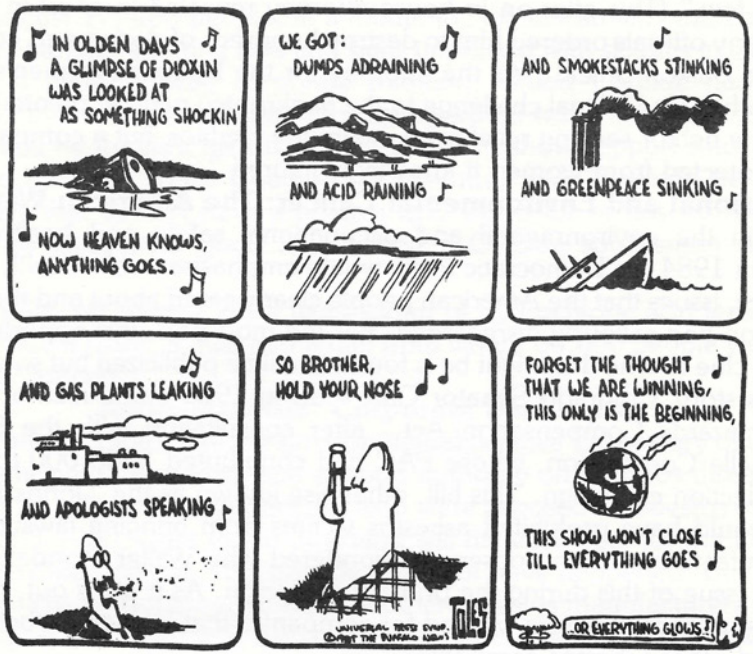
Activists in the environmental and occupational safety and health movements hoped that in 1984 the Democratic Party would emphasize public health and environmental issues, issues that the American people clearly cared about and that the Reagan administration had callously disregarded. For the most part, this opportunity was not seized. One clue to why this might be is found in a little publicized but sordid chapter of the asbestos story. Colorado Senator Gary Hart in 1980 introduced a bill called the "Asbestos Hazards Compensation Act," after consultation with the Denver-based Johns-Manville Corporation, whose PAC had contributed $408,000 to Hart's 1980 Senate re-election campaign. This bill, otherwise known as the "Johns-Manville Bail-out Bill," would have prohibited asbestos victims from bringing lawsuits against asbestos manufacturers. Some observers wondered why Walter Mondale didn't make much of an issue of this during the primary campaign. As it turns out, three of Mondale's closest political advisers worked for companies that lobbied on behalf of Johns-Manville and other asbestos companies.

The asbestos story will not end with those men and women who have been occupationally exposed to asbestos. Asbestos can be found in approximately 31,000 school buildings across the country (as well as 700,000 government, residential and commercial buildings), and cases of malignant mesothilioma, a disease almost always caused by inhaling asbestos, are beginning to surface among teachers, custodians, and former students whose presence in the schools was their only known exposure to the mineral. Asbestos manufacturers appear ready to fight property-damage claims brought by school systems as ruthlessly as they have workers' lawsuits.

In the wake of the accusations against all three of these companies—Film Recovery Systems, Union Carbide, and Johns-Manville—not only have there been attempts to

"blame the victim" in various ways, as in citing Stefan Golab's "heart attack," asbestos victims' "excessive cigarette smoking," or "overcrowding" near the Bhopal plant. There have also been consistent efforts to "blame the victims' attorneys."

In the Film Recovery Systems case, defense attorneys claimed that lawyers promised Golab's co-workers "monetary gain" if they would testify against the company. A great deal of hand-wringing went on over the "international ambulance chasers" who arrived on the scene in Bhopal to round up plaintiffs. (The fact is that in India, plaintiffs must pay a filing fee of up to 5% of damages they seek, an impossibility for the Bhopal victims, while the contingent fee system in the U.S. allows those of modest means to sue corporations.) Similarly, while the Johns-Manville court battles went on, many decried "the clogging of the courts," "our litigious society," and "overzealous attorneys," just at the time when juries were awarding huge sums of money, including punitive damages, against asbestos corportions to victims of asbestos disease.



Ideally, worker safety committees and community organizations should be a first line of defense against corporate poisoning, and they sould be nurtured by labor and environmental movements with political clout. But especially with only 19% of the labor force organized, and with occupational health and environmental protection off the national political agenda at the moment, lawsuits are a necessary tool in defending the public health. Tony Mazzochi of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union goes so far as to say:

> History shows that the lawsuit is the only adequate preventive measure against occupational and environmental cancer. Take away the lawsuit, replace it with a compensation schedule or some other administrative scheme, and you pave the way for cancer to become just another commodity to be costed out. The solution to the asbestos problem can then be applied across the board to future problems, such as the widespread contamination of the nation's drinking water supplies with cancer-producing chemicals. In this manner, you can institutionalize the occupational and environmental cancer as a way of life. *(Quoted in* The New Yorker, *8 1 85)*

Brodeur discusses another move to restrict the lawsuit. The Reagan administration is supporting a bill called the "Uniform Product Liability Act." Pressing for the bill is the Coalition for Uniform Product Liability and the Product Liability Alliance, described as "the most broadly-based coalition of business groups ever assembled to support a specific cause." This bill is designed to limit the legal rights of the 300,000 Americans disabled and 80,000 killed each year by product-related injuries. Such a law would solve many problems for corporations and insurers casting about for a way out of toxic-disease claims involving everything from DES and dioxin to nuclear power plant radiation and super-absorbent tampons. (The A.H. Robbins Co. of Dalkon Shield fame persuaded Senator Paul Tribe, (R-Va.), who had received PAC contributions of $130,000 from members of the Coalition for Uniform Product Liability and the Product Liability Alliance, to introduce an amendment to the bill limiting punitive damages that could be awarded against makers of defective products.)

In addition to such bald-faced maneuvers as the proposed Uniform Product Liability Act, the Reagan-era assault on public health is evident in the budgets and policies of OSHA and the Environmental Protection Agency. During the last five years OSHA has become almost totally pliant to corporate interests, and effective workplace inspections, improvements in standards and regulations, and worker education have gone by the wayside. Its budget for 1985 is $217.8 million, for an organization that is responsible for the health and safety of 45 million workers at three million workplaces.

Similarly, while American industry produces 300 million tons of hazardous waste every year, the federal EPA budget provides enough money to inspect each of the 16,000 confirmed hazardous waste sites once every 50 years.

Sadly, the murder convictions of Film Recovery Systems executives appear to be an aberration rather than a herald of a new era in worker safety. For the truth is, U.S. corporations are being given license to injure, poison and kill people, on the job and in their communities, and that is exactly what they are doing.

—J. Helmick

Hormel Meatpacking
Corporate Campaign With A Punch

Some great things are happening in the small midwestern town of Austin, MN (Population 26,000). Fifteen hundred workers at the Hormel meatpacking plant are drawing the line against the massive, ongoing concessions in the meatpacking industry.

Local P-9 of the United Food and Commerical Workers Union has been waging a fight for more than a year, mainly to restore a $2.44 wage cut imposed by the company without the union's consent. In late August P-9 went on strike. Previous wage concessions had helped to finance a brand new $100 million—and very profitable—Hormel plant in Austin in 1982. (This at the same time that two plants in Iowa were being closed down.) P-9's president, Jim Guyette, stated that the union did not intend to make any further concessions because of Hormel's healthy profit margin and because concessions are simply being used to finance further attacks on meatpackers. (For good background on P-9's fight and the state of the packing industry, see *In These Times* of 7/24 and 8/7/85.)

Last year the local brought in Ray Rogers, the architect of the campaign against J.P. Stevens, to lead a corporate campaign against Hormel. The first thing that P-9 did was to expand the target and go after Hormel's main financial backer, the First Bank. With assets of $85 billion and a strong interlocking relationship with Hormel, P-9 felt that it had to hit Hormel where it hurt. "What we had to do," said Guyette, "was to present the workers with a winning program, something that could get them excited. They certainly wanted to fight."

Wagging the Dog

Over the past year the local distributed well over 200,000 leaflets, and picket teams of hundreds of workers continue to travel around the Midwest passing the word about Hormel and First Bank. A measure of the union's success, the company just filed an unfair labor charge against the union, claiming it was conducting a secondary boycott against the bank. This was in response to massive pullouts of deposits from the bank—estimated at close to $100 million already. First Bank is the nation's 15th largest bank and Hormel a major corporate depositor. Guyette answers charges that the bank has no say in the matter by saying "The tail doesn't wag the dog."

The corporate campaign has consistently maintained a very strong rank and file nature to it and this has helped in making it so successful. In fact the local voted to fund the campaign through an extra fee paid by each member. The International (UFCW) lobbied against this proposal, which forced another vote in which the members again voted their overwhelming enthusiasm.

P-9 has developed a strategy that is distinct from the prevailing view in the International. The difference is so strong that the International has attacked the local's campaign as suicidal and damaging to the interests of other packinghouse workers. In the

face of steep competition and the rise of non-union outfits like IBP, wages have slid as low as $6 an hour and less in a few plants. The International argues that before anything else can be done, the wages at the bottom must be brought into conformity with the rest of the industry. Guyette and the local argued for a two-prong strategy that will stabilize wages at the top as well as boost the bottom up. Otherwise, Guyette argues, concessions gained at the top will only allow the big packers to continue busting unions and forcing wages down.

The International, which refused to back the corporate campaign, is officially supporting the strike. However most major unions appear to be sitting out the battle at the direction of the AFL-CIO leadership. This state of affairs is quite hard for P-9 to accept, but the local is undaunted.

Model of Democracy

The rank and file at Austin have run their own show all along, and many think that this is part of the reason that the International is hostile. "The key," says Guyette, "has been to provide leadership that combines democracy and participation with an informed membership." In fact, at one point in the campaign, the local had the International Vice President come and speak to the workers, but they were not swayed by his effort to get them to give up the campaign.

Guyette believes that too many union leaders are more interested in selling their packages to the workers than listening to their needs. He states, "If the membership ever voted down a contract I recommended, I wouldn't be offended at all. I'd just go back and do the job better." In preparation for the strike, and through the course of the campaign, not only were workers themselves actively involved, but so were many of their families. The local set up nine committees, ranging from Health & Safety, to Legal, to a committee of volunteer doctors, barbers, etc.

This strength and organization was obvious during the strike vote in August in which 93% of the workers voted to strike, even though Hormel had put out its final offer at $10.00 an hour.

United Front

P-9 has reached out very broadly among other workers, businesses and farmers for

support. Just recently about 500 Hormel workers picketted First Bank in Minneapolis where they were joined by a strong contingent of Twin City workers, farmers from Groundswell, and other community supporters. When the city of Austin recently ruled that the members could not draw benefits while they were on strike, a huge delivery of food was sent down to Austin for the families. Also, Hormel workers are making efforts to link up with other meatpacking workers, many of whose contracts expired by September 1st. This includes 2,500 workers at Morrell's in South Dakota who just went on strike in response to another wage cut proposal by the company that would have reduced wages to $8.00 an hour.

The fight going on at Hormel, win or lose, is having a major impact on the meatpacking industry. Over the past decade unions have generally taken one beating after another. The Hormel workers have decided to fight the battle on terms favorable to them instead of the company. As one meatcutter stated, "The company's attitude changed after the last pay cut. They used to respect us. Now if you look at my wrist and many others', and you will see recent scars from surgery due to tendinitis from constant, repetitive motions of the wrist. It gets so bad you can't move it."

As the proud P-9 members wear on their hats "Your Future and Mine." This is what the fight is all about. ●

Black and Hispanic Workers vs. City Hall
Boston City Hospital AFSCME Workers Score Wage Equity Gains

Boston's Black and Latino city workers won an important battle for wage equity during this year's round of contract negotiations with the Flynn administration. Pressure from Black and Latino community leaders and threats of wider public exposure from AFSCME 1489, the union representing the bulk of minority workers, forced a resistant City Hall to upgrade the job ratings and salaries of several hundred workers, predominantly people of color.

The city wage scale begins at an R-2 rating and goes up to an R-20. In most municipal departments, job ratings under an R-5 have close to vanished. These departments, not coincidentally, are very white and very male. The only area with large numbers of workers holding ratings below an R-5 was the city's Health & Hospitals Deptartment. Health & Hospitals contains Boston City Hospital (BCH) *and* the bulk of the city's minority employees. Local 1489 was able to force City Hall to agree to abolish all ratings under an R-5, thus ending one of the most blatant examples of discrimination in Boston public employment.

Political Backdrop to Negotiations

Municipal workers in Boston, represented by AFSCME and SEIU, had suffered the weight of years of former Mayor Kevin White's administration. Kevin White started out as a liberal but gradually became less and less so, developing an extensive political patronage machine. Hiring, firing, and promotion became based to a large degree on loyalty to the mayor, sidestepping considerations like union rules and competence. Increasingly, budget cuts and staffing reductions became commonplace, reducing both the level and quality of city services provided the people of Boston.

Black and Latin people, long excluded from city employment, began to gain employment in significant numbers in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Minority employment in the municipal workforce was, however, largely limited to the City's Department of Health & Hospitals, of which BCH is the major part. Not only are most Black and Hispanic municipal workers employed almost exclusively at BCH. Minority people within Boston City Hospital are crowded into the jobs at the very bottom, and those jobs earn substantially less money than comparable entry-level jobs in other city departments, such as the Department of Public Works or the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Aside from being the main employer of Boston's Black and Hispanic residents, BCH

has increasingly become the main source of health care for Boston's Black and Hispanic communities.

AFSCME Local 1489's record of fighting for equality for Black people and other people of color, within the union and the hospital, and outside of it, earned the union support and trust from sectors of the communities of color in recent years. Along with the other BCH unions, Local 1489 has long fought against cuts in services at BCH and the impact the cuts would have on the minority communities which depend on BCH. During the fiscal crunch caused by the tax cutting measure, Proposition 2½, AFSCME 1489 was the only union that officially took the position that affirmative action gains must not be wiped away as a result of layoffs in the public sector.

The union has as a matter of course supported many Black and Latino candidates for political office. Local 1489 was one of a handful of unions to support Black progressive Mel King. The bulk of the Boston area labor unions threw their support to the white populist Ray Flynn, who was inacurately nicknamed the "Lech Walesa of Boston politics" by some progressives.

Despite our support for King, when Flynn took office two years ago, many in the union, members and leaders alike, were cautiously optimistic about BCH's future and the chances for a fairer shake from City Hall. As a city councillor, Flynn had been an outspoken critic of Mayor White's shabby treatment of BCH's patients and employees. In the last few years of Mayor White's reign, Flynn actively defended BCH against White's threats to close or sell BCH. Many BCH employees now thought they had reason to believe the new mayor would lend a sympathetic hand to those at the very bottom of the municipal wage scale.

Negotiations Begin

However, when the Boston AFSCME locals (Local 1489 is only one local among over a dozen AFSCME locals who bargain jointly) began their negotiations with the Flynn administration, BCH employees began to find that Flynn's actions didn't match his lipservive to those at the bottom.

You might say that we were a little naive to think we were going to evoke some sympathetic response from the Flynn administration. We basically disagreed with the populist way Flynn looks at things, with his glossing over inequities between poor and working class white people vs. people of color and reducing everything to economics. Yet we, and many others for that matter, got convinced of his compassion toward the underdogs of society, whatever your color.

We soon learned that Flynn's compassion apparently only goes so far. We immediately encountered resistance to our proposals. It became the major stumbling block of AFSCME negotiations. We gradually agreed on acceptable contract language items and eventually agreed on a general wage package, though there were varying levels of enthusiasm for this wage package among the membership.

But the bottom line for AFSCME Local 1489 was to gain wage parity for employees at Boston City Hospital, and Flynn's negotiators still refused to budge. We had raised similar proposals within AFSCME in past contract negotiations, but weren't successful in getting the predominantly white and male locals to back us up.

This time we were able to get the rest of AFSCME to hold out for us, though it wasn't clear how far they'd go to back us. We came to the conclusion that pure militancy alone was insufficient for one local union of about a thousand members to be able to bring City Hall to it's knees.

Pressuring Flynn on Upgrades

Now we also came to learn that City Hall is sensitive to public criticism. Flynn's public relations staff works very hard to foster an image of an administration sensitive to all, including Boston's communities of color. His administration has staged big media splashes with token minority appointments to City Hall positions. One reason is Flynn's preoccupation with preventing another electoral challenge from Boston's Black community. But the position of the overwhelming majority of Boston's minority city workers remained that of second class citizens.

Sandra Johnson photo

We knew we needed wider support to achieve the contract goal of salary upgrades. Having built up some solid relationships with key Black and Latino community leaders in recent years, BCH employees now turned to them for support.

The union placed an ad explaining the situation in a Boston area Black newspaper and other community papers. We also held a press conference and rally protesting the Flynn administration stance vis-a-vis minority city workers. Former mayoral candidate Mel King lent his support and sharply criticized Flynn.

Other Black, Latino, and progressive white leaders also publicly voiced their support of BCH employees' efforts to gain equity in wages with other city employees—Black City Councillor Charles Yancey, the first openly gay City Councillor, David Scondras, Hispanic Community leader Felix Arroyo, School Committeeperson Jean McGuire and others.

They and others put pressure on the Flynn administration. Their actions let City Hall know that not correcting these gross inequities would be a slap in the face of all people of color, not just the workers involved. Even some other political leaders friendly with Flynn encouraged City Hall to concede to our demand for equality. Boston's liberal daily, *The Boston Globe*, carried an article on Boston's discriminatory employment pattern and hit hard at Flynn's dragging his feet instead of positively addressing the issue.

Toward Building a Unified Movement

Threats of more public actions eventually forced the Flynn administration to concede to our demand. Local 1489 won upgradings for all job titles in the two bottom pay grades, thus bringing up the bottom grade to that of the other divisions in Boston. The upgradings will go into effect at the end of 1986.

Discrimination is far from ended in municipal employment in Boston. Minority employment remains largely limited to the Dept. of Health & Hospitals, and within the department, minority people are still concentrated toward the low end of the scale. The union is looking to make future gains in career ladder training and advancement into more predominantly white skilled job titles.

Still, the union has now eliminated one of the worst instances of discrimination. In addition, newer employees who may come into the system will not be subjected to discriminatory entry wages. This change goes against recent trends in contract bargaining in which many unions have agreed to "dual wage systems," pay scales giving newer workers a lower starting rate than present employees. These dual wage scales are having a destructive effect on the unity of the workforce. And we could not have won equality of entry level wages for BCH without the support of those Black and Latino and other leaders ready to organize to take on the Flynn administration.

The Ray Flynn—Mel King 1983 mayoral race in Boston caused deep and bitter divisions within Boston's progressive community. Pro-Flynn progressives argued that Flynn's brand of politics would be able to bring white working people together with Black people and other people of color. But Boston City Hospital workers experienced something very much to the contrary. The candidate who couldn't bring himself to acknowledge that racism existed in Boston during the mayoral campaign now resists the efforts of workers to end discrimination in Boston municipal employment.

We hope that those that are inclined to support Flynn, particularly progressive minded people, can begin to recognize that Flynn's brand of urban populism has severe limitations, that it offers very little to people of color, and therefore, doesn't offer much toward building a unified movement encompassing white working people and people of color for social change.

—John Ingemi, Meizhu Lui

(John Ingemi is President of AFSCME Local 1489. Meizhu Lui is Treasurer.)

Join the Campaign Against Coors

Coors has come East in an effort to expand their market and boost sales which, due in large part to the boycott in the midwest, have been dropping dramatically. With Coors' move to the East comes the opportunity for progressive-minded people who, up until now, had to support the boycott from afar, to get involved on a local level. And it is a campaign that we should get involved in, for in the Adolph Coors Company we truly have a company that everyone to the left of Attila the Hun can hate.

A few lowlights will suffice:

- Coors has broken 19 unions of Coors workers in the past 20 years.
- Coors founded the Heritage Foundation, a right-wing think tank, and has been a major financial supporter of the Moral Majority and the John Birch Society.
- Coors contributes money to, or organizationally supports, at least 5 groups which are providing aid to the contras.
- Coors has become infamous for their lie detector test all prospective employees have to take. Until recently, the test included questions regarding sexual preference and proclivity.
- Coors has sponsored and supported such gifted public servants as James Watt and Anne Gorsuch-Burford.
- Coors is the target of a nationwide boycott by the AFL-CIO, the National Education Association, NOW, and countless local groups representing people of color, lesbian/gay people, the disabled, senior citizens, and others.

This last fact is particularly important because it points out that in a campaign to boycott Coors an incredibly broad united front can be built. How many other issues have been able to bring together activists from the labor, lesbian/gay, Black, and anti-intervention movements?

Also making the boycott appealing is that it is essentially a grassroots campaign with the focus on bars and liquor stores that are in the local community. The Coors campaign offers the ability for lots of small victories that can help build momentum for escalation to larger targets such as distributors and stadiums. It can be worked on equally successfully by students, workers, and people doing community organizing. It is an opportunity not to be passed up.

—Arvid Muller

(The author is a member of the Boston Boycott Coors Task Force.)

Organizing at Litton Microwave

One year ago, fifteen hundred workers at Litton Microwave Division in Sioux Falls, South Dakota finally got a first union contract. Success came at the end of a seven year campaign against this notorious union-busting outfit. What made this victory so significant was that Litton had moved its profitable microwave operations across the border from Minneapolis precisely to escape a unionized workforce and to take advantage of South Dakota's very warm business climate. This article will take a closer look at this organizing effort as well as the ongoing fight to consolidate a local under less than ideal conditions.

South Dakota: Business' Burger King—"Have It Your Way"

Out in these parts they say it's the last stop before Taiwan. The governor is a maverick Republican who made his name by personally leading an assault squad to remove members of AIM from an office building. Now he has taken out newspaper advertisements across the country urging business to come to South Dakota "where profit is not a dirty word." The South Dakota legislature passed a bill overnight which allowed banks like CitiBank to move entire operations into South Dakota. CitiBank now runs credit card headquarters out of Sioux Falls—a $25 million facility employing almost 1500 people and totalling $3 billion in deposits. Sears is planning a similar move into "retail banking" very soon with its headquarters also in South Dakota. Literally hundreds of other businesses have found refuge in South Dakota, one of only six states where there is no corporate income tax and one of only four states without a personal income tax.

All this has given South Dakota a highly deserved ranking as having the Number One business climate in the country, according to *Business Week*. If you want to see why South Dakota is at the top of *this* list, just look at the bottom of most other lists. Last in per capita income (about $13,000 annually); last in worker compensation tax rates; last in unemployment insurance costs; and, of course, a population that is largely unorganized. As the agricultural sector of the economy continues to slip badly, South Dakota has opted to try to replace these jobs with manufacturing and service jobs.

Enter Litton

Litton shifted much of its microwave operations to Sioux Falls back in 1977. Soon after, a couple of UE organizers (referred to by Litton as the Minnesota Twins) followed from Minneapolis. A long, hard campaign began. A giant conglomerate ranked around 58th in the Fortune 500, Litton threw a lot of its resources into defeating the union. Among other things, they had their vice-president from Beverly Hills in and out of Sioux Falls to lead the crusade. Several union activists were fired, and Litton wrote new pages in the book of dirty tricks, eventually getting them convicted of multiple

labor law violations which are still under appeal.

Litton also did a careful, scientific study of the composition of the Sioux Falls labor force and found out that it had a better environment than several other midwest cities under consideration. They hired a workforce that tended to be relatively older or much younger—and almost all women. They figured this to be an unlikely group to vote in a union, especially if the company gave some liberal benefits to sweeten the just-above fast food wages. But Litton was proven wrong in 1980. Workers voted by a small margin to join the UE.

Litton didn't take its defeat lying down. It bargained without the remotest intention of signing a contract. While Litton was eventually convicted of bad faith bargaining, the union didn't wait for the NLRB to act despite the closeness of the vote. While agitation continued in the shop, it became apparent that for the union to triumph, the fight had to be taken beyond Sioux Falls. A corporate campaign was launched that eventually brought together eight different unions and a number of religious and community groups to pressure Litton. Several trips to Litton's annual stockholder meetings in Beverly Hills put the issue on the national agenda. A strong bill, called the Congressional Debarment Bill, was sponsored in both houses. This would have penalized repeated labor law violators such as Litton by cutting off their government contracts. (Litton is one of the largest defense contractors in the U.S.) In the local Sioux Falls community, efforts to build a community coalition were very successful. At one point more than a hundred people attended a forum on corporate responsibility.

In response to the pressure, Litton agreed to form a committee of company and union representatives to investigate its own labor practices. After a lack of results, culminating with a lock-out and eventual shutdown of a Litton machine shop in Athol, Massachusetts, the company, fearing a resumption of the corporate campaign, went back to the bargaining table. The union in Sioux Falls finally won their first contract in October, 1984, becoming the second largest unionized industry in Sioux Falls (right behind Morrell's meatpacking company.)

Learning To Run The Show

The union's victory changed a lot within the local. Like any other victory, it's one thing to get there, but it's quite another to run something once you do. At the Litton plants, union activity and organization were still very fragile. The campaign had had a relatively top-down character to it, probably necessary under the conditions, but now making the transformation to running a large local that much more difficult. In making this transition the local also had to contend with a local union staff that had always played a major role in all decisionmaking within the local. This began to change, not always without problems, as the rank and file leaders began to take on responsibility themselves and the staff adjusted their role. Developing ways for the workers to flex their new-found muscle in the shop has certainly been one of the most difficult parts of the organizing effort.

Organizing The Silent Majority

With South Dakota a right-to-work state, workers in unionized shops do not have to pay union dues, and many at Litton make use of this opportunity. Of these workers,

however, a fairly large number generally support the union or at least blame the company more than the union for the troubles at Litton. A small number of these people even wear union t-shirts and consider themselves in the union, though they aren't members in good standing. Success in winning over this group of workers will go a long way toward determining the long-term strength of the local, and this is a big challenge that still has to be met.

The effort to change these workers' attitudes is a difficult one, especially given the lack of union background that many have. There is a pretty strong rural bias against unions that is just starting to break down with the agricultural crisis. The local had a member who is also a farmer speak at a rally of 8,000 farmers in Pierre, South Dakota, the kind of step which really helps. Most of the workers who have family at the Morrell packing plant join up relatively quickly.

Many workers say, "I agree with the union but I can't afford to pay the dues." Others say, "why should I join when I get the same things as everybody else?" (The union has a legal responsibility to represent all workers.) Still others say, "why should I support other workers who won't pay their way. Get back to me when they all join." This last attitude actually influences solid union folks: disgust for these freeloaders sometimes causes people to get pretty cynical. In the main, however, the union has found that people who are helped in a grievance or some other day-to-day problem will usually join up.

Naturally, this is the major concern of the local—working to bring concrete results that improve the working and living conditions of the workers. There are some material benefits that have also been added as a supplemental bonus for those who do join. These include reductions in drug prescriptions at a local pharmacy, limited free legal counseling, and a free $2,000 life insurance policy given by a company who works very closely with the union. This has had some positive effect in combatting the idea that everyone—union and non-union—gets the same. However, changing these attitudes often come down to your basic one-on-one rap.

A lot of discussion goes on to convince workers that it is in their interests to join up and pay union dues—that really they can't afford not to, given the company's lousy wages. (Assemblers at Litton—about 80% of the workforce—receive $5.67 an hour; that includes a recent 40 cent increase.) A further point is that without a union and a contract, the company could take this stuff away at any time. General educational work also has to be stepped up—activities and articles aimed at giving workers a little more background in labor traditions and the bigger stakes involved in the Litton campaign. This will also give the advanced a more protracted view of the fight.

Litton: Contract A Pain In The Ass

After the contract was signed, the first skirmish with the company was over how many contracts they would print. It is easy to see why. The company figured that the fewer who knew about it the better. Litton never reconciled itself to having a contract and continues to make noise about how it is way too restrictive. Periodically, the company even makes a blatant attempt to violate the contract to send a message. This obviously gives rise to a lot of discord.

One case in point occurred several months ago. The company read into the contract that workers on medical leave for more than 30 days would not accumulate seniority while they were out. To back this up, they used a section of the contract that dealt exclusively with personal, union and military leaves. They said that their policy rewarded those who were actually working, a point that later justified docking seniority from those out on workers' comp as well. The company then sent out letters to all affected workers saying that they were only doing this because the contract forced them to. (This has become a favorite company tactic to try to turn workers against the contract.)

The union swung into action. The fact that the plant is about two-thirds women meant that Litton would mainly be penalizing pregnant women, who were most commonly the ones on extended medical leave. The union showed that Litton's policy was discriminatory and anti-family. This won the union some very helpful support from a local women's political organization. The union also looked into filing a discrimination suit based on the policy having an adverse impact on a particular class of people (women).

Backing all this up, the workers in the shop mobilized—wearing stickers, speaking out in newsletters and harassing the company representatives. Within a few weeks the company gave in. The union had reversed the company's efforts to turn workers against the contract. A good number of the affected workers joined the union and much respect was also won even from those who still remained outside the union.

"What's Good for Litton is Bad for Business"

Much of the union's corporate campaign has been based on portraying Litton as an unfair and irresponsible employer trying to take advantage of the hard-working people in the state. Because it hasn't simply attacked business for using South Dakota as a stomping grounds, this approach has yielded good results. In fact, based on these efforts to isolate Litton, many in the community including local and state politicians and other, fair-minded businesses, now use Litton as a yardstick as to what type of business South Dakota should avoid. During a series of massive layoffs earlier in the year involving 1115 of the the 2000 workers, a union-backed legislative effort to reform the state's rotten unemployment law and study the impact of economic development in South Dakota lost by only one vote (16-15) in the predominantly rural, conservative state legislature.

During the layoff, many small businesses, hurt by the layoffs themselves and unappreciative of Litton's practices, joined with city and local agencies to help the laid off workers. Litton, which refused all union requests for help, was reportedly called onto the carpet by top state leaders and told to clean up its act.

Much of this, of course, takes place in a state worried that companies like Litton, and the labor strife they bring, could tarnish South Dakota's Number One business climate ranking. Just the same, the union's ability to work with others to isolate Litton has been a much-needed weapon in dealing with the company and also putting the issue of corporate responsibility on the state political agenda. A candidate for governor with a shot at winning recently stated that his main priority is to raise the per capita income of the people of the state and help the people to get a fairer shake. A far cry from the attitude,

"whatever business wants. . . ."

Overall, the campaign has shown that it is possible, though neither cheap nor easy, to successfully challenge corporations who flee to low-paying, pro-business climates. Obviously, this capital flight is still in high gear: over the last few months, we saw the pathetic scrambling of states to get GM's Saturn project only to see it wind up in a small town in Tennessee that may not even want it because it will ruin their way of life. And Idaho just became the twenty-first right-to-work state, while other states are considering similar proposals. All this may make organizing efforts along the lines of the Litton campaign a bigger priority in the coming years. ●

Lynn GE
A Reform Coalition Comes to Power

The victory of the reform coalition in Local 201, International Union of Electronic, Technical, Radio and Machine Workers (IUE) was a long time coming. There is no single reason to account for it. You could say that union members in the giant Lynn, Massachusetts River Works and allied locations were sick of the old leadership and attracted to the challengers in about equal measure.

The business agent of the local, who headed the ticket for the incumbent group, had a reputation for being arrogant, aloof, and absent. The challenger for the top office was the vice president of the local. He was the one who opened the Union Hall well before first shift every morning, had an office full of people all day long and a well-deserved reputation as a voice for democracy in the union. He had worked for an active stewards' council and steward education and had supported a limited right to recall local officials.

There was a strong feeling among the members that the union was constantly overworked in dealing with the company, and that the incumbent leaderhsip was not doing anything to prepare people for the changing nature of their work due to the introduction of new technologies. In addition, the incumbents had alienated groups of people in the union who had tried to develop aggressive committees to involve active members in servicing the membership at large and fight the company. This included members of the local's Women's Committee, Activities Committee, New Technology Committee, Civil Rights Committee, and the stewards' committee which coordinated the larger Stewards' Council.

Especially important in this regard was the Women's Committee. Over a period of years a core of dedicated activists had successfully carried through a strong program while building a network of support for the growing number of women in the shop. Based on experience, this grouping was firmly opposed to the leadership.

There were clear-cut issues facing the membership at the time of the election on the fundamental direction of the union. These are the same issues facing unions, especially industrial unions, across the country today.

"Factory of the Future"

Less than a year earlier, General Electric management had approached the international officers of the IUE and proposed locating a multi-million dollar "factory of the future" in the Lynn location. The price, of course, was concessions. Instead of the scores of job classifications that existed in the Lynn River Works and other Local 201 locations, there would be only three: two skilled machine maintenance jobs and a robot loader. Among the three, the workers would do everything in the new plant,

from salary work to sweeping the floor, running grinding machines to maintenance work. The new plants would run seven days a week, with union members working 12 hours a day, alternating three and four day weeks, with no time-and-a-half for the first eight hours on Saturday, and no double time for Sunday. The company also demanded that the union agree to "measured daywork with accountability" in the new plant, a system by which workers were measured and held responsible for their output. This system had already been introduced at other locations in various forms and had been bitterly opposed in some quarters of the union.

The special agreement around conditions at the proposed automated factory would be tied to the national contract. Since the National Agreement governing some 80,000 GE workers would never be held up for a supplement concerning about one hundred people, this effectively cast the major portions of the agreement in stone.

A minority of Local 201's Executive Board—six out of twenty-two—led a fight against the special agreement. But they were up against stiff odds. In addition to having the blessing of the Board majority, the International, and Lynn city officials, the company's drive for concessions carried the clear threat of job blackmail. Not only did GE threaten to locate the new plant elsewhere but it said it would not invest another $45 million in Lynn that was tentatively in the pipeline if a "No" vote demonstrated a "poor labor climate." Exhibiting again its way with words, the company called its threats of destruction of the workers' jobs "letting the employees have a say in their destiny."

The threats proved effective, even though the job picture at the 201 plants is stable. The concessions passed overwhelmingly, with a 70% favorable vote. The Executive Board majority now felt they were in a position to clean out the pesky dissidents in the next election.

Apparently they had not been following trends around the country. As in the UAW, union members found it easier to take their frustrations out on those who had recommended concessions than to fight the concessions themselves. Of the six dissidents, two were elected to higher office, two were re-elected without opposition, one was re-elected easily and one did not run again. And seven more people who had actively opposed the concessions were elected to various positions on the Board.

The Quality Circle Scandal

In addition to the issues of concessions and being prepared to deal with the challenge of new technology, the issue of outright collaboration with the company exploded just before the election.

About a year-and-a-half before the election, the leadership had forced through an experimental Quality Circle program called "Worker Involvement." The company had originally attempted to start up quality circles unilaterally. Stewards, Board members and the then-vice president joined together to break them up since they were not sanctioned by the union. But even in the union-sanctioned form, with steward co-leaders of the groups and specific contractual areas supposedly excluded from discussion, most union activists saw them as a sophisticated form of union-busting.

A number of maneuvers were pulled off by the Board majority to get the initial six

groups started. The Board majority encouraged the quality circles to get into safety issues not currently covered by OSHA standards (in which case the union would deal with the problem). But by the time the company came to the union a year later to expand the program with an additional ten groups, the opposition had hardened. Experience had shown that the groups inevitably stepped into contractual issues. After all, the first article of the National Agreement recognizes the union as "*exclusive* representative of employees" for collective bargaining "in respect to rates of pay, wages, hours of employment and other conditions of employment." The threat to the bargaining power of the union was obvious to active stewards. In addition, failure of the company to deal in the quality circles in good faith led to problems, and one group broke down altogether.

It looked like the vote for expansion of "Worker Involvement" was going to lose at a union meeting attended by over a hundred members, but the scales were tipped by a group of members who somehow got out of work to attend the meeting that was being held during their shift. A memo from a plant manager surfaced and was copied. It directed foremen to let people leave work to go to the meeting about expansion of the Worker Involvement program, and pro-expansion Board members were seen in the shop shortly before the vote encouraging people to punch out and attend the meeting.

The vote in favor of expansion stood, but it spawned an investigation by an Executive Board sub-committee into possible company interference in internal union affairs—and implicitly, union collusion with the company.

Finally, at the last meeting before the election, a vote passed to print the manager's memo in the local's newspaper, along with a letter to be written by the business agent cautioning the company to stay out of the union's affairs. As a last-ditch maneuver, a member of the Board majority made a motion to have the matter "tabled and entered into the minutes." This is a rare parliamentary maneuver which automatically prevents implementation of the previously passed motion until after the next meeting.

Robert's Rules of Order make it clear that this motion is meant to be used only if a major matter has been acted upon under circumstances when most members have not been properly notified or have been unable to attend; also that it cannot be used if the delay would frustrate the purpose of the original motion. So the special tabling motion should have been ruled out of order by the chair. Yet the president allowed the motion, and the action which would have brought the whole matter to light was squashed.

Even this backfired on the leadership, however, when a group of members who had followed all these developments put out their own flier tracing the events. The cover-up attempt only made the whole sordid mess look worse, and flagrant collusion between the Board majority and the company became a significant issue in the election, as a climax to the whole program of cooperation with the company.

The reform coalition was decisively brought into power, based on the efforts of a broad coalition of activists who, despite their diverse political perspectives, all believed that the integrity of the union as a separate, independent organization of the workers was at stake. Uniting everyone who held this view was key to victory in the election. A network of stewards and activists was built up, mass campaign meetings of upwards of

one hundred people were held on weekends, and reform candidates spent many hours in the shop talking to people about the issues.

Where the former leadership had been "leading" the Local beyond business unionism to blatant anti-unionism and collusion, the victory of the reform candidates re-established Local 201 as a workers' organization independent of the company. How the union, under new leadership, can go about improving the working conditions of its members and making the union a force for social progress in the face of continued factionalism and disruptions in the local, the anti-labor climate in the country, and the hostility and intransigence of one of the most powerful corporations on earth will be the subject of a later article.

—Chris Curran

(Writing under a penname, the author is a union activist at GE Lynn.)

Organizing Federal Workers in the Reagan Era

Crisis and Change in AFGE

The rightward shift of American politics in the 1970s and 1980s, especially since Reagan and PATCO, has not been good to AFGE, or to federal employees generally. AFGE is the American Federation of Government Employees, the largest of the unions of non-postal civilian federal employees.

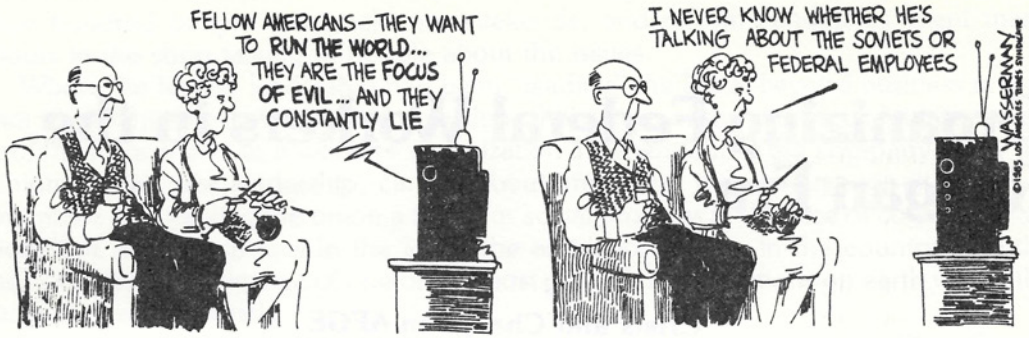
The effort under Reagan to remake government in the image of big business has led to severe attacks on federal employee jobs: dismantling of social programs; de-staffing the regulators (from EEOC to OSHA and NLRB to Food Inspection), thus accomplishing deregulation without a legal/political fight; contracting-out anything and everything done by the government that a profit could be made on; massive computerization to make government "more efficient" (and make a buck for high tech manufacturing and service corporations).

During the last six to seven years, there has been a 55-60% turnover among federal employees, the momentum of which has increased as a result of these attacks on America's "public servants." This makes organizing difficult as members leave the workplace as fast as new members are recruited. The majority of federal workers are now young people who did not grow up out of the Depression and New Deal era. Rather, they've grown up in the Clint Eastwood/"me now"/"party hardy!" culture. Most do not see government service as a career; many hope it will be a temporary job situation until they can find something better in the wonderful private sector.

But hard times can bring out the best in us. Especially since 1980, AFGE has begun to adopt some of the most progressive policies and programs present in the American labor movement.

A large percentage of AFGE membership, reflecting the federal workforce itself, consists of women and minorities. Approximately 40% of the union's membership are Black, Hispanic and other national minorities. The base for these progressive policies has been among this section of the membership, principally organized through the Minority Coalition. In alliance with the Women's Caucus and the Conference of Councils, resolutions were passed at the 1980 Convention setting up strong, independent Women's and Fair Practices Departments within the union.

The Conference of Councils is a coalition of most of AFGE's twenty-four councils administering national exclusive recognitions along agency ("industrial") lines: Veteran's Administration (VA), EEOC, Social Security Administration, Bureau of Prisons, etc. These councils represent approximately 56% of AFGE's membership.



Then along came Reagan. Faced with a political attack, AFGE had to get political. The December 1980 NEC meeting adopted resolutions submitted by District 7 National Vice President Allen Kaplan. A Leadership Strategy Conference attended by over 500 local activists followed in May 1981. AFGE took a handful of legislative and political action committees and forged a national network of political activists. The shock of Reagan forced the union to admit that our jobs, our lives and our issues are political to the core.

Proportionately to AFGE's numbers, few unions have been as active in coalition building: with our constituents who are served by our programs, in Citizen Action groups, in the AFL-CIO. Ten thousand AFGE'ers participated in Solidarity Day 1981. The AFGE headquarters was the base of operations for the 1983 March on Washington for Jobs, Peace and Freedom.

Why the Membership Loss?

With these positive programs, why is AFGE losing 1,000 members per month? Why is the total membership below 200,000 members for the first time since 1966? According to AFGE President Kenneth Blaylock, "Despite the recruitment of some 80,000 new members over the last two years our total membership has continued to decline through RIFs [reduction-in-forces, or public sector layoffs—*ed.*], contracting-out, internal political disputes, and attrition." And since AFGE has seldom had a solid, active organizing program, it has not made up the difference with new members.

In addition, AFGE is to some degree more a federation of "fiefdoms" than it is a centralized national union. At the 1966 convention, when the membership first went below 200,000, a resolution was passed to establish fifteen districts with elected National Vice Presidents, or NVPs. In 1968 these became full-time paid positions.

The NVPs play a key role in AFGE. It is interesting to note that the district with the smallest membership decline has been District 7, where progressive NVP Al Kaplan has implemented the Fair Practices, Women's, and Political Action programs thoroughly and supported local organizing efforts. This, even though that district is the only one in AFGE that so far has not been assigned a national organizer. In the majority of cases, however, the NVPs have been more concerned about maintaining their cushy jobs than about furthering the programs of the union. In many cases conservative NVPs stand in the way of local implementation of progressive national programs. The

bulk of the locals are very small. The majority (64%) have fewer than 100 members. The typical local has between 35 and 45 members. Small locals simply don't have the resources to carry out the needed programs.

The Actions of the 29th Convention and the Aftermath

It was in this context that slightly over 1000 delegates met in Cleveland, Ohio, in August 1984 to set policy for AFGE for the next two years. The convention turned back proposals to amalgamate small locals, raise dues, and increase representation on national leadership; proposals which might have helped the union strengthen its organization. Even among progressives there was some confusion and disunity on the proposals' merits, contributing, along with strong conservative resistance, to their defeat. For example, most left and progressive forces opposed giving the national leadership power to force mergers of smaller locals to make them more effective. They even opposed motion towards *voluntary* mergers, out of concern for local autonomy and protecting the minority from being run roughshod over by the majority in an amalgamated local or service council.

The Convention did adopt a comprehensive statement on new organizing. In addition, the Convention passed very progressive resolutions on civil and women's rights, committing itself to establishing union day care centers, reaffirming its committment to affirmative action and women's reproductive rights, and opposing the Ku Klux Klan. The Convention continued union emphasis on political action. It also adopted strong positions favoring a bilateral nuclear freeze, opposing US intervention in Central America, and rejecting apartheid.

It is this writer's opinion that the most important policy adopted by the Convention was the organizing plan to target locals in certain areas for "rehabilitation." Without that type of reorganization and retraining at the grassroots the national policies remain just paper.

The national leadership began to carry out this plan, within the restrictions of the small per capita tax increase. But the NVPs, who dominate the NEC, blocked efforts to implement the Convention mandate. Worse! In June 1985, in response to the internal fiscal crisis of AFGE based on continued membership loss, the NEC abolished fifteen of the sixteen national organizer positions in the Organizing Department, and cut some 20-30 other staff positions as well. The NEC still says that they are complying with Convention mandates because they are announcing "incentive organizer" positions to take the place of the $20,000-$30,000 national organizer positions. These incentive organizers will be paid a base salary of $13,500 with bonuses for members recruited above a certain standard. This approach was tried in the past and failed. Instead, the NVPs countered with their own organizing plan, putting the targetting of locals for organizing efforts under their control, in direct violation of Convention votes.

The power of the NVPs within the current AFGE structure continues to show. Now they are putting more emphasis on organizing, and in July 1985, for the first time in years, AFGE had a net membership gain of 200. But the NVPs are targetting only locals who are their political supporters, and they are not implementing the comprehensive plan adopted by the Convention to combine political action, representation and organizing in a progressive manner.

Meanwhile, the left and progressive forces within the union have not really followed through on committments made to establish regular communications and circulate an issue-oriented journal. Following some major steps forward in 1980-81, activists in AFGE became fully absorbed in the day-to-day work of building the Fair Practices, Women's, Political Action, and Organizing programs of the Union, primarily at the local union level. In some cases, progressive activists have gained Council leadership positions as well. Several leftists took national staff positions in these program areas. Specific rank-and-file educational and organizational forms have continued to be neglected rather than broadened and deepened.

The right approach to development of the rank-and-file movement, left unity, and a left-progressive alliance in AFGE does not seem to be as clear as in the Teamsters or UAW, because of this greater participation of leftists and progressives in leadership and staff positions. Even the necessity of an "independent" rank-and-file movement, or of other special efforts to unite left-progressive forces, is not a burning concern. This writer believes that lack of such work is what is allowing the right-wing NVPs to undermine positive programs. The Minority Coalition is a potential vehicle for an independent rank-and-file movement. It could be built and developed in the direction of a "Rainbow Coalition."

Summing Up

The biggest problem facing AFGE is the overwhelming attack on the New Deal/War On Poverty government programs, and the workers who found jobs in these programs. No amount of internal organization and reorganization, no matter how progressive, can turn this around by itself. AFGE can only grow and survive as a progressive union to the extent that the peoples' movement succeeds in promoting a socially responsible and democratically controlled public sector as a central component of an alternative program for American society to that of the right-wing.

On the other hand, AFGE has adopted many elements of a program and plan of action that heads in this direction based on building political alliances between public workers and those who are served by public programs and trying to reform and improve these programs in opposition to the right's attempts to dismantle them. Yet, AFGE remains relatively paralyzed and ineffectual in implementing these policies because of its organizational problems.

At the present time, despite many progressive policies on paper, AFGE appears to be disintegrating as a cohesive national organization. While some locals and area councils are making positive steps in the directions adopted by the Convention, largely on their own initiative and funds, the problems of the national union raises some questions as to what we are organizing people to join.

(The author is President of an AFGE local. He particularly asks if any Forward Motion *readers have comments or suggestions about the issues raised in the article, particularly the organizational contradictions discussed at the end of the article. A longer, more detailed report of the 29th AFGE Convention, from which this article was taken, is available through* Forward Motion. *We also hope to print a related article on farm/labor alliance work and how such work fits in a trade union plan of work in a future issue of FM.)*

ILWU Local 13
Mixed Blessings of Success

In many ways, the International Longshore Workers' Union (ILWU) stands as a model of success for progressives in the labor movement. Developing through militant and sometimes bloody struggle under the leadership of Harry Bridges and other leftists, the union today is a force to be reckoned with on the West Coast waterfront. Carrying on many great traditions, the union has tallied up a long list of gains. Yet this success has its darker side. There are times, in fact, when the founders of the ILWU ask what is happening to their organization.

First, a look at some of the ILWU's accomplishments. Regular longshore workers' pay starts at over $15.50 an hour, and is usually more because of overtime, "penalty cargo," transportation, skill differential and other payments. It's not uncommon for a worker to earn $50,000 a year on the docks, performing tasks like driving cars off ships, throwing forty pound boxes of bananas on a conveyer, or checking container numbers.

A regular longshore worker doesn't have to work forty hours to make his or her money. Regulars frequently get eight hours pay for working four hours under an informal "4 and 4" split gang arrangement. When work in the harbor is slow, regulars get a pay guarantee. And if a ship is loaded or unloaded before the end of a shift, regulars get paid for the whole eight hours.

The ILWU hasn't just focused on wages, however. Using their leverage over West Coast imports and exports, the union has a tradition of protecting its' members working conditions and dignity, too. On example is particularly instructive: when someone is seriously injured, all work at that dock is suspended for the rest of the shift.

Often left-wing in their sentiments, the ILWU leadership has encouraged the membership to take many progressive political stands. In 1980, the union declared it would not load military cargo destined for El Salvador. In June 1981, Local 13 helped lead a one day shutdown of the Los Angeles/Long Beach Harbor to protest proposed cutbacks in disability insurance for harbor workers. The union has, in the past, refused to unload South African chrome as a gesture of opposition to apartheid. More recently, they protested the Soviet downing of KAL flight 007 by shutting out a shipment of Stolichnaya vodka.

ILWU locals are involved in various community projects, such as funding a school for handicapped children. Their labor solidarity work is often exemplary. Strikers from other industries are sometimes given extra work, for example.

Encouraged to be active by their leadership, and enjoying great benefits from unionization, the rank and file longshore workers are extremely proud of their organization.

ILWU buttons, hats, T-shirts, pins and jackets are visible all over the harbor area of L.A. They are worn not just by union members, but by family and those hopeful of getting registered some day. Local 13 officials have little trouble finding volunteers for various union activities. Every year, the union holds a "Bloody Thursday" picnic, commemorating the murder by the police and National Guard of six striking West Coast longshoremen in 1934. This picnic, unlike so many union social functions these days, is a heavily attended event in the community.

Certainly the ILWU has some great achievements under its belt. But it is the very desirablity of longshore jobs, and the group spirit in the union, that has led to serious problems in recent years. A union book is so valuable that a web of corruption and favoritism has grown up around hiring. Local 13 provides a clear illustration.

While hiring is controlled jointly by the union and management, the union members of the registration selection committees have wielded tremendous power, not always for the good. It was an open secret on the L.A./Long Beach docks in the '70's that the right contact and the right payoffs (sometimes in five figures) were what counted. In fact, one enterprising union member made off with several thousand dollars after he convinced eager prospects that he was the right person to bribe. (He wasn't.)

The situation has been exacerbated by measures the union has taken to conserve work for their present members. When the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA-the employers' group) asks for more employees, Local 13 resists. Instead, they have generally preferred to rely on a system of "casual" workers to take up any excess work. These casuals, who frequently go through tortuous exertions just to get a casual card, currently get, at best, one or two days a week of work. The casuals greatly outnumber the regulars. Yet they are not union members, nor do they get preference for union jobs as they open up.

Casual longshore workers are paid the same hourly rates as regulars, but their situation is quite different. They have no benefits or pay guarantees, and are paid only for time actually worked. They tend to get the worst jobs— those left over by the regulars. Frequently they are pushed around by the supervisors, who know that casuals have a deathly fear of having their casual card taken away. The casual "hall" is an outdoor parking lot about a quarter mile from the regular (indoor) longshore hall. Any day or evening hundreds of casuals can be seen standing around for hours at a time, waiting to see if "extra" work becomes available.

Over the years, the harbor community has come to see Local 13 as a rather privileged fraternity. More recently though, the union's hiring practices have been seriously challenged.

In the late 70's, for example, a group of women took the local to court, alleging sex discrimination. As a result, the union and the PMA were forced to sign an agreement instituting quotas and goals. This suit and other court cases prompted the federal government to agree to monitor future longshore hiring practices and gained some local media attention. But since not much hiring was going on through the early 80's, the hiring issue has simmered along without too much fanfare. It was in 1984, when the union announced its agreement to hire 350 new workers, that things came to a full

boil.

Anticipating controversy, Local 13's leadership declared that selection would be different from the "old days." They vowed to institute a fair process, awarding points based strictly on skill and experience. Experienced casual workers, some of whom had been passed over for many years, were cautiously hopeful.

Late in September, the union announced that it would be handing out applications to all comers at a drive-in theatre near the harbor. Applications would be given only to people in cars, as they drove through. (Only in L.A.!) For three days in advance, people barbecued, drank, slept and partied in cars along the routes leading to the drive-in. On the morning of September 24th, 40,000 people jammed the streets for miles around, drawing national media attention. Cutting 40,000 to 350— this was the job confronting the joint union/management hiring committee.

Almost immediately, things started to look fishy. At a union meeting, sworn to secrecy, ILWU members were coached on how the applications would be scored. Those in the know as a result of this meeting (family and friends) hurried off to get documents and training (for example, CPR) which would add points quickly. The union opened up a new casual hall and forced all the existing casuals to reapply for cards. Some were disqualified on technicalities. At the same time each union member was given a casual application. Friends and family members of ILWU members streamed into the casual rotation by the thousands. Sons and daughters, cousins, nephews, and friends of regulars, some of them just out of high school, were being given a chance to pick up instant "experience" on the docks. Naturally, this influx of new casuals cut into the work of the old ones.

The docks have traditionally been a pretty open and friendly place. Relations between regulars and casuals have been, and continue to be generally quite good. After all, many regulars were casuals once. But in the competition for jobs, an undertone of tension has appeared. Union members talk about keeping jobs "in the family" and blame "outsiders" for poor work, accidents and petty theft. (Their own relatives and friends, of course, are not "outsiders.") On the other side, long-time casuals feel cheated. A whole series of lawsuits have mushroomed. One group has even picketed the longshore hall, charging that almost all the jobs given out so far have gone to friends and relatives. They claim that the scoring system used has allowed people with no longshore experience to beat out ten and fifteen-year casual workers. Resentment for second-class working conditions for casuals is rising.

Just to add to the uproar, a new controversy has exploded over how to enforce the consent agreement on hiring women. A lottery was held in which several wives of longshoremen were picked. In a burst of "fairness," the union disqualified these wives, saying it wouldn't be right for two people in a household to have such good jobs. (Children were okay, though, because they would eventually "strike out on their own.") Some of the wives promptly sued, for which they were harshly attacked by the national president of the ILWU.

All of this drama is being played out in the local press, and is familiar to tens of thousands of residents of the harbor area. Although it involves elements of farce, the situa-

tion has serious implications for the future of the ILWU here. And it raises questions for labor as a whole.

The ILWU in L.A./L.B. is strategically located at the heart of a booming industry—cross-Pacific trade. And the Union has fought hard for its members. Some combination of these two facts has put the wages and working conditions for West Coast longshore regulars far out ahead of workers in other industries. Yet this is an unstable situation at best. Today there are desperate people who would literally lie, cheat or kill to get a regular longshore job. And there are union members who would like to take advantage of that desire. Today sons and daughters of longshore regulars are growing up in upper middle-class homes, expecting to move into a job like Dad's—ahead of the "outsiders." Today thousands of casuals face conditions faintly reminiscent of the "shape up" abuses that the union was founded to eliminate.

And how about tomorrow? What happens when the shipping companies stop making money hand over fist? Will they continue "4 and 4"? Will the new generation of longshore workers be ready to face strikebreakers and the National Guard like their grandfathers were? Can the ILWU prevent the establishment of non-union stevedoring companies with ready access to experienced workers? One regular, thinking ahead, puts it this way: "I pray every day that the bubble doesn't burst."

The ILWU is getting so far out in front of the rest of the labor market that their success has a precarious quality. In some senses, their situation is similar to that of the construction trades unions in their heyday— before they crashed under the labor market's pressure. But the ILWU has big advantages over the building trades unions. For one thing, the union has not played into the hands of management by practicing widespread discrimination against minority workers, like the building trades unions did. Nor has the ILWU been blatantly undemocratic in its internal affairs. In fact, the union generally has a proud and progressive tradition, which its officials are trying to carry forward today. And rank and file longshore workers hardly correspond to the stereotype of the craft-union labor aristocrat. These are mostly Latino, Black and white manual workers, with few if any specialized skills. What they have is their organization—their union.

If it's relatively easy to see the dangers facing the ILWU, it's not so easy to say what they should do. No labor advocate or supporter seriously suggests that longshore workers should give up their superior wages and working conditions. If anything, the rest of labor should be challenged to match their gains. But the ILWU must not become detached from the rest of the working class. How is this possible, under the current conditions, with workers in just about every other industry suffering take-aways?

There are measures the union could take that would go a long way toward solidifying its future. One is, of course, cleaning up the disgraceful way hiring is done. Casual cards should be given out by lottery. Then experience on the docks (seniority, in essence) should become the main, if not sole, criterion for registration as a regular. Such simple steps would eliminate favoritism and let everyone know where they stand.

Second of all, casuals should be welcomed into the union. The goal should be to have everyone who works on the docks properly represented—on the job and in the

union hall. This arrangement would help the regulars as well as the casuals, because it would prevent working conditions from being undermined. And it would help insure that unity would be maintained among all workers in the industry.

Finally, the union should do more to strengthen the working class movement as a whole. For example, the ILWU is well positioned to run candidates for local political offices—candidates who would fight for better health and safety legislation, publicize local labor issues and promote class struggle on a whole range of political questions. If workers outside the industry come to see the ILWU as a leader and a model instead of an object of jealousy, everyone will benefit.

Is all this too much to expect of any union in the U.S. in 1985? Probably it is. Let's hope the ILWU surprises us.

—A L.A. Casual Worker

Review

Organized Labor and the Black Worker

The U.S. labor movement has one of the most unusual histories of any labor movement in the advanced capitalist world:

> From approximately 1873 . . . until 1973 . . . American labor suffered governmental repression that was probably as severe or more severe than that suffered by any labor movement in any other Western industrialized democracy. . . . According to the foremost historians of American labor violence, the U.S. has had the "bloodiest and most violent labor history of any industrial nation in the world."[1]

At the same time, the USA has one of the lowest percentages of its labor force organized into unions. In 1955, the year of the merger between the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), 36% of the labor force was unionized. By 1980, it was 20.9%.[2] In addition, there is no independent political party speaking explicitly for labor (a social democratic labor party). As many have noted, this is a central fact of political life for the U.S. working class, a fact which also helps to distinguish it from workers' movements around the world.[3]

The peculiar history of organized labor in the USA is often looked at separate from organized labor's relationship to the Black worker. The most common approaches in examining this history have been laundry list methods enumerating the many problems or contradictions facing organized labor without clearly designating priorities.

Foner's Theme

Philp S. Foner's *Organized Labor and the Black Worker*, originally published eleven years ago, offered information and a perspective on the contradictions between Black workers and organized labor which was striking in its clarity and in its depth of research.[4] The following, in Foner's own words, is an indication of his perspective:

> Most labor historians today agree that craft unions created an aristocracy of skilled workers at the expense of the unskilled and semiskilled and, at the same time, retarded the further organization of American industry, thus, in the long run, adversely affecting all workers, skilled as well as unskilled. Yet not many are willing to acknowledge that the racist policies and practices of organized labor created a privileged group of white workers at the expense of black workers and thus strengthened the employers' ability to divide the working class and weaken efforts to unionize major industries.[5]

As Foner notes, many labor historians and activists alike have been unwilling to come to grips with the full impact of the racism of organized labor. Foner's theme is not unique: many activists and theoreticians have hit at the same point. *What is nearly*

unique is the comprehensive and thoroughly up-to-date historical documentation of this point.

A second theme in *Organized Labor...* is the persistent recurrence of Black worker self-organization. Beginning on a large scale with the "Colored National Labor Union" (CNLU) in the 1860's and moving on to today's "Coalition of Black Trade Unionist" (CBTU), Black workers have responded to the rabid racism of much of organized labor with various movements and organizational efforts. Sometimes as independent unions, other times as oppositional caucuses or associations, Black workers have refused to bow down to racist discrimination and national oppression. Foner's strong support of the necessity for and right to Black workers' organizations (while at the same time maintaining a clear pro-union stance) stands in glaring contrast to many labor activists who view such efforsts as "dual unionist"[6] or "divisive."

The "laundry list" method of dealing with the contradictions within the U.S. working class is such a common approach to understanding U.S. labor history for at least two reasons. For one, there is a real truth that no *single* contradiction *in isolation* can account for the relative backwardness of the U.S. working class and its labor movement. There are a variety of ideological and structural blocks which hold back a progressive working class consciousness. In addition to white racism, male supremacy, anti-communism and the relative superiority of post-World War II U.S. capitalism all help to account for the sorry state of the labor movement in the U.S.A.

Secondly, using the laundry list method represents, *fundamentally*, following the path of least resistance in overcoming the problems within organized labor (and within the U.S. working class generally) since it avoids the setting of priorities and developing the sort of practice necessary to unite and strengthen the class. In other words, an activist can excuse his or her sluggishness on the national question and equal rights by claiming that there are several other matters of equal importance which he or she is addressing at this time. By taking an anti-historical approach to the contradictions in the working class, one can justify a perverted division of labor where white activists avoid dealing with racist discrimination and equality, and the burden therefore falls on the shoulders of oppressed nationality activists.

Foner throws down the guantlet to such agnostic approaches to the divisions in the working class, and points squarely at the horrendous effects on U.S. class struggle of racist discrimination and national oppression. A reading of *Organized Labor...* shows that *more than any other reason*, white supremacy has held back progressive class consciousness. The chapter on the Railroad Brotherhoods and the Industrial Workers of the World is illustrative.

The method by which the Railroad Brotherhoods organized—along craft lines and with a fierce policy of racist exclusion—successfully drove skilled Black workers out of the railroads. Particularly in the South, the railroads had a large proportion of Black workers running them. The formation of unions with explicit white-men-only clauses led to the virtual elimination of Black workers from any positions other than porters. Thus, no one would remember or know, that Casey Jones, immortalized on TV as a

white engineer looking like Fess Parker (of "Daniel Boone" fame), was in fact a Black man.

The white supremacist stand of the Railroad Brotherhoods dovetailed with other forms of class collaboration with the employers. This class collaborationist stand led to a rank-and-file revolt and the formation of the American Railroad Workers Union (ARU), led by Socialist Eugene V. Debs. Yet the racist practices and ideology, so much a part of the Brotherhoods, was never repudiated by the ARU, despite Debs' own appeals. Foner demonstrates how the eventual collapse of the ARU and the anti-Brotherhoods insurgency which it represented was tied integrally to their failure to confront white supremacy.

Contrasted to the Brotherhoods is Foner's examination of the Industrial Workers of the World (the IWW, detailed in a full volume of his classic *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*). The IWW or Wobblies, which will always be remembered as the *only* labor federation in U.S. history to refuse to permit segregated locals, held to a stand on equality which even by today's standards was remarkable. In its industrial struggles, the IWW took their stand on equality very seriously. In response to the AFL's attack on Black workers as being natural strike-breakers and unorganizable, the IWW replied:

> The whole trend of the white craft labor organization is to discriminate against the negro and to refuse to accord him equal economic rights. When, as a consequence, the negro is used to their own undoing, they (the white craft unions) have no one but themselves to blame.[7]

The Wobblies were not destroyed from within. Their consistent attack on racism earned them the wrath of the capitalists, the AFL, and eventually (and for a variety of reasons) the U.S. government. The military smashing of the Brotherhood of Timber Workers (an IWW affiliate) in Louisiana, was a testament to the levels of repression U.S. society will permit when it is threatened on the color line.

The glaring comparison of the racist, class collaborationist Railroad Brotherhoods with the militant, pro-equality IWW is symbolic of the two poles in the labor movment with regard to racist discrimination and class struggle. While the racist—sometimes outright, other times covered in liberal garb—tendency has generally dominated, Foner presents the reader with a clear picture of the anti-racist, class struggle pole which in key periods (such as the 1930's) has had a decisive impact on the growth of the labor movment. Partly for that reason, todays's Left-wing of labor needs to make *Organized Labor...* required reading.

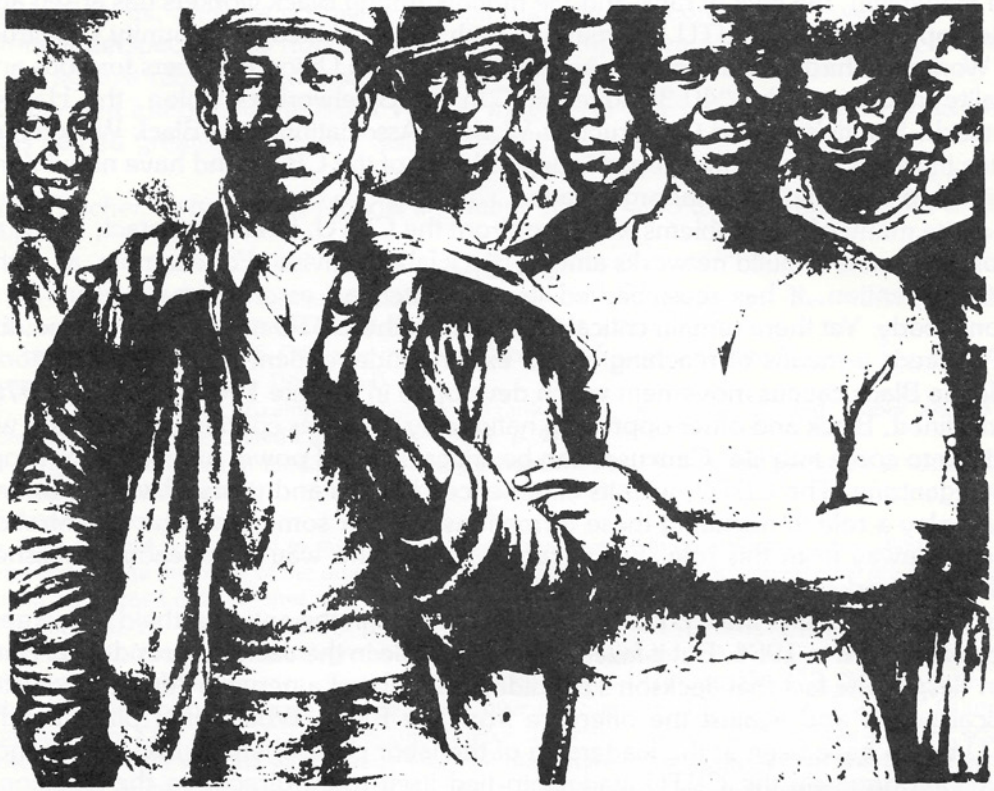
Black Leadership in the Unions: More than Just Sitting by the Door

> Will you admit that you need us [Black workers—*Editor*]) in your unions? If so, why should we not hold office, also? Are we not men? Have we not the same ambitions as you people have? Are we not in many instances as competent as you? Then why should we not hold office? Not office in name, but office indeed. . .—*Black United Mine Workers leader Richard L. Davis in a letter to the editor of the* United Mine Workers Journal *in 1893.*[8]

Foner highlights the demands of Black workers for full representation in the ranks of organized labor's leadership. This demand has often been accompanied by independent self-organization to put pressure on existing leadership.

Independent self-organization of Black workers has existed as long as the U.S. labor movement. The massive introduction of Black workers into the labor movement as a result of the organization of the CIO changed the character of this relationship profoundly. Foner documents the critical role of Black workers in building the CIO, a role which is generlly ignored by most historians.

The promises made to Black workers during the 1930s by the CIO were only partially fulfilled. While the number of Black union officials increased dramatically over what had existed prior to the CIO, there was much to be desired. Additionally, while the CIO had opened up its doors to Black workers as full union members, in many cases the actual shop conditions of segregation and institutional racism remained relatively untouched. In response to this failing, Black worker self-organization reassserted itself following World War II.



Drawing by Charles White

The forms of self-organization which have arisen since the CIO period have varied greatly, including formations such as the National Negro Labor Council (1951-1955), the Negro American Labor Council (1960-roughly 1979), the Harlem Fightback (1960-present), the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (roughly 1968, with emergence of Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement, till 1971-2), and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (1973-present). The most recent of these formations,the

CBTU, was correctly pointed to by Foner as continuing the tradition of Black worker self-organization. Explicitly pro-union, the CBTU pressed demands of Black workers, including those for greater numbers of Black workers in union leadership. Despite a pro-union stance, the CBTU was first attacked as being dual unionist by some sections of organized labor and has in recent years been ignored.

Foner held promise for the CBTU, promise which remains relatively unfulfilled. Although the CBTU has attracted 1000-2000 Black activists to its annual conventions, it has failed to become an organizing center for these same and other activists. While several local chapters of the CBTU have energetically pursued various struggles, the national organization has done little to coordinate these efforts.

As a result, though the CBTU was and is a recognized and respected pole of Black labor leadership, the bulk of rank-and-file motion among Black workers has arisen and existed apart from the CBTU. Formations such as the United Community Construction Workers, Third World Workers Association, and the Union Members for Jobs and Equality in Boston, the "40-3 Movement" in the Steelworkers Union, the Harlem Fightback, Seattle's United Construction Workers Association, and Black Workers for Justice in North Carolina developed independently of the CBTU and have no working relationship with that national organization.

Despite many of the problems which confront the CBTU, it remains intact, and is an important means to build networks among Black labor activists. For example, as of the 1984 convention, it has reestablished its newsletter, an essential mechanism for a national body. Yet there remain critical issues which the CBTU must face. For one, the CBTU needs a means of reaching out to existing independent Black labor motions. While the Black caucus movement which developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s has declined, Black and other oppressed nationality caucuses continue to exist and will continue to come into life. Caucuses can be critical seats of power and bases for shop-floor organizing. The CBTU, with its experienced leaders and years of work, can and should play a role in nurturing these formations. Yet for some time, the organization has shied away from this role. For instance, there is no way for already-established local Black workers' organizations to affiliate.

On a different scale, the CBTU has been very active in the anti-apartheid movement which resurfaced in 1984. But it failed to play any role in the Jackson presidential campaign despite the fact that Jackson's candidacy stimulated a nerve in Afro-America for political power and against the offensive from the Right. What better place for the CBTU but to have been at the leadership of the labor component of Jackson's candidacy? Unfortunately the CBTU leadership tied itself more directly to the traditional Democratic Party direction represented by Mondale. The chance for an independent voice of Black labor within the "rainbow" was missed.

Finally, the CBTU needs to develop new leaders. This has been a problem for many organizations, and it has certainly evidenced itself in efforts at Black worker self-organization where a leadership arises out of an upsurge, but does little to prepare its successors. In the case of the CBTU, most of its leaders have been so since the formation of the organization and it is far from clear where and how new echelons of leadership

will be brought forward.

It is a tribute to Foner that his book can be used to bring to bear an historical perspective on these sorts of problems. In fact, lacking an historical perspective often blinds one to even a recognition of the problems.

By Way of Conclusion

Philip Foner's *Organized Labor and the Black Worker* remains a text unsurpassed in its rigourous documentation of the history of the Black worker. Foner's documentation shows without any doubt the activism and resistance Black workers have themselves organized. *Organized Labor...* documents the heroism and consistency of which all Black labor activists should be proud.

There is nothing dated about *Organized Labor...*.The issues which it addresses remain with us, and the obstacles are still there to overcome. The availability of this historical perspective, as noted above, gives an important context to our present day battles against racist discrimination and for equality.

Organized Labor and the Black Worker may be 11 years old, but as with good wine, it has gained greater flavor and distinction with age.

—*Bill Fletcher, Jr.*

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is a Black Marxist and labor activist who writes regularly for Forward Motion.

Notes

1. Robert J. Goldstein, *Political Repression in Modern America*, Cambrige New York: Schenkman Publishing Co., Inc., Two Continents Publishing Group Ltd., 1978), p.3.

2. Herbert Hill, "The AFL-CIO and the Black Worker: 25 years after the Merger," *The Journal of Intergroup Relations*, Spring 1982, p.60.

3. See for example, Roxanne Mitchell and Frank Weiss, *A House Divided: Labor and White Supremacy* (New York: United Labor Press, 1981), p.34.

4. Origianlly published in hardcover by Praeger Publishers in 1974, today published in softcover by International Publishers, 1981.

5. Foner, *op cit.*, p..ix.

6. Dual unionist is supposed to mean setting up an organization in opposition to an existing union and attempting to take the place of the union. For many in organized labor, any oppositional groupings inside a union are termed dual unionist as a means of dismissing them.

7. Foner, *op. cit.* (original edition), p.109.

8. Herbert G. Gutman, "The Negro and the United Mine Workers of America" in *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America*. (New York): Vintage Books, 1977), pp.151-152. (Editor's Note: Just as this article was being prepared for publication over the Summer, 1985, we read of Prof. Gutman's untimely death. One of the US' most reknown labor historians, Herbert Gutman was a radical scholar whose writings burn with the spirit of resistance and the culture of the oppressed. In addition he did not allow himself to be confined within the traditional limitations of his professional field, contributing significantly, for example, to the history of the Black family in his book, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925*. (New York: Vintage Press, 1977). His work will be missed.)

Interview with Michael Farrell
The Irish Republican Movement Today

Introduction: Ireland Today

Ireland was Britain's first colony. And it might well be Britain's last. After several centuries' occupation, Irish people are still struggling to free themselves from Britain's remaining grip over the northeast corner of Ireland. Since twenty-six of Ireland's thirty-two counties gained independence, numerous attempts have been made to either gain some measure of equality for the North's Catholic population or else oust the British forces militarily from the remaining occupied territory.

The Irish Republican Army has been unable to militarily defeat the British, but neither have the British been successful in crushing the Irish Freedom Movement. All sides involved, from the Republican movement, to the British ruling class, to the Reagan administration, and others now recognize the stalemated military situation. This has led to political developments on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Republican movement, led by Sinn Fein, has turned its attention more to political solutions. As the political organization connected to the I.R.A., Sinn Fein has mounted a serious challenge to the traditional voice of the Nationalist population in the north—the Social Democratic Labor Party (SDLP).

The SDLP's continued "moderation" in the face of British and Orange forces' brutality has earned itself nicknames such as the Stoop Down Low Party in Nationalist strongholds like the Bogside in Derry. In contrast, Sinn Fein support among the persecuted Nationalist population is on the rise. Its politics have taken a decided turn to the left, it has modified its military strategy, and it now sees the Irish struggle in common cause with other freedom struggles the world over, such as with the Palestinian people, and those in Central America and South Africa.

Of further significance is Sinn Fein's new contacts with sympathetic elements in Britain itself. The visits to London for meetings with the Labor Party's left wing by Belfast's Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams, and subsequent visits by Labor Party leaders and activists to the north of Ireland offer the hope of increased unity between the British working class and the struggle for Irish freedom.

The last few years have also witnessed the beginning of political activity in the Republic of Ireland by Sinn Fein. Its efforts to transform itself from a political party in Northern Ireland to an all-Ireland one have resulted in modest gains in the Republic. Sinn Fein candidates are winning elected office in all parts of Ireland. They are taking up economic struggles such as over housing and challenging the Dublin government

over such Nationalist issues as **Ireland's** inability (or unwillingness) to provide more television and radio programming in the Irish language.

Hoping to offset these advances, Anglo-Irish talks between London and Dublin are in progress, ostensibly to come up with a peaceful solution to the troubles in northern Ireland, while attempting to satisfy all sides in the conflict. Such a solution would include such things as "guarantees" for the rights of the Nationalist community, a role for Dublin in the north, and also a continued link to Britain to alleviate the fears of the loyalist, Protestant population.

As for what any of these things will look like, nothing specific has been presented to the public, if any specifics exist at all. But one thing is certain. Most elements in both the loyalist and Nationalist communities have rejected most of these general concepts as either unacceptable or unrealistic.

Even recent attempts in the Irish Republic designed to limit the moral authority and power of the Catholic church within Irish society—for example, legalization of contraceptives—which many hope would make a unified Ireland more palatable to the loyalists, aren't likely to win many converts in the Protestant communities in the north. Besides, the Catholic church recently led a drive to make the illegality of abortion (already illegal by statute) an amendment to the Irish constitution. They were successful.

Within the Nationalist community, there are some elements which fear that Sinn Fein's move away from a purely military strategy and toward left wing politics could end up with the liquidation of the Republican cause, such as what has happened with the "Official" IRA which split off from its military wing, the "Provisionals", in the early 1970's.

The "Officials" gradually shed most of their Republican politics in favor of so-called working class politics. The Worker's Party, as they are now called, began to call for working class unity and an end to religious sectarianism in the face of the brutality suffered by the Nationalist population at the hands of the British and loyalist forces, rather than coming to their defense. Fears that this could happen to Sinn Fein appear unfounded. There isn't a shred of evidence that this is the direction that Sinn Fein is heading. Nationalist politics are on a solid footing in Sinn Fein.

On the other side of the Altantic, there also appears to be movement in the Irish-American community and within the U.S. government. The Irish-American community has long been a major source of aid to the Republican struggle in the north of Ireland. Probably *the* major source. It is a diverse community and large sections of it are quite conservative, and even reactionary. There has been much conflict between many Irish-Americans and oppressed groups in the U.S., particularly Black people. Conservative elements are well represented in the solidarity movement in the U.S. Here you will find "supporters of Irish freedom" who oppose every other liberation movement in the world, and resist the attempts of Black and other oppressed nationality people's in the U.S. to gain equality.

With the Republican movement's tilt toward more left wing politics, there's been some dampening of enthusiasm in some quarters of the Irish-American community for the struggle in the north of Ireland. In local Irish-American newspapers we are begin-

ning to see some sound the alarm that the Republican movement is moving toward Marxism and terrorism.

It looks as though we could be seeing the beginnings of a concerted effort by some Irish-American conservatives, sections of the U.S. media, and the Reagan administration to discredit and slander the Republican movement, and cut that movement off from its U.S. base of support.

Reagan and other right-wing politicians, and much of the U.S. media are escalating their propaganda bombardment, in which the Republican movement is increasingly tied to "Soviet-backed insurgents" and "fanatical terrorists." This while the New Right builds its ties with loyalist groups and genuine fanatics like the Reverend Ian Paisley. In addition, the Reagan administration is actively cooperating with the British government to change extradition laws, making it easier to return to British authorities those Irish Republican activists who have had to take refuge in the U.S.

Forward Motion's Bill Fletcher recently spoke with Irish political activist Michael Farrell on the current situation in Ireland. Michael Farrell helped found "People's Democracy," an organization in the north of Ireland which played a critical role in the organizing of the Civil Rights movement in the north in the late 1960's. People's Democracy has also spawned such well-known Irish freedom fighter's as Bernadette Devlin, who widely championed the cause of a united, socialist Ireland. In the interview which follows, Mr. Farrell assesses current political tendencies and prospects for the Irish freedom movement.

Mr. Farrell is the author of what has been called the definitive history of the northern Irish state, *Northern Ireland: The Orange State*, published by Pluto Press. He is presently a journalist in Dublin, where he continues to advocate social justice and freedom for Ireland.

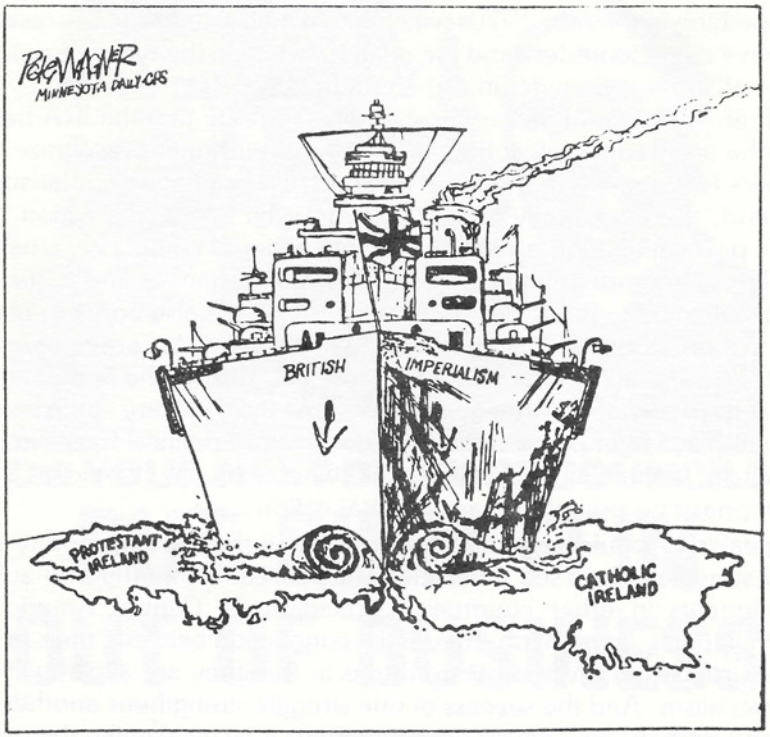
—*Seamus Flaherty*

FM: How would you characterize the present situation in Northern Ireland?

Farrell: The nationalist minority, the Catholic population in the north of Ireland, is in revolt against the repressive conditions under which they live and also against the partition of the country. The two issues have come together. At one time Catholics and nationalists focused more specifically on repression and discrimination within Northern Ireland. Now most see the two issues as completely linked. They cannot secure redress for their grievances within the partitioned state of Northern Ireland, so they focus on Irish unity.

The British government wants to retain its grip upon the north of Ireland largely for strategic reasons but also to some degree for reasons of prestige. Conservative ideologues in Britain see the continuance of the British empire (what remains of it) as important to their party's government. If they are forced to withdraw, it would be a really severe blow to the prestige of the British ruling class.

Within Northern Ireland that puts the nationalists into conflict with the British government and also with the Protestant, Unionist majority which is very much a minority within Ireland as a whole. That revolt has led to armed struggle by the Irish Republican Army, the IRA, and the smaller group the Irish National Liberation Army, or INLA, which has had varying levels of support since it began in the 1970s. Since the hunger strikes in 1981 it has had greater support. Also Sinn Fein, the party of the IRA, is contesting elections and at those elections has won very substantial support—43% of the nationalist community within Northern Ireland.



There is also the constitutionalist nationalist movement. The SDLP [Social Democratic Labor Party—*Editor*] politically represents mainly the Catholic middle professional class but it also has the support of sections of the working class who are more conservatively oriented, influenced by the church, and are sometimes people who have suffered from the violence of the war. But even that party has been forced into a more militant stand, and they have refused to take seats to which they have been elected in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The SDLP now also says that Irish unity is the only solution to the problem.

The Sinn Fein and the IRA have also changed their politics within the last few years. The Sinn Fein has moved considerably to the left on socio-economic issues: as a matter of fact it's almost a socialist party now. They have also changed their conception of

the role of military-political action. Once the IRA was a very militarist organization: it saw military action as the main method of political change and really saw political action as only creating support for the military struggle. Now the official position is that political action and military action are equally important.

In my own view, political action is *more* important than military action. Military action is only one tactic in an overall political struggle. But I do think that this represents a big change and a big advance in the political thinking of Sinn Fein. As a result, what they have been trying to do is to confine their military campaign to targets among the British army and the British security forces. They have moved away from the type of bombing in the mid-1970s which had a high rate of civilian casualties. Generally, they have come to understand the relation between the types of action they take and the level of support they get in the community.

The British army's internal military assessments indicate that the IRA has reached a stage where the army can't defeat them. The British authorities recognize that so long as the Catholics feel aggrieved, there will be an IRA, it will have popular support in the community and, therefore, they cannot destroy it by aggressive action. The British government's political outlook is still one of trying either to completely crush the IRA or contain it militarily and not to make any major political changes and particularly not to move towards Irish unity. Some of the IRA's leaders have also come to recognize that they are not in a position to militarily defeat the British army because they are based on a minority of the population. The minority is roughly 40% of the population, but it still is a minority. Given this, their strategy is to continue their military campaign but also to try to bring into play larger political forces and especially political forces in the south of Ireland, in Britain, in the United States and elsewhere. Again, I would go a little further than that, emphasizing primarily mass political action.

Broadly speaking I would say that the IRA also sees their struggle today as part of an international struggle. They see themselves in political sympathy and solidarity with guerilla movements in other countries, particularly in Central America, southern Africa, the Philippines. In addition, they see a connection between their struggle in Ireland and the struggles in these other countries in that they are all struggling against a common imperialism. And the success of one struggle strengthens another. It strengthens morale and perhaps also physically strengthens it by weakening the overall imperialism which they are fighting. (This is my view and the view of the People's Democracy organization in which I am not active at the moment but which I still politically agree with, and that of the most left section of the leadership of the IRA.) Admittedly, there may still be elements in the IRA who have a more traditionalist conception of their role.

FM: A few minutes ago you were talking about elections and political activity. What sort of non-military political organizing are groups such as People's Democracy, Sinn Fein, Worker's Party, Irish Republican Socialist Party, engaging in? What is possible and what are they doing?

Farrell: Sinn Fein and the IRA draw their primary support from the working class, nationalist community of the north of Ireland. This is still a very deprived working class,

partly as a result of the general recession in Northern Ireland where there is 20% unemployment overall and partly as a result of discrimination within that: there is a great deal more unemployment in the Catholic areas. So the Catholic working class is

Election poster of the Official Unionist Party depicting Gerry Adams, left, and Danny Morrison, Sinn Fein officials.

concentrated in public housing authority projects, low quality slum areas with high unemployment and so on.

Sinn Fein is organizing politically within these areas, not only in support of their armed struggle and a united Ireland, but also on the day-to-day economic and social issues which face the people in these areas. They are agitating about the conditions in housing demanding better housing from public authorities. They are fighting for people to get better welfare benefits. They are using the welfare machinery to try to improve the standard of living. They give advice within working class areas to people as to what benefits they are entitled to. They fight their cases for those benefits with local government offices, and so on. So, they are organizing at a grass roots level in the working class areas.

Sinn Fein is coordinating this work with contesting elections. For a long time they boycotted elections within Northern Ireland. But I think the election of hunger strikers in 1981 convinced Sinn Fein. For a long time there had been an ongoing argument between People's Democracy and Sinn Fein on (a) the value of overall political action, mass political action; (b) the necessity to work within broad fronts (for instance, not to make solidarity work with the IRA or INLA or explicit support for the armed struggle a precondition of involvement in the united fronts and so on); (c) the value of contested elections. They now believe much more in the value of mass political activity. They believe in working within the united fronts and don't demand that the people involved support their entire program. And now they have come to use elections as a method of mobilizing support for their political position and demonstrating that support.

This is an important issue in that the British government carries out propaganda campaigns to try and say that the IRA has no popular support and is simply a bunch of hoodlums. The IRA's political perspective has been to break the hegemony of the constitutionalist nationalist party within the Catholic electorate. Currently they, along with the SDLP, are splitting the vote within the Catholic electorate 50-50 to 60-40 against them. They want to change that balance in their favor. Just at the moment they are interested in and may contest in the government elections. This would be the first major contest for local council elections, and they should win about 46 councils in Northern Ireland, as opposed to maybe 66 for the constitutionalists. That would mean that they will be able to carry their grass roots work on issues that directly effect people's economic and social conditions into the councils, and their perception is that the councilors should work as part of an overall grass roots campaign on this type of issue.

Having concentrated on the role of Sinn Fein, let me speak about some other organizations. People's Democracy is now a small, explicitly Marxist organization without a great deal of popular following or membership. It has been playing more a role of giving ideological leadership to the movement. The INLA is a smaller, left wing organization with a link to the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP). They have declined very much in popular support over the last couple of years. They are both very, very small. The INLA has been extremely reduced by British repression, the use of informers within their ranks, and so on. Also, their *raison d'etre* has disappeared be-

cause they originally came into existence as a more left wing, more Republican socialist type of organization. Now that Sinn Fein has moved further to the left, there is much less difference between their positions. Sinn Fein, as a larger organization, has pulled people towards it—people who formerly would have supported IRSP/INLA. I don't think IRSP/INLA could have contested the elections, to be quite frank.

FM: What about the Worker's Party?

Farrell: The Worker's Party is a strange political phenomenon. It is the product of a split within the IRA Republican movement back in 1970. The split was over two issues. One was that the Republican movement had been moving to the left and committing itself to more radical social policies. Parallel with that, it had downgraded military struggle. When attacks were launched on Catholic ghettos in Northern Ireland by the state security forces, many nationalists felt a need for armed self-defense. The IRA (the old IRA) was unwilling to provide that, and that led to a split. The split was confused because some people who split disagreed with the official IRA's more radical social-economic policies. Others (the majority) split over the issue of defense for Catholic areas. Because that was a felt need of the nationalist minority, the group which split away from the old IRA grew in strength and they eventualy were forced by the British to the left.

The Worker's Party is rooted mostly in the skilled working class and lower professional classes and among liberal elements like students and so on. Sinn Fein is more rooted in the actual industrial working class. It has revised its policy towards the south of Ireland and is making an effort now to campaign poltically there on the same sort of left-wing politics that it has adopted in the north or Ireland. They have come to the realization that while there is considerable sympathy in the south of Ireland for the minority position in the north, that is not the dominant issue in the minds of working class people in the south of Ireland. Sinn Fein is now putting primary emphasis in the south on the day-to-day living conditions of the poor there and trying to link that with the national question rather than having the national question be their main political platform in the south. They have had success with this strategy and in the last overall elections in the south they won more votes than the Worker's Party.

FM: Is there any kind of progressive or radical organization going on among Protestants?

Farrell: I'm not up-to-date on the situation in the north among Protestants. The trade union movement in the north was traditionally dominated by the Protestants because discrimination excluded the Catholics from skilled jobs. A lot of its time was devoted to defending the privileged position of Protestants. I presume it is fairly similar to the trade union movement here in the states which has defended white workers' privileged status. So the trade union movement played no real role in the early Civil Rights struggle in the north and has played no role in the broader struggle for a united Ireland. Recently, however, the Republican movement has started to pay greater attention to trade union work, partly as a decision by Sinn Fein, but partly just as a by-product of the situation. Fifty percent of Catholics do not have jobs, but many have unionized and are trying to play a more active role in the unions. Initially this has taken place

in those workforces which are predominantly Catholic—the poorer workforces like hospital and civil workers, domestics and so forth.

So there has been an increase in trade union activity initially among Catholic workers. But this activity has spread to include some of the Protestant workers. There has been more militancy where Protestant and Catholic workers have been working together in the trade unions. For instance, there have been some strikes for industrial action which have included Protestants, particularly low paid public service workers. That has led to a little more class conscious trade union activity among Protestant workers than there was some years ago.

Actually, one of the criticisms I have of Sinn Fein is that they still do not give as much importance to this work as they should. Within the overall struggle against the British in the north of Ireland, it is very important to try to work with the Protestant workers where possible in order to reduce sectarianism. A few trade union officials have not only begun to take a stronger stand on purely economic issues, but have begun to face discrimination as well. So, as I say, there are some slight progressive developments going on there but nothing very major.

FM: In a speech you just gave here in the U.S., you mentioned the McBride principles. Could you say a little bit about this? In particular, you said that the issue of affirmative action in Northern Ireland was a time bomb. I've forgotten the exact metaphor you used. . . .

Farrell: I think I said the detonator. Well, this is an issue which has not been very clearly argued yet among the Republican movement in the North. Religious discrimination continues against Catholics at quite a high level in skilled work and civil service. There is a government Fair Employment Agency in the north of Ireland. But legislation specifically excludes the possibility of any type of affirmative action, or any type of action, which can in fact change the situation. There are American companies operating in Northern Ireland whose policies are as discriminatory as all the other companies.

Recently in America, a set of principles has been drawn up called the McBride Principles which call for affirmative action in these companies. They are modelled on the Sullivan Principles concerning U.S. investment in South Africa. I would think that in South Africa what is necessary is not just the sanitizing of the working conditions of American companies but divestment. The situation there is much more urgent and discrimination much greater. But within Northern Ireland, if the issue of affirmative action can be forced upon American companies by the proper authorities here adopting the McBride principles, that would expose the Fair Employment Agency and the inadequacy of the British legislation. It would hopefully force the Britsh to adopt affirmative action as policy in Northern Ireland. Either they *wouldn't* do it, in which case their inability and unwillingness to change discrimination would be exposed; or it would force them into doing it and create more conflict between the British government and the Orange elements who defend discrimination and sectarianism. It would break the effective alliance that is going on at the moment between the British and the Orange elements. Either way it would play an important role in the situation. That is

why I say the American companies could act as a detonator to explode this whole situation.

FM: Based on what you have been saying, there seem to be some very striking parallels between the situation facing the Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland and the situation here in the United States facing Afro-Americans. The issues you raise about the trade union movement are particularly striking. Is that parallel a popular perception in Northern Ireland?

Farrell: I think it is. The Civil Rights movement in the north of Ireland was very much inspired by the Civil Rights movement of Black people in the U.S. in the 1960s. This was so both in terms of the general conception and the actual tactics adopted. One of the key Civil Rights marches in Northern Ireland (which was organized by People's Democracy) from Belfast to Derry was modeled on the march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965. Certainly after the beginning of the Civil Rights movement, the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland saw their position as analogous to that of Afro-Americans in the States. For instance, one of the key statements made at one of the earliest rallies that we staged in Derry spoke of the Catholic working class minority as the white Negroes of Northern Ireland. That was grasped immediately by the crowd as an exact description of their position. I think that perception has continued right through.

Today there would also be identification with freedom struggles all over the world—the Palestinians, the ANC in South Africa, the guerillas in Central America, and so on. Definitely Catholics in Northern Ireland—the politicized ones in particular, but I think almost all Catholics in Northern Ireland—would identify with the position of Black people in the United States or Black people in England, where there is also discrimination. There are some links between them as minority groups.

FM: In Britain, how have those links been built? Is there a concrete form that they have taken?

Farrell: Well, some of them were built in practice. There were big riots in Brixton and London a couple of years ago by Black and Asian youth against the police as a result of harassment there. The reaction of the Black and Asian youth was to identify with the IRA in Ireland and there were slogans "We are the Black IRA." Since then there has been a lot of movement in the British left around the issue of Ireland. There is the "Troops Out" movement which is one of the alternative groups on the left of the Labor Party. Many of these are groups which are also deeply involved in the struggle of the Black and Asian people of Britain. This has brought the two issues together and there has been a quite conscious drawing of parallels which I think has been readily grasped on both sides. It does inspire us to see on television Black and Asian groups rioting in England who totally support the fact that we are rioting against the same thing. So, within the overall development in Britain, those links have been made much stronger.

FM: One last question. Here in the U.S., especialy since the contemporary struggle in Northern Ireland became an armed struggle, there has been a support and solidarity movement particularly based among Irish-

Americans. Do you have any observations about that support movement?

Farrell: There are two observations I think I would make. One is that of the very large number of Irish descendant people in the United States, only a tiny fraction are active in the solidarity movement for the struggle of Northern Ireland. From the Irish point of view there needs to be considerable thought given as to how to greatly increase that support. Part of the problem is that there is a small, very vocal section that gives complete support to the IRA alongside a much larger sector of the Irish-American community interested in issues of human rights in Northern Ireland but, because they are not there to experience the day-to-day oppression and harassment that the Irish people suffer, can't really sympathize with the armed struggle. Very little effort has been made to organize this second grouping.

The other point to be made about U.S.-based solidarity is that I know that in certain areas of the United States, probably here in Boston, there has been a great deal of tension between the Irish-American and Black communities over the rights of the Black community. The Irish in this area have been on the wrong side of the question of rights for Black people. I haven't personally met it, but I have been speaking to the more politicized Irish Americans. But I am told that there are elements in the solidarity movement with the Irish struggle who have a bad record or don't take a stand for the rights of Afro-Americans. I think that is very much out of touch with what the situation in Ireland is today. I think the Irish organizations today would want people in solidarity with the Irish freedom movement in the United States to be prepared to take up the struggle of Afro-American people as well. I think Sinn Fein is probably doing its best to politicize and educate its supporters in this country on that level. But since Sinn Fein people are not allowed into the U.S., their contact with the solidarity movement is not so good and they may not be completely aware themselves of the problem.

FM: I thank you very much for sharing your ideas with us today.

Macho Nerds for Reagan
Street Theatre in the '80s

The invasion of Grenada sent most progressives reeling. How do you effectively argue with apparent success? But at the University of Wisconsin, the Macho Nerds for Reagan—a guerilla theatre operation—were later able to turn the Grenada domestic offensive on its head. The Nerds demonstrated a way to take the initiative when the Right appears to have the upper hand.

These Macho Nerds, by the way, claim to represent the *true* spirit of Republicanism. They and their ladies auxilliary, Girl Geeks for the Gipper, like to dress in appropriate clothes and cheer the Right-wingers at public events. Their platform says things like: "Make children say grace before receiving school lunches." They have names like Skip Steele and Muffy Tupperware.

The Nerds' greatest coup was last October on the one year anniversay of the invasion of Grenada. It was at a College Republican event called Student Liberation Day. Here is the setting.

The College Republicans (CRs) were on a roll at the traditionally liberal University of Wisconsin, Madison. They considered themselves part of a national conservative movement that would transform even the reddest campuses. CRs swaggered about campus and obnoxiously ran up to progressives to tell them their days were numbered. Little did they know.

Student Liberation Day is best experienced through the eyes of a young Republican. It is an overcast day on October 25th. You've helped organize a national event to coincide with Reagan's re-election campaign. Madison is seen as the frontline. Campuses across the country are bringing actual rescued medical students to speak.

But the day starts off badly. You and a distressingly small number of CRs are gathered on the steps of the Student Union with your imported medical student. You had to move the rally site because those creepy Macho Nerds for Reagan got wind of your plans. The Nerds put up posters first, announcing their own same-titled Student Liberation Day on your original site. The gathered onlookers don't appreciate you and the sound system sounds like it is inside an aquarium that echoes.

Suddenly, a phalanx of Nerds and Girl Geeks appear in garish polyester. They carry absurd picket signs like "Kill the Poor." They chant "Macho Nerds for Reagan, punch out the weak!"

The crowd is enthralled. You and fellow CRs blanch, dimly realizing what you're in for. Chant sheets are snapped up by onlookers. They exuberantly join in with "Money for Bombs, Not the Poor, U.S. go to El Salvador." The Nerds and Geeks are on adrenaline highs. It's working better than they dared hope. They incite the gathering further.

The crowd grows more menacing and chants at you, "Kiss the ground, kiss the ground." The Nerds *do* kiss the ground, while a TV camera laps it up.

In an attempt to regain momentum, you and fellow CRs regroup and shout in unison "U-S-A, U-S-A." Nerds with tape on their glasses walk over and join in with even greater patriotic fervor. You can't win and silently fume. "Nuke New Zealand" screams the mob. Student Liberation Day collapses into chaos. The Nerds are ecstatic.

That's an unembellished description of how the Nerds and Geeks deflated one of the Right-wing's most successful issues. After starting the semester with the largest Republican rally in recent campus memory, only about a dozen CRs braved the anticipated Nerd appearance at Student Liberation Day.

Political Judo

Let's call the Nerd approach political judo—grabbing opposing views and pushing them to humiliating extremes. It's a fabulous organizing technique you should consider for your campus or workplace. Political judo offers these advantages: it can devastate the opposition; it is mass oriented; it entertains the troops—essential during the Reagan dark ages; it offers wide political education opportunities; the press eats it up; and it's a blast. There are limitations, but we'll get to those.

The thrashing of the Republican's golden hour of Grenada shows how effective satire and ridicule can be. The Madison Nerds and Geeks feel they are actually responsible for knocking the wind out of the campus CR onslaught. The CRs became timid in their public outreach, afraid of what wild distortions and embarrassments would befall their every utterance.

The Nerds were especially bothersome because the Republicans had no effective defense. At an official Nerd press conference, a CR heckler fought back by demanding to know where the money came from. "We get it from the Republican National Committee," was the reply. To the delight of gathered journalists, the *livid* CR screamed "No you DON'T."

The Nerds could not have written him a better script. Denouncing the Nerds for distorting things (!) only sounded humorless and stupid. The CRs only alternative would have been to out-clever the Nerds with "Wimps for Mondale" or the like. Experience has shown there is no danger of this.

The Nerds scrupulously stayed in character, making it easy to deflect attacks. A ROTC member once accosted a Nerd and demanded, "Are you a homosexual slut?" The Nerd was taken aback at first, then covered his face in abject shame, screeched "who *told* you" and slunk away. The genuinely stunned ROTC guy mumbled "I was only kidding." On another occasion an elderly lady asked for ten extra leaflets from Stinky Finkelstein (he's German, not Jewish). Stinky handed over the leaflets and the woman tore them up. Shouts of "Communist, Communist," sent her scurrying.

Sound like fun? Activists love becoming Nerds or Geeks. Political judo really *involves* people. There's fun brainstorming, poster painting parties, leafleting, the thrill of the stage, and the feeling that you've actually touched people. There's also months of reliving street politics victories over beer.

Talk about releasing the initiative of the masses, two of the Nerds' best chants, "Kiss

the ground," and "There's no suburbs in Russia," were spontaneously created by the ugly mob at Student Liberation Day.

Political judo keeps activists oriented towards the public, not solidarity group Peyton Places. There are no endless meetings and dreary sloganeering which are death for new activists. And the intensity of Nerd events gives hard and fast experience to the neophytes, as well as new stimulation to the jaded.

The Nerds' most appreciative audiences were other activists trying to maintain their bearings during the insipid '84 presidential campaign. Peels of laughter followed signs like "Bomb Ronnie Bomb" (chanted like "Run Jesse Run"). After days of occupying the Wisconsin State Capitol, anti-apartheid militants were treated to an entire skit denouncing them. ("Freeeee Nelson RockeFELLor" was sung to the tune of the Specials song about Mandela.) Picketers of a Right-to-Life convention were cheered by counter-picketers chanting "Mommies, mommies, don't be commies, stay at home and fold pajamies." (A huge big tip of the hat to the West Coast Ladies Against Women for that one.) A problem here was that a newspaper focussed on the Nerds, barely mentioning the pro-choice demonstration. In addition, some progressives thought the Nerds were for real and said mean things to them. But that was fun too.

Underlying the Nerd antics were serious objectives. Besides whaling on the reactionaries and stiffening the troops, political judo can help educate people about the nature of society. Simply take any undesirable view and stretch it until the unpleasantly logical conclusion snaps back into the eyeball. Here are some topics the Nerds addressed:

Class: "Not me, draft the poor, send 'em to El Salvador.

Capitalism: "Turn fire departments over to the free enterprise system."

Jingoism: "Establish two minute hate sessions against Libya."

Feminism: "Protect the rights of women, especially unborn women. Ban abortion."

Militarism: "Invade a small island annually on the anniversay of Grenada."

Paternal Racism: "In cooperation with the First Lady, we're going to have a Michael Jackson concert in the Rose Garden for the Negro children."

Because serious points were couched in humor, the press gave coverage to views usually too incendiary to mention. The bit about "two minutes hate against Libya" got on TV. Rarely does such disrespect for basic precepts of U.S. foreign policy get so widely disseminated.

The Nerds were wildly successful at getting press coverage. Wacky advance press releases helped, but a lot of it was the timing. The media was overloaded by the smarmyness of the '84 campaign. A certain honesty helped too. Basic to the Nerd message is "Of course we're media whores, shamelessly trying to manipulate the press." Cynical journalist types appreciate this.

The Madison Nerds estimate a dozen local radio, TV and print outlets covered them at least once. A national college press service distributed a feature article, and the nationwide *Campus Voice* magazine carried a blurb. The *Philadelphia Enquirer* ran a front page photo of Nerd compatriots at the Bush-Ferraro debate. There was even mention in *U.S.A. Today*.

An added advantage to political judo is that even the worst papers have difficulty

distorting it. Simply printing the name "Macho Nerds for Reagan" gets the point across, no matter how they defile the actual events.

Photo by Mary M. Langenfeld

Playing It In Oshkosh

The magic of the '84 campaign would be difficult to duplicate. But political judo could possibly be extended to your own situation. Maybe try this at your workplace: "Macho Scabs for a Longer Work Week, because *we* can hack it." If your kids' library is threatened by censorship, how about "Nerds for Clean Reading." Better yet, don't let on it's a joke; create turmoil by demanding censorship of the most ludicrous choices. Dr. Seuss is a red! Hmmm, maybe that's not extreme enough.

There are limitations to Nerdism. The Madison Nerds found that campaign humor and jousting with CRs didn't translate well off campus. It was good for scattering the opposition and for the edification of the already progressive, but few folks in Oshkosh, Wisconsin appreciated them.

Oshkosh is one of the towns Reagan visited to promote his tax plan. The Nerds showed up to greet him, along with 10,000 residents of small Wisconsin towns. The Macho Tax Plan leaflet and other antics drew laughs from a few closet progresssives glad to know they weren't alone in the North woods. But most people were just bewildered by the Nerds and Geeks. Many were angered. The Nerds couldn't upstage an act like the President of the United States. The Nerds became isolated in a hot, pressed crowd, managing only to irritate the people close enough to hear the goofy

chants. The press's scanty coverage of opposition went to people who took their clothes off.

At Oshkosh, the Nerds learned their tactics affect primarily the politically aware—the Right by embarrassing them, the Left by inspiring them. In Oshkosh, few knew how to take the demand to end farm subsidies and "replace them with a new crop that's glowing on the horizon. Two missiles in every silo!" Many people reacted as if their basic beliefs were being ridiculed by weird out-of-towners. The Nerds weren't out to mock the patriotism of Oshkosh farmers, but rather to embarrass a demagogue who plays on people's trust. But much of the crowd identified with Reagan's view of the U.S. and felt they also were the target of derision. Reagan's policies are, of course, at odds with the interests of Oshkosh residents and it seems there should be a crack there wide enough to drive a mile-wide wedge through. But even the Nerd demand to protect the family by cutting Social Security (in order to keep the grandparents at home) failed to cut through the haze.

The cherished objective of shock politics like the Nerds' is to make people re-examine basic beliefs. The Nerds got no feedback on whether any soul-searching followed the Oshkosh residents' initial anger. It is unlikely there was much reappraisal of world outlooks. But it seems reasonable some doors were opened. Probably the greater effect of Nerd tactics is to stimulate and focus the questions people already have. But for those faithful to American traditions, the Nerd approach may be too aggressive and polarizing to spark genuine re-examination. People you are trying to win over just get too defensive.

But the Macho Nerds can still embarrass the dinosaurs and stir the questioners. Go and be a Nerd. Or a Go-Go Girl, as the Nerds nasally refer to their Girl Geeks.

There is power in speaking the underlying truth of the *real* Macho Nerds.

—Biff Haywood, III

(Biff Haywood, III is a Macho Nerd theorist.)

Stirrings in the Bronx

I live one block west of the second widest thoroughfare in New York City—the Grand Concourse. Within easy walking distance is the Italian working class neighborhood of Villa Avenue in the Bronx where my mother grew up and a tree-lined block on Rochambeau Avenue where my paternal grandfather's house sits. His house awaits the same fate that has befallen the majority of houses on the block; to be fed into the insatiable maw of an ever-expanding Montefiore Hospital.

My parents left this neighborhood 35 years ago with me in tow, not yet five years old, to resettle in Stamford, Connecticut. The neighborhood we first lived in was not very stately. It was a barracks-like suburban way-station for the upwardly mobile. Finer neighborhoods would follow this initial real estate investment.

Most of my family dutifully followed this migration from the Bronx to Connecticut or upstate New York. It was part of the middle class credo, although later a moral onus was frequently attached to this movement by referring to it as "white flight." But I did something odd. At the age of 22, I decided to reverse the years of my family's generational progression and returned to New York City and eventually to the very community my family pulled me out of 17 years earlier.

The building I have been living in for eight years was almost solidly Jewish in the 1950s. The mezuzah, like a cocked, all-protective eye in the frame of my front door is a testament to that long bygone period. Now I would estimate that 70% of the tenants are Puerto Rican, 20% white and 10% are black. The surrounding neighborhood was traditionally Irish and Jewish, a mixture of middle, professional and working class families. Today, the neighborhood is predominantly third world and poor. Some people call it a neighborhood in transition and decline. I call it a victim of class and racial warfare. Last week my insurance agent reminded me that since I live one block south of Kingsbridge Road, I am considered a resident of the South Bronx. But this is a kind of racial geography because physically I live in the Northwest Bronx. This distinction translates into higher insurance rates, fewer mortgages, poorer services and all the other mean and petty consequences of racial discrimination.

Although the Bronx has become a media metaphor for urban blight, I love my neighborhood. It has a unhewn, heroic quality to it that both the suburban outlands and the bloodless, gentrified tracts of Manhattan lack. Across the street from my home is the cottage-residence of the demoniac-genius Edgar Allan Poe. A few blocks away is the Kingsbridge Armory—the largest in the world. Down Fordham Road are the Botanical Gardens and the Bronx Zoo. The descendents of the laborers who built these cultural gems live in the adjacent Italian community of Arthur Avenue. My great grandfather owned a tavern on 187th Street. No matter how much the Bronx has changed in ethnic composition, on a hot summer night the sidewalks of the Arthur

Avenue neighborhood are still cluttered with elderly Italian men and women, sitting and communing with the fresh air and each other on their block. Their neighborhood remains strong and they stick out a collective tongue at the politics of neglect and fear.

New immigrants from Korea, the Dominican Republic, Thailand, Yugoslavia, Albania, Italy and the West Indies have poured into the Kingsbridge neighborhood in recent years. It bristles with the hues of many skin colors and the musicality of many tongues. They dream in common though, of a better place to live and raise their children. But the Koch and Reagan administrations as well as most of the media have had a different vision of the Bronx. In terms of an interborough division of labor, the Bronx is to serve as a holding pen or dumping grounds for the poor and oppressed, a squalid, non-white backdrop to the glitter of what is becoming more than ever the whorehouse of the rich—Manhattan.

My neighborhood, the ancestral spawning grounds of my family, rich in history and glory, the soil of great cultural institutions and ethnic neighborhoods, is under continuing attack by those whose view of New York is parochial, mediocre and immoral.

My neighbors are neither playing possum nor compliant pawns in this scheme. The tenants in my building have formed a tenants' organization and join the many other tenants in my neighborhood who have already done so. Down the Grand Concourse, community people marched recently with banners protesting the alleged police murder of Eleanor Bumpers who was killed for being Black, poor and in need of psychiatric services. The Bronx is stirring. People are moving to reclaim their neighborhoods from greedy real estate interests and bush-league politicians. I foresee the dynamic and creative energy for human renewal in New York City emanating from the shunned and plundered northernmost borough, the Bronx, my home.

—Gil Fagiani

Good News/cpf

LocoMotion
Liveaid

Live Aid was damn impressive. No one really knows how many hundred million people around the world saw TV broadcasts of the twin rock and roll concerts in London and Philadelphia on July 13 or how many more heard radio coverage. Hundreds of musicians, some of them figures who have had massive impact on the development of rock and roll as a cultural form, put greed and ego aside (or at least on the back burner) to fight African famine. It was the climax of a process which began with Band Aid in England and developed here as USA for Africa. That process has publicized the horror of mass starvation, galvanized a whole range of social forces into action and raised a fortune for relief efforts. (The Dutch alone were reported to have pledged $30 million during the Live Aid broadcast.) Who could fault such a magnificent effort?

Rock critics, that's who. It's their job and they did it well. Publications like England's *NME* and writers like Dave Marsh (in New York's *Village Voice*) or Joyce Millman (in the *Boston Phoenix*) raised a *lot* of pointed criticisms and unsettling questions about Live Aid. In doing so, they crystallized and expanded on reservations many fans and many political activists felt. More important, they gave those of us who care deeply about rock and roll some interesting tools with which to make our own summations. Let's look at three of the major points of controversy.

We Are The (First) World

First off, the whole thing was Euro-American-centric, almost bizarrely so. There was a sticky aura of smugness and self-congratulation about the concert broadcasts, but the most blatant aspect of this was the bill.

Sure, rock and roll is, for all its world-wide impact, centered in the US and Britain, with contributions of various importance coming from a range of industrialized nations. But where was *reggae*, one of the most vital and pervasive currents in rock since the early '70s? And where were the *African* musicians, whose influence on bands like Talking Heads and the Police is a major hallmark of rock in the '80s? No doubt, the money is mainly going to come from developed countries. But face facts: Peter Tosh or King Sunny Ade would have done more to boost contributions than, say, the awful band the USSR shoehorned in at the last minute, not to mention to enhance the quality of the event.

In fact, it was mainly the outraged hollering of rock writers during the planning stage that salvaged LiveAid from being a blindingly white negation of the central role of Black music in rock and roll. The original line-up announced had few major Black acts, slighting even crossover giants like those who were part of the USA for Africa session. Event organizers responded, "Well, gee, we asked a lot of folks but they were busy."

Here, writ large, is the lesson that political activists and revolutionaries in the US cannot afford to forget: time and again *special attention* will be required to overcome the effects of national oppression and white-biased ways of looking at things. In this case, it meant realizing that acts with predominantly Black audiences need every possible playing gig to survive, can ill afford to cancel scheduled shows or recording sessions and are often under more stringent management control than big name white groups.

Efforts were made to deal with these obstacles, finally, but the event was salvaged more than transformed. Particularly moving was Teddy Pendergrass' comeback flanked by Ashford and Simpson. Other of the featured Black artists, like the Four Tops and former Temps Eddie Kendricks and David Ruffin who sang with Hall and Oates, were also not exactly what's happening in Black music in 1985. Where were stars like Whitney Houston or DeBarge or Kashif? Ace rappers Run/DMC got a slot, but MTV cut them off after about two bars to make room for an interview with the aging blond heartthrob Sting!

Do They Know It's Imperialism?

LiveAid's national and racial composition wasn't the only thing critics took aim at. They pointed to some big problems in the line that the TV spectacular pushed on famine. First, it tended to simply remove hunger from any political context whatsoever, leaving a picture of an act of God (drought) compounded by human ignorance (backward farming practices and so on). The role of imperialism in causing underdevelopment and the disruption of traditional agriculture, the failure of developed countries to take the problem seriously until far too late, the internal policies of the repressive governments in East Africa, propped up by the US (the Sudan, for example) or the USSR (Ethiopia), all went almost unmentioned.[1] Hunger was presented as a distant problem. Well, if "hunger has been eliminated in 84 countries" as announcers like Sally Fields kept saying, what are all those folks doing at foodbanks in New York and Youngstown and Houston and your town and mine? And the solution? Money.

In fact, LiveAid could be interpreted as the ultimate vindication of Ronald Reagan's "voluntarism" prescription for social problems to be dumped on the "private sector." Some people tried to undercut this message. Bob Geldorf, the English rocker who initiated and has remained the moving force in this whole process, put it very forcefully to the media, who have been promoting him for the Nobel Peace Prize or perhaps canonization, saying that rock and roll, both performers and fans, had done its best and it's way past time for governments to stop shirking and half stepping. Other participants called on the corporations, like ABC, which made $4,500,000 profit broadcasting several hours of the concerts and donated none of it, to get on the stick.

Nevertheless, the argument remains. LiveAid failed to help viewers understand how famine and hunger continue to exist in a world where farmers go bankrupt because they can produce too much food too cheaply. It left them passive spectators at a massive spectacle, with pledging money on the phone the only course of action offered.

Day of the Dinosaurs

And the spectacle itself did not go unscathed. As rock critics will, they commented on the quality of the music. Most were pretty cranky about it, and I think they were

right. The bulk of the show was dinosaurs, artists whose creative primes lie ten to twenty years in the past. Some were grim indeed—my friend Tom summarized the semi-finale as "the late Bob Dylan backed by the late Ron Wood and the late Keith Richard." For my part, I was particularly irked by "Dancin' in the Streets," a song which in the '60s was a *social anthem*, an essential soundtrack for partying or rioting. At LiveAid, we got a video of David Bowie and Mick Jagger, just the two of them, singing as they gazed into the limpid pools of each other's eyes. It made you want to spit.

Okay, there *was* plenty of fine music, much of it presented by those newer bands like the Pretenders and Style Council who did get to perform. Still, LiveAid as a look at the state of rock and roll music at age 30[2] showed distressingly many symptoms of middle age and some of rigor mortis (i.e. Crosby, Stills and Nash). It did not give much sense of the vibrant streams which still flow into rock and roll, keeping it a yeasty, exciting art form—reggae and African, but also soca, salsa and Mexican, rap and funkfusion, hardcore and heavy metal, dancemixes, cajun, and more.

These related criticisms of composition, content and culture don't exhaust the list of LiveAid's flaws. Nor are they all there is to be learned from it. Most reviews wound up with overall favorable summations, and a lot of thoughtful correspondence in *NME* seemed to concur. *Rock and Roll Confidential*, the masterly newsletter Dave Marsh edits,[3] said "Good work done less than perfectly done is one hell of a lot better than no work at all." Joyce Millman thought the main thing was that "it showed people what they should demand from the music—that it bring them together for a common purpose."

My own summation runs along these lines. Whatever its shortcomings, the Band-Aid—USA for Africa—LiveAid process has accomplished an enormous deal. Lives have already been saved. A fire has been lit under the ruling class in this country and others. No taint of smarminess, moral posturing or self-satisfaction was enough to tarnish the overwhelmingly positive social effect in the US. Campus activists, for instance, have summed up that the fight against African famine has helped to "relegitimate" social concern on campus and this was a part of the social climate in which the student upsurge around South Africa took place during the spring.

Let's take this one step further. Right now, rock and roll, I'll argue, occupies a *unique* place in American society. It promotes and embodies a bunch of values which are generally progressive and sometimes revolutionary, retains the rebellious stance it was born with, and serves as a major counter-current to the ideology of the Reagan era.

"Now wait just a minute here," I hear you say. Hold up. I don't claim rock is without contradictions and hideous failings: racism, male chauvinism, selfish values. That's the meat of this column, after all. But look around. What other sphere of American life in 1985 is as little poisoned or hobbled by reaction? Not the unions. Not religion. Not movies or television or sculpture or paperback fiction. Not the schools. Not the Democrats. Medicine? Sports? Fast food? The Media? Come on. To use the most deadly of left cliches—it's no accident that it was the rock and roll community of artists, critics, and others in the business, and millions of fans who created a LiveAid. It's a damn good thing that rock and roll was there to rip African famine out of the category of

Third-World-disaster-as-usual and point out the obligations of society in the developed countries. It sure wasn't happening before "Do They Know It's Christmas?"

Well, this is a longer discussion and one LocoMotion will be returning to. I would like to end this column by stacking the deck a little. This October, look for a record called "Sun City." It's a "We Are The World"-type project being spark-plugged by rocker Steve Van Zandt (Little Steven) and producer Arthur Baker. "We are rockers and rappers united and strong/We're here to talk about South Africa and we don't like what's going on." Tracks have already been recorded by Jimmy Cliff, Pat Benatar, Ray Barretto, Lou Reed, George Clinton, Jackson Browne, Darlene Love, Miles Davis, and dozens of other stars. Sounds like it'll be a killer.

—Dennis O'Neil

Notes

1. Special praise is due the German contingent, whose pre-song statement included the trenchant observation: "The commanders in Washington and the Kremlin are sick in the head."

2. July 13, 1955 marked the third week at #1 for Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock," the first rock song to top the pop charts. Chuck Berry's first single, "Maybellene," was at Chess Records' pressing plant.

3. I keep intending to devote a whole LocoMotion to recommended reading and doubtless will, but if you follow rock and roll, you should be reading this nifty publication. Write to RARC, Dept. 27, Box 1073, Maywood, NJ. Ask for a free copy, pronto. If you like it, subscribe.

---

rward Motion Forward Motion Forward