

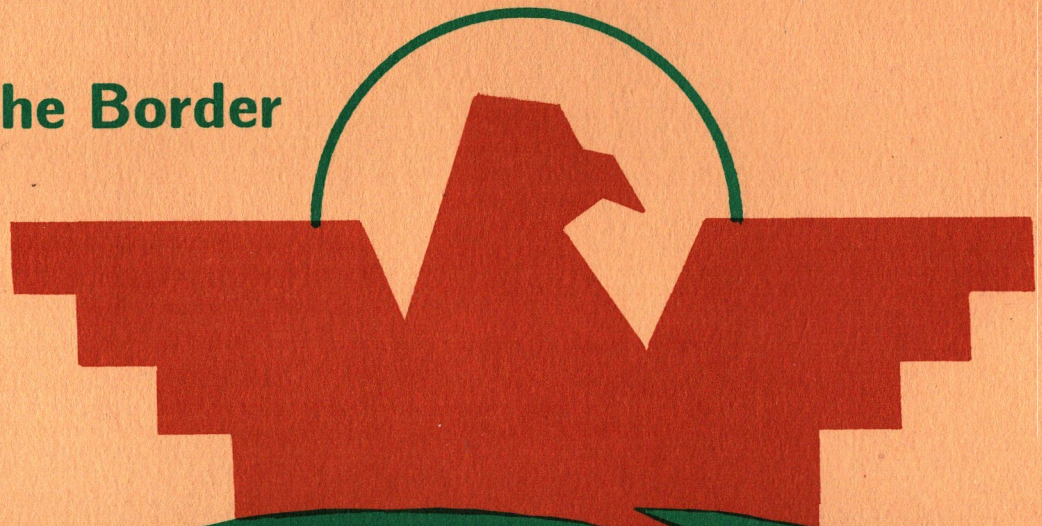
November–December 1987

A Socialist Magazine

\$2.50

forward motion

Both Sides of the Border



Chicano and Mexicano Activists Look to the Future

Immigrant Labor and Simpson–Rodino

Left Unity in Mexico

Crisis in Panama

Forward Motion

November—December 1987
Vol. 6, No. 5

Editorial Collective

Susan Cummings
Seamus Flaherty
Tom Goodkind
Jon Hoffman
Lucy Marx
Vivien Morris
Claire Welles

Associate Editors

Peggy Baker
Bill Fletcher, Jr.

FORWARD MOTION is a magazine of socialist opinion and advocacy. We say socialist opinion because each FM presents analyses of important organizing work and reviews of political and cultural trends. We say socialist advocacy because FM is dedicated to a new left-wing presence in U.S. politics and to making Marxism an essential component of that presence. We share these purposes with other journals, but we seek for FM a practical vantage point from within the unions, the Black and other freedom struggles, the women's movement, the student, anti-war, and gay liberation movements, and other struggles. We also emphasize building working people's unity as a political force for social change, particularly through challenging the historical pattern of white supremacy and national oppression in the capitalist domination of this country.

In This Issue

A number of events this past year have combined to put and keep the U.S. border with Mexico more sharply in the news and on people's minds. These events range from the Immigration Reform and Control Act to Costa Rican President Arias' bold peace initiative for Central America. In one of the articles in this *FM*, Chicano student activist Devon Peña states, "the U.S.-Mexico border is the only place on earth where the First World meets the Third World head-on in a collision between cultures and classes." Peña suggests the singular explosiveness of the issues now focusing on that border (though we might compare it to the Soviet-Afghan border). This issue of *FM* explores the critical economic and political issues that mark "both sides of the border."

What is the significance of the immigration law reform? In recent years, U.S. business' dependence on Latino labor has steadily grown. On one side are the *maquilladora* factory workshops; on the other are U.S. industries like the Los Angeles apparel industry whose basis is quite similar, as contributor Peter Olney points out. The immigration reform's punitive features towards employers of undocumented labor appears to run counter to U.S. capital's needs. Certainly economic dependence is not likely to recede nor are the desperate conditions in Mexico and Central America likely to abate. So the law's actual effect might lie less in eliminating labor competition from undocumented workers than in further depressing wages in U.S.-based sectors relying on that labor. In turn, this may further depress wages generally in the U.S. For sections of U.S. capital now openly arguing that U.S. competitiveness means wage competitiveness with the Third World, this may not sound so bad.

For U.S. working people, such an outcome will add a sad irony to widespread anti-immigrant, anti-Third World labor attitudes. These are no longer just a matter of anti-Japanese fervor, and the challenge to U.S. Left and progressive activists has grown commensurately. Bucking simple-minded protectionism, we need to build a sense of common cause, of going forward together against world capital. We need to show the American people that U.S. intervention in Central America—no less than its presence in South Korea or the Philippines or South Africa—preserves the pressures of low wages and corporate profits and little else.

From among the Latino peoples, there is already a growing pole of resistance. Steadily bolstered by the process of immigration across the border, the Chicano people have grown stronger. Demographically, Latinos generally and Chicanos and Mexicanos particularly are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. Undeterred by the backward ideolo-

Contents

Editorial	The Left and Jesse Jackson	1
Editorial	End the Coors Boycott?	6
Interviews	Bright Promise: The Chicano and Mexicano Movements <i>with Delores Huerta, Kiko Martinez, Argemiro Morales, Devon Peña, Daniel Orsuna, Angela Sanbrano</i>	8
Poetry	The Illegal <i>Rosario Caldera Salazar</i>	16
Interview	Organizing Around the New Immigration Law <i>with Barry Harlow</i>	17
Labor	Everything Under the Sun <i>Peter Olney</i>	20
Analysis and Interviews	Left Unity In Mexico <i>by Victor Roha</i>	25
Analysis	Crisis in Panama <i>Lamoin Werlein-Jaen</i>	35
Obituary	On the Death of Truman Nelson <i>Alexander Lynn</i>	41
Labor	No Going Back to the Jungle <i>Joe Alley</i>	45

Forward Motion

November–December 1987
Vol 6., No. 5

FORWARD MOTION is published six times a year by the Center for Democratic Alternatives.

A single issue is \$2.50 plus \$.50 postage and handling. A yearly subscription is \$12.00; \$25.00 for a sustainers subscription. Library and institutional rate is \$25.00 per year. Address all orders for single issues, subscriptions, back issues, and change of address to Forward Motion, P.O. Box 1884, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. Please inquire concerning bulk orders and book store rates.

Forward Motion welcomes unsolicited articles, but please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope with requests for return of originals. Articles may be submitted on 5 1/4" computer diskette in most MS-DOS or CP/M word processing formats.

Second class postage, Boston, MA and additional mailing offices.

Design and Layout
Linda Roistacher

Printed by Red Sun Press
Jamaica Plain, Mass

Subscribe to Forward Motion

Issued six times a year.

\$12.00 for 1 year subscription.
\$25.00 for sustainers subscription.

FORWARD MOTION
P.O. Box 1884
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Name _____

Address _____

City/St/Zip _____

...In This Issue

gies offered in the Immigration Law, or California's "English Only" referendum, the statements from Chicano and Mexicano activists included here show a political assertion and independence that is bound to grow.

The Ollie North hearings and other Reagan administration antics seem to be having a similarly negligible effect on Central American countries and political movements. In those hearings, the rhetoric of the danger of Soviet meddling was raised to new heights, but the U.S.' reputation as the number one oppressor in Central America only grows.

Our assessment of political changes in both Mexico and Panama, two classic centers of U.S. meddling, show parallel backgrounds of economies drained by the IMF and other instruments of U.S. capital, the bolstering of a dependent or comprador capitalist sector in those countries, and a related protection of political cronyism. Instead of buying stability, the U.S. faces growing nationalist sentiment, even within the oligarchy. Anti-U.S. rhetoric, sometimes with a revolutionary flavor and sometimes quite right-wing, indicates that local ruling circles grow restive under the arrogance of U.S. domination. U.S. willingness to abandon old friends like Marcos and the Shah elsewhere only increases that sense of unease.

What is perhaps most encouraging is the spread of left-wing unity combined with left united front strategies and rejection of sectarianism. The Left in Central America has certainly been stirred by the examples of unity-building in Nicaragua and El Salvador. It must also wrestle with the same sorts of issues the Left in the Philippines has had to grapple with in the anti-Marcos rebellion and the ensuing unstable Aquino regime. In Panama, there now appears to be the tactical unity of political extremes, while in Mexico, a long-term organizational unity, regrouping of upwards 100,000 socialist activists and revolutionaries offers an example to watch closely in the months and years ahead.



The Left and Jesse Jackson

There was a moment eight or nine months ago when the Democratic Party was riding high. The Iran/Contra scandal appeared to be devastating the Reagan coalition, and the fractious Republicans had no substitute waiting in the wings for '88. Democratic presidential prospects looked good to most, and better than good to many.

Today that's all over. The combination of Ollie North, neo-liberal foreign policy confusion, and Democratic spinelessness, while not saving the whole Contra policy, have salvaged the Reagan coalition. "No Excuses" Gary Hart's sudden demise left the Democrats scrambling for a frontrunner with at least two minimal qualities: name recognition in more than three states, and white skin. Now recycling consultant Joe Biden has withdrawn to catch up on his studies. Because nobody takes Bruce Babbitt seriously, and because Jesse Jackson is both progressive and Black, the regular Democrats are looking at Dukakis, Simon, Gephardt, and Gore. That one of these men could become president is due solely to the unappetizing choices served up by the Grand Old Party: a wisecracking Bob Dole, whose only hope for the nomination is in romancing the right wing with promises of "little three-day invasions," and the Imperial Toady George Bush. It seems that presidential politics in the U.S. have sunk about as low as they can get, but Pat Robertson and Jack Kemp have yet to really strut their stuff.

Reversing Reaganism

The major conflict in U.S. politics today remains that between the Reagan coalition and the diffuse forces aligned against it. Reaganism has been weakened, but mostly from internal contradictions—foreign policy disarray, shallowness of economic policy, and fractured unity—rather than from the successful attacks of a coordinated opposition. Left to themselves these contradictions will intensify, but not to the point of the coalition's self-destruction.

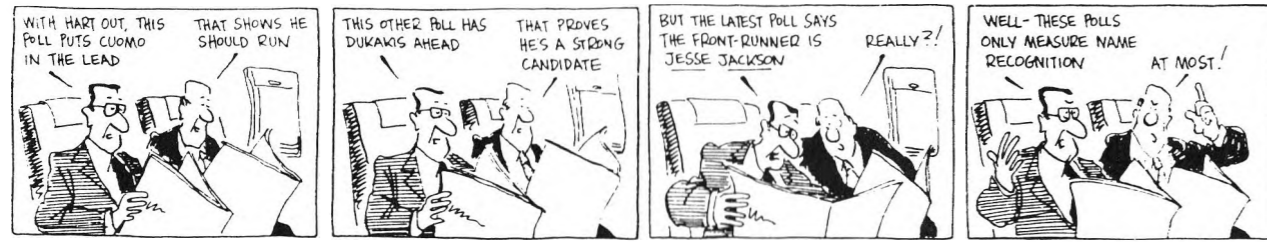
What does the Democratic Party presidential campaign offer to hasten the reversal of Reaganism? There is nothing

in the mainstream of this campaign for progressives, not to mention the Left. With the partial exception of Paul Simon and briefly Pat Schroeder, traditional Democrats have put forward nothing in the way of vision, program or candidate to stop or even disorganize the Reagan coalition, and Reaganism without Reagan is still the most likely scenario for 1989. For progressives, there is only Jesse Jackson.

There is only Jackson the peace candidate, who supports the Sandinistas, appears with the family of Brian Willson, and speaks at a national anti-war march. Who else among the Democrats would do this? There is only Jackson, who appears in Austin, Minnesota and Watsonville, California to herald the "Selmas of the '80s". Only Jackson, who is not afraid to speak out against "those who try to divide us" at the October National March for Lesbian and Gay Rights in a time of hysterical homophobia, and who still defends the rights of Palestinians when Zionist logic remains one of the fundamental rules of U.S. politics. There is only Jesse Jackson, whose anti-corporate coalition of the dispossessed is unique for our era, even if today the snow-blind vision of many continues to deny the campaign the full support it merits.

Reaganism has been weakened, but mostly from internal contradictions...rather than from the successful attacks of a coordinated opposition.

Reversing Reaganism depends on strengthening the key social movements which have been centers of resistance to it. Yet the Democratic Party has generally filtered and defused anti-Reagan sentiment, instead of allowing it full national exposure. A perfect example is the recent Bork rejection in the Democratic-controlled Judiciary Committee.



Wasserman/LA Times

Press accounts indicated that the swing votes on the Committee (and in the Senate at large), particularly from the South, reflected grass roots pressure from Black constituencies as well as labor, abortion rights and other advocates. Yet instead of basking in the glow of this virtual revival of Democratic-led coalitionism, Party leaders chose to cut off hearings testimony just as the various advocacy and constituency groups were to be heard. Yes, once again, they reportedly feared the deadly "special interest" tag.

It is mainly the Democratic neo-liberals that have made issue of giving in to special interests—from Gary Hart's jumping on Mondale for his union support to Gov. Dukakis' determination to rid Massachusetts of gay and lesbian foster parents. Capitulation to a conservative national trend is less a failure of nerve among former traditional Democratic liberals than ascendancy within that party of a distinct neo-liberal trend with its own political logic.

Basic economic changes have undermined the traditional New Deal policy. International politics and economics are quite different from those of the JFK and LBJ years. Meanwhile, changes in the electoral arena such as the lessening relevance of party apparatuses, the skyrocketing cost of elections, and declining voter turnout have disproportionately affected the Democrats. Especially relevant to the rise of neo-liberalism is the declining importance of the AFL-CIO in the Democratic Party: its numbers are decreasing, its financial contributions can't grow at the same inflated rate of campaign costs, and its political and popular authority have eroded. Reduced to a "special interest," the AFL-CIO can no longer compete with direct corporate intervention for Democratic Party influence. An often surprisingly overt anti-unionism among Democratic leaders today follows from the Democrats' inability to continue to mediate liberal-led social movements (particularly organized labor) and corporate needs. The relationship was always unbalanced, but now it is totally one-sided.

Jackson's Reform Economics

In debates ranging from welfare reform to trade policy, regaining the profit competitiveness of the U.S. economy and resurrecting an international stability conducive to U.S. imperial interests sets the Democratic agenda. Against this trend among Democrats, Jesse Jackson is a uniquely powerful voice. The Jackson campaign has rejected the forced-work premises of so-called welfare reform proposals and alone has coupled trade policy to ending U.S. support for reactionary regimes in South Korea, Taiwan and elsewhere.

Jackson has also given a number of speeches evoking clearly social-democratic and anti-capitalist themes, such as his labor-oriented attacks on corporate "merging, purging and submerging" and his calls for international self-determination and rights for Third World workers exploited by U.S. capital.

Jackson's pro-equality populism has tied the widespread anger against "economic royalism," "economic violence" and "corporate greed" to the need for justice and equality. In some situations, his effort to reach white workers and farmers among the dispossessed by targeting the parasitic corporate manipulators and unpatriotic profiteers has led to more typical American populist over-simplifications. When he tried to equate conditions in New York's Howard Beach community to those faced by recent Black victims of violence and murder there, he did not entirely help the Black community response.

Similarly, Jackson has been consistently concerned with the plight of this country's families because of declining social services and economic opportunities. But he has not consistently focused on the connection to the feminization of poverty and women's rights that women's movement activists have made.

Still, the hearing he has received and that he has helped progressive causes get is not to be denied. The Jackson campaign is where the Left—at least those of us willing to

dirty our hands in the electoral arena—should be this year. Yet within the common tactic of "Jackson in '88" there may be as many aims and methods as there are Left groups and grouplets. For those without sectarian ambitions, the Jackson campaign represents an opportunity unlike any other not to dominate and divert, but to advance a sharp progressive agenda appropriate to this defensive period. In light of this, those who can should pursue common goals.

Jackson has opted to give up the outside protest orientation without abandoning the independent thought—the social reform goals that represent the mainstream of Black liberation.

The general goal of socialists in the campaign should be identical to that of every other campaign worker—to build the best campaign and the strongest movement possible, and to do everything necessary to get out the popular vote. But there are other contributions which the Left, especially those who consider themselves part of a revolutionary Left, have a responsibility to formulate, pursue and advance within the broader social movement that the Jackson campaign can be. Here we want to emphasize four, of which two concern the potential for electoral realignment coming out of the campaign, while two have to do specifically with labor, its opportunities and responsibilities.

Progressive Challenge to Neo-liberalism

Our first goal should be to strengthen the anti-Reagan coalition by challenging the neo-liberal capitulation to the corporate agenda. This means using the Jackson campaign, especially its foreign policy and economic themes, to create a space for a progressive agenda. It means taking that agenda to the millions left behind by the neo-liberals, and reaching for a mass pole opposed to their policies as well as those of Reaganism.

The Jackson campaign will not reveal the mass base for a third party; progressives are simply not advanced enough for that today. Like almost all relatively successful progressive mobilizations in the '80s—with the significant exceptions of the Anti-Apartheid and Black electoral struggles—this fall's anti-Bork campaign was a battle fought

on defensive grounds. Yet the swing against Bork shows some shifting away from a now weakened Reagan administration. At this juncture, a strong Jackson campaign in 1988 can help us take the next step: to consolidate a popular base for the notion that the dispossessed are the majority in this country, and that corporate politics have nothing to offer them.

Black Political Power

A second goal which can further electoral realignment has to do with strengthening the political power and independence of the Black people. The Black community has been the main social bloc consistently and uniformly rejecting Reaganism. The Jackson campaign of '84 represents the most developed reaction to Reaganism yet, and the mobilization of the Black masses was obviously the heart and soul of that campaign. In its 1984 turnout for Jackson, the Black community gained greater respect both for its opposition to Reaganism and its electoral discipline. It multiplied the effect of Black protest by arousing the support of other oppressed nationalities as well as some whites. This is visible to Black communities even where it is minimized by the white press. In the context of the Democratic Party's disarray in the face of Reaganism, these achievements are a lesson in independent politics at the mass level.

The Jackson campaign clearly faces obstacles within the Black movement, even if the campaign itself is careful not to take its Black base for granted. To those Black activists who remain stand-offish towards Jackson out of a rejection of the Democratic Party or a mistrust of Jackson himself, we have to insist that the key to the future of any independent electoral movement is in the unity of the Black masses, and the Jackson campaign has clearly advanced that. But the greater problem comes from the more moderate element of Black leadership.

Popular backing for Jackson has generally outpaced spirited organizing for him by both Black elected officials and established leaders of the Black community, as the boeing of Andrew Young at the 1984 Democratic convention demonstrated. Unfortunately we can't look to the Rainbow activist stratum as a replacement for established Black leaders who are lukewarm about Jackson. Though they may spotlight individuals previously unrecognized, election campaigns—no matter how vibrant—do not raise up whole new layers of mass leaders. And in '88—though a large Black voting percentage for Jackson seems secure—the level of spontaneous popular interest will likely

not be the same, if only because it is the second time around. There needs to be a stronger leadership response this time within the Black community; Mayor Washington's early endorsement is a good example of what is necessary.

The generation of a Black united front behind Jackson is therefore an important issue. To the extent it happens, it will most likely happen outside the Rainbow Coalition, Inc. context. The Rainbow Politics slogan has had a strong and growing effect on wider circles of left-wing activists (Black and white) and progressives generally. But the Rainbow Coalition itself does not represent a united front within the Black community, and this is not the time to work this through. Now is the time to go all out for an election campaign unified and strong in the Black community.

Moderate Black leaders have generally advocated moving away from the '60s outside protest orientation; but for them, this has meant accommodation to those within the corridors of power in business and government. Though his goals were far from revolutionary, one of Jackson's distinctions is that he maintained a protest orientation in Operation PUSH. In other words, he tried to walk the line between the more radical and more moderate wings of the Black movement. In his presidential campaigns, Jackson has opted to give up the outside protest orientation without abandoning the independent thought—the social reform goals that represent the mainstream of Black liberation. His campaigns therefore firmly acknowledge that times have changed since the '60s, but he continues to test the flexibility of supposedly democratic American institutions.

Jackson's appeal for unity within the Black movement is therefore solidly-based and unmistakable. There is bound to be struggle with Black moderates who opt for a "winner" rather than Jackson's "symbolic candidacy"; that struggle will be sharp at times, and some has already occurred. But in general we should resist condemning Black moderates for their careerism or opportunism (Jackson himself is not immune to these) in favor of a high-minded appeal to give Jackson the chance to further test those democratic institutions, "to fulfill the best dimension of the Constitution," as Jackson himself puts it. All of the Black liberation movement can learn from that experience.

Unions and the Black Movement

A third goal for the Left in the Jackson campaign is to push organized labor to deal with the Black movement. Certainly the main institutional target of the campaign

ought to be the AFL-CIO, and the trade union left has to be a key actor in that effort. A year ago the issue was getting Jackson a fair hearing; it was apparent that Jackson had too powerful a labor message and the AFL-CIO was too weak to deny him altogether. Now that moment has passed: Jackson will be heard. His public opinion results among union members are high and probably will remain so. He will get a good primary vote among unionists, and he will gain the support of many local and some higher level officials. A Jackson endorsement by the AFL-CIO would be the most significant breach by Rainbow forces in U.S. politics after the fact of Jackson's campaign itself. It would break the downward spiral of pro-corporate adaptation by labor in the Democratic Party; it would explode Democratic Party politics as we know it. It would have some of the weight of those other rare moments in U.S. history when organized labor has allied itself with the Black movement. Yet today we press for such an endorsement with little hope of getting it.

Jesse Jackson could bring to the signing of union cards the same sort of moral crusade he brings to voter registration drives.

The Jackson campaign in '84 lacked the resources and orientation to make a full-scale, prolonged assault on AFL-CIO officialdom. Yet Jackson's understanding of the importance of labor has been greater than the unions' appreciation of him. While fighting for the official endorsement, we should push within the campaign for the kind of pro-labor initiative that Jackson has proven capable of taking in other arenas. Appearing on this or that picket line isn't enough: the Left should help Jackson make a move that will express—as would an AFL-CIO endorsement—the historical promise of labor-oppressed nationality unity.

A tremendous labor need and obvious candidate for such an initiative is a Jackson-led drive for unionization of the South and Southwest. Labor leaders are under pressure for greater innovation than selling credit card services. What Jackson labor supporters ought to do is work for a major summit-style meeting among Black and Latino leaders from churches, communities, government and business throughout the South along with some national unions to reach an accord on unionization of major indus-

try in the South, repeal of Taft-Hartley, and other related reforms. The focus on summitry would parallel Jackson's international successes, and such a high-profile meeting would up the ante for the AFL-CIO in its bid to endorse someone else. If something organizational emerged from such a summit, imagine the excitement: a "Unions for the South Alliance," with which Jesse Jackson could bring to the signing of union cards the same sort of moral crusade he brings to voter registration drives.

A final and related goal for us in the Jackson campaign is to unify labor's left-wing. That left-wing has grown in depth, organization and experience during the past five years, but it remains dispersed and disunited in basic ways, not the least of which is its division along racial/national lines. It is among the radical rank-and-file, among the organizations of Black workers in the South, the maverick locals who supported P-9, within the anti-concessions movement, among the farmworkers and strikers of Watsonville that the Rainbow has the greatest chance of taking hold in a mass way. It is there that the chances of building multinational unity in action are greatest.

It has been hard for labor activists to settle on effective tactics for electoral politics. We seem to cycle between two poles—that electoral politics is a "trap for progressives," echoing poor and working people's cynicism about the political mainstream today, or the "support a winner" approach the AFL-CIO leadership stratum still foists on

union representatives. The Jackson campaign should not be simply be flattened out to issues of electoral tactics in the abstract. This campaign offers the labor Left a vehicle with national visibility with which to legitimize its work and pull together its disparate strands. In unifying its own ranks and promoting the best possible Jackson labor program, a multinational labor Left can lead a fight for the type of practical alliance between labor and the Black movement that could change the outlook for mass organizing in the 1990s. And if Jackson does take a bold pro-labor initiative such as a Southern unionization campaign, what better place for a united labor Left than in the forefront of such an effort?

These then are the general goals on which we believe the revolutionary Left should focus its participation in the Jackson campaign. There is no telling now what the 1990s will bring for the U.S. Left; we can be certain only that they will not be a repeat of the '80s—too many basic shifts are occurring internationally and domestically. The Jackson campaign affords us an opportunity to go into that decade with a revival of mass progressive politics in which the Left can play a dynamic role. But that opportunity will come and go before many of us have noticed. It's time to get to work.

—Freedom Road Socialist Organization,
National Executive

Still Tastes the Same to Me! End the Coors Boycott?

The AFL-CIO leadership has announced a landmark negotiated end to its ten year old boycott of Coors beer. The media had never really acknowledged the power of the Coors boycott, but when it came time to listen to Lane Kirkland announce that the Coors family dynasty had caved in, they were there in force.

The whole episode leaves a bad taste in my mouth and it still tastes like reaction. Before you swallow a cool Coors, here are some things to consider.

Labor was never the leader of the Coors boycott despite the fact that they had the most resources and personnel to promote it. The boycott started ten years before and was initiated by the Chicano community in response to the blatant racism of the Coors family. The boycott idea was based on the Chicano experience of the United Farm Workers' boycott of lettuce and grapes.

As far back as I can remember, progressives in Colorado have hated Coors. When Joseph Coors was a regent of the University of Colorado, he vehemently tried to prevent increased access of Chicanos to the university. Chicanos were about twenty percent of the state's population, but only one percent of the student body. Coors declared that "the academic level of the university will be destroyed if we allow equality to take its course." When the "long, hot summers" spread resistance in the Chicano barrios of Denver, Coors donated helicopters to the Denver police department and wanted machine guns mounted in them.

Coors' hiring practices in his plants were equally racist, with only a few token minorities and women in its brewery prior to the historic 1974 strike. At Coors carton subsidiary, management ordered blacks with Afros to wear hairnets so that "clumps of hair" wouldn't fall into the machines.

Coors showed no respect for the rights of its workers. The use of lie detectors and searches were standard personnel practice, and questions about workers' sex lives and sexual "deviations" were common. (The use of lie detectors was stopped in September 1986.) The company broke eighteen unions in its subsidiary plants before it was finally

able to bust the Brewery Workers Local 366 out of its main plant in Golden, Colorado. Coors showed the same disdain for the right to free speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press when students demonstrated on campuses against the war in Vietnam. And the Coors brewery proudly joined in the national effort to "Bomb Vietnam into the Stone Age," by producing ceramics for missiles.

And Coors has been more than generous in putting his money where his mouth is. A multi-millionaire, Joseph Coors has been bankrolling ultra-rightist groups for a generation, including the John Birch Society. He helped found the powerful Heritage Foundation think tank and the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress.

The AFL-CIO's Coors boycott started after the 1977 brewery workers' strike. The real beauty of the boycott was that it was a multi-issue coalition. Labor added to the already extensive efforts of Chicanos and Mexicanos. Women, gays and lesbians became very active—some say even the most active—component of the boycott in recent years. When Joe Coors told a group of blacks that they should "be thankful for slavery because it is responsible for your entry into the civilized world," blacks too joined the boycott effort.

The boycott was very successful. Coors produced 13.3 million barrels of beer annually in 1977 and distributed it in thirteen states. As sales sagged, they expanded marketing to forty-five states. But they were only able to sell two million more barrels after a ten year, multi-million dollar advertising campaign.

Coors knew it had to change its image, at least cosmetically. It hired some minorities and women, and went looking for brown faces who were ready to sell out. It hired a Chicano public relations spokesperson to answer charges of racism. Conservative black and Hispanic organizations were the first to sign an agreement with Coors in exchange for ending their boycott. They got \$325 million for "development projects." Then came the AFL-CIO's agreement, which calls for unionized construction workers in the new Coors facility in Virginia. It also calls for Coors to



FM photo

Coors was one of the targets of this 1970s march in which Colorado's Chicano movement and labor activists joined forces to denounce union busting and racial discrimination.

"remain neutral while employees engage in organizing activities" at the Golden brewery.

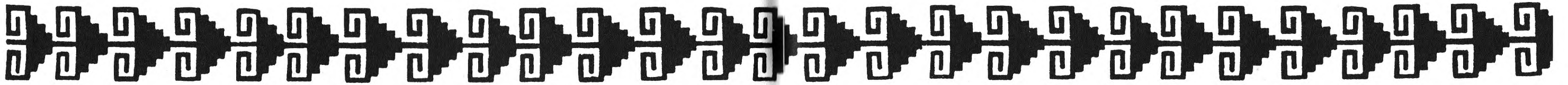
MAPA, the Crusade for Justice and MECHA student organizations are already pledging to continue the boycott. Lesbian and gay activists are gearing up for new struggles. Hopefully Central American activists will take note of Coors' avid promotion of the Contras and join in exposing this right-wing zealot.

Coors has made concessions, but it is still the same company. It is still a scab beer in my book, and a reac-

tionary beer with a new image still tastes the same to me. ■

—A former member of the Coors Strike Support Committee, Denver, Colorado.

For information about the continuing Coors boycott call or write: Coors Boycott Committee, 655 14th St., San Francisco, CA 94114, (415) 861-0318; or Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center, 208 W. 13th St., New York, New York (212) 249-4877.



Bright Promise for the Chicano and Mexicano Movements

Commenting on "the prospects, tasks and challenges facing the Chicano and Mexicano movements today" are Dolores Huerta, Kiko Martinez, Argemiro Morales, Devon Peña, Daniel Osuna, Angela Sanbrano.

Dolores Huerta

This is a very exciting time for all of the Chicano Movement, and especially for the students. I don't think there has been a time as ripe for activity and as full of opportunity for progress since the 1960's. A lot of this is due to the vast numbers of new immigrants from Mexico and Central America. Our people are not only the focus of the Simpson-Rodino law, but other repressive laws. We can begin to become conscious and participate in activities where changes need to be made. Students are in a powerful position to do this, to reach out and lend their services to the community. I am now involved in a strike in Perlier, California, where two hundred and forty farm workers are locked out. They have been fired. It is sad that so many of the people we are coming in contact with are not literate. They need help, even just to fill out forms or deal with the authorities so they are not taken advantage of. We have so much work to do just in representing these people.

Students on campus have to fight for budgets for minority programs as well as for ethnic classes that will be involved in community outreach. For instance, every Chicano Studies and ethnic studies program should have a migrant farm worker component. Students should be able to reach out and work with farm workers or in the community as part of an accredited class project.

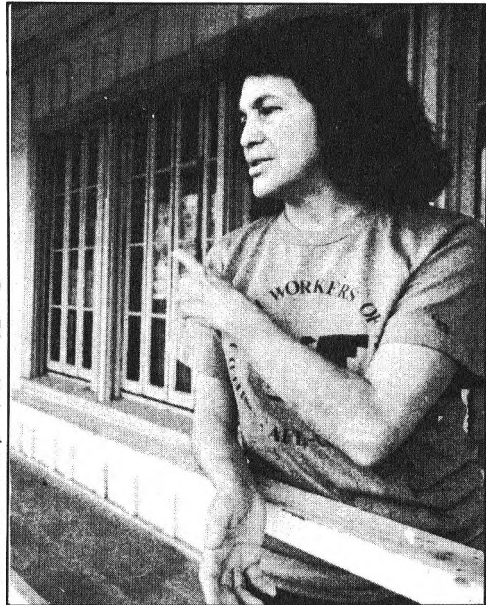
Once out there, our efforts will influence events and demonstrate how much a single person can do. We will recognize our own power as individuals and as an organized group. We will become more involved. The people have so much power to reclaim. We must recognize that the whole establishment, not only the schools but the local government, the country and everybody else is trying to keep Chicano power down to a minimum. They are trying to eliminate us. That is why, for instance, the two hundred and forty farm workers were locked out of their jobs.

The "Amnesty Program" also presents many opportunities to win al-

lies among those who need help. We must oppose all the slashes in budgets and social programs. We are not getting our return on money we pay in taxes, which should go into services rather than into defense industries. Our people are being taken advantage of as consumers both in terms of what we are being charged for goods and by the lower quality of the products sold to us. We also face a very big issue in the prison system. They are building all of these prisons. Hey! Who are they for? They are putting Mexicans in those prisons; they are putting Chicanos in those prisons. The poor are in those prisons because there are no good jobs. We don't see jobs coming into our communities, just everything taken out. For instance here in Fresno county, which is the richest agricultural county in California and probably the whole country, over thirty percent of the farm workers live in complete poverty. The wealth they create is not being returned to them. We have to define the economic issues, the health and social issues. We are not getting school or housing needs met. We have a lot of fronts upon which we can make a tremendous impact.

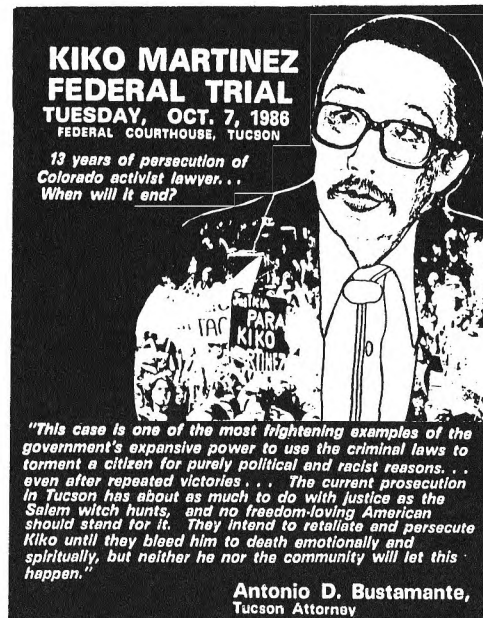
In order to form coalitions we have to be powerful ourselves. We definitely have to coordinate with the Black and Asian communities. We need to reach out to the new Asian immigrants instead of turning our backs on them. If anyone can relate to their experience it is us. We need to coalesce with Black and Asian students. We are all minorities, but this depends on us building our own organized strength. Chicanos, Blacks and Asians have more power by uniting to form rainbow coalitions. We can't be wary about differences in our groups, of having a variety. We have to have differences. We have to have different ideas. We come from different backgrounds. Some of us come from farm worker backgrounds, some from educated backgrounds; some of us were born here, some of us have parents who were immigrants. We have to be tolerant and not expect everyone to be at the same place. The main thing is not to be afraid to take action either as Chicanos or in coalitions. We must know that we are not powerless when we overcome our fear and fight for social justice.

"The people have so much power to reclaim. We must recognize that the whole establishment is trying to keep Chicano power down to a minimum."



San Diego Union/Michael Franklin

Dolores Huerta is a cofounder of the United Farm workers Union (UFW). A tough organizer and negotiator, Huerta played a major role in the famous grape harvest of 1965 and led the UFW's first successful contract talks in 1966. Later, she was a founding member of the Coalition of Labor Union Women. Today Huerta serves as first vice-president of the UFW.



Revolutionary, political activist, people's lawyer, Kiko Martinez has been persecuted by Colorado state and federal officials for fourteen years. Cases are still pending against him resulting from his years underground. Contributions are needed to continue the fight; send to the Kiko Martinez Defense Fund P.O. Box 753 Alamosa, CO., 81101

Kiko Martinez

People in the United States have to start orienting themselves to greater ideological, cultural and political interactions with the Mexican people. It is time for Mexicanos to grasp our political heritage and what our political prospects and prerogatives are historically in terms of reunification of the Mexicano people. We are a cutting edge within North America as well as within Mexico. Look at the political and cultural imperialism by the U.S. over Mexico. We occupy a very unique niche in terms of our capacity to fight that system. One of the tasks then is to work with the people of Mexico and all of Latin America. We must develop a consciousness of both being a part of the Latino people and being a part of North America.

The "Hispanics" are, in my opinion, a creature of the Democratic Party and the corporations—neither of which has been responsive to the Mexicano people or other working and oppressed people in this empire. The "Hispanics" have middle-class values. They are a product of all the reforms and gains that were made by the revolutionary Chicano movement. The gains that we won have been usurped by this class of people. They are the ones with money and skills to organize on a national level. Consequently, there aren't resources for grass roots organizers who want to create change for the people at the bottom of our society. We need to formulate ways to get national resources to do that organizing.

Another task is to develop an ideology that will be responsive to the 21st Century. Even without a nuclear cataclysm, we are in for some serious trouble. There are classes within the Chicano nation; we have to look within our own class for our future. We must analyze the different possibilities of what it means to be Mexicano given the class structure of society. Where I am from [the San Luis valley of Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico—ed.] there has never been much industry. The proletariat is in agriculture, lumber and some mining. Our people work in the most exploited sectors of the working class...or they are forced to leave the valley to work in places like Pueblo or Denver.

You have another dynamic in this part of the Southwest. There are tycoons like Maurice Strong, Malcolm Forbes, Robert Anderson (from ARCO) and others who are getting wealthy by speculating on our land. The common people don't know what these people are planning for us, but if we look historically at what their class has done, the prospects could be very grim. Here in the San Luis valley we have the infamous "Taylor land." [This huge land grant was once collectively owned by the original Spanish, Indian and Mestizo settlers and has now become "private" property—ed.] Many of the National Forests were built on what were historical land grants, communal properties for use by all our people. Now they are being exploited by big timber, cattle and mining companies. The struggle for the land is a very important issue in this region, but elsewhere there are overriding issues such as fighting the English-only legislation and for immigration rights.

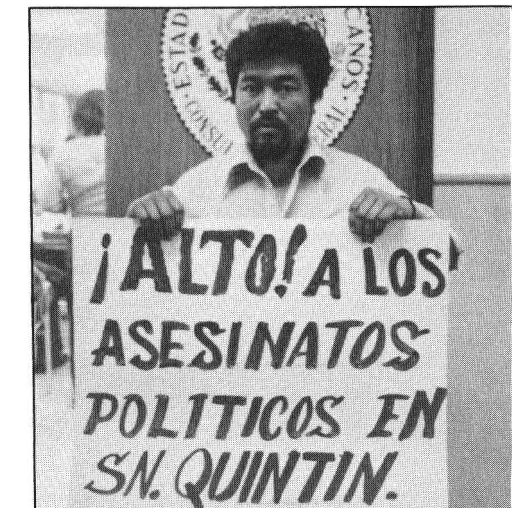


In protest against U.S. occupation of historical land grants, Patsy Tijerina sets fire to a government sign in Coyote, New Mexico.

Argemiro Morales

The Chicano Movement, like any other social movement, represents the interests of a marginalized sector of the U.S. society. The struggle ought to be based on bettering the situation of the Mexican-Americans in the U.S., but this struggle should also focus on the rest of the workers and oppressed peoples and Mexico in the world.

The so-called illegals are among the lowest strata. The Hispanics do not always identify with us, though we share a common cause. These common interests are not often understood. We "illegals" would like to be recognized. This may be difficult for Chicanos. But in reality there are not many differences between us. The Chicano and Mexicano peoples must work hard to support each other, to reach across the border. We should not allow ourselves to be divided! The Mexicanos should also help their Chicano brothers with their struggles in the USA. We would hope that the Chicano Movement would take up the issues that concern the "illegals" who live in the U.S.—for instance our living conditions, substandard wages and discrimination has has and also help us fight for the liberation of Mexico. The work between the Mixtec farm workers and political activists in the U.S. is at least one example of how to do this.



Argemiro Morales is a farm worker, activist, organizer with the Mixtec Indians in the U.S. (His comments are translated from the Spanish.)

Devon Peña

The U.S.-Mexico border is the only place on earth where the First World meets the Third World head-on in a collision between cultures and classes. Not only is the border significant as a legal and political icon of transnational economic realities, it is a unique staging point for the development of our cultural legacy. The synthesis between Mexican and American, between Third and First Worlds, is an integral part of daily life in the region. The border is playing a significant role in the industrialization of Mexico's economy. It is therefore not only producing commodities but also workers like the women of Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, and Tijuana who are learning to organize and struggle in the workplace and community. The outcome of these syntheses and struggles may well portend the shape of things to come for the US and Mexico as a whole.

The new immigration law merits immediate attention and action. It imposes a discriminatory and military solution to a problem that is entirely a political fiction and which rests on ignorance and denial of a long-standing historical and social reality: Chicanos have been migrating along a north-south axis natural culture area for over five hundred years, and certainly for many centuries before the imposition of an international border artificially divided our homeland in two. A new police law regulating that migration will not end this historic and natural flow. It will make life and work much more difficult for Chicanos and Mexican immigrants alike.

The struggle for immigrants is not only about civil and human rights. It is about the future of our political strength and our cultural autonomy. Sometime in the next century, Chicanos, Blacks, Asians and Native Americans will constitute more than half the US population. The influx of Mexican immigrants will increase our population and that is the real political problem facing the vested powers. White male America is desperate to conserve its privilege and power and it must confront the demographic realities or lose the battle. The Third World is coming home to the First, and the political and cultural landscape of the US will never be the same.

Without the personal commitments of individuals, all analysis and understanding of the key struggles facing our community will remain ineffectual.

How many of you will face this dilemma when you leave college and enter the world of work? I would argue that all of you will face such dilemmas, particularly those of you pursuing degrees in engineering, law, business and medicine. What price will you and your community pay for potential (and really quite fragile) upward mobility? This is a question you must ask yourselves.

If we are going to become investment bankers, venture capitalists or high tech entrepreneurs, let us not pretend that our choices are free of consequence for the environment, the community, and our culture. The

choice of a business career implicitly involves a choice to uncritically accept a system that produces commodities in ever-maddening quantities in a manner that is highly destructive to the environment and profoundly damaging to human health and culture.

Our organizing and activism is inevitably informed by our values. In a system that emphasizes competition, can we restore the tradition of cooperation which informed the actions of our grandparents? In a society that places private economic gain above all else, can we revitalize our traditions of gift-giving and social responsibility? In a political order that stresses command and hierarchy, can we return to the participatory styles of our own heritage? In an industrial system that is slowly but decisively destroying the environment, can we recapture the ecological sanity of our antecedent horse-and-plow culture? In an atomistic urban life that fractures families and interpersonal relations, can we sustain ourselves in extended kin and friendship ties? In a scientifically-managed and bureaucratized political economy that supposedly brings us the highest material standards of living, can we escape being emotional and spiritual paupers?



"In an industrial system that is slowly but decisively destroying the environment, can we recapture the ecological sanity of our antecedent horse-and-plow culture?"

While I am concerned about the prospects of a narrow and self-centered personality type among Chicano students today, I am actually a lot more optimistic than many of my colleagues in the social sciences. As students you are members of many different institutions and organizations. You participate in many group activities with friends, families, and colleagues. I am not convinced that Chicano students are as atomistic and narcissistic as many claim. Every day in my teaching, I see the way Chicano students weave multiple webs of relationships in the process of learning and struggling. Like all people, you are weavers of the social fabric and there is great hope and beauty in the webs you spin out as skilled social actors. Cultivate this awareness and sense of connectedness to others as a source of strength and inspiration for your participation in future struggles.

Devon Peña is Professor of Sociology and Southwest Studies, Colorado College, Colorado Springs. His remarks are excerpted from his keynote address at the 8th National Chicano Student Conference at the University of Colorado at Boulder, April 5, 1987.



Daniel Osuna is an activist living in Phoenix, Arizona. He is an organizer for El Partido de la Raza Unida.

Daniel Osuna

The challenges to the Chicano-Mexicano movement are monumental. Even though conditions are harsh in our communities, we have to realize the implications of living in the world's richest country. Conditions aren't as bad as those in Latin America, Asia or Africa. It is hard for people to get involved unless there is a threat to their job or family. They don't want to risk losing what material gains they have won. La Raza Unida Party is focusing our struggle on the organization of youth—for the long haul. People twenty-five years or older already have a mindset and it is difficult for them to work on a collective basis.

We base our work on the long term struggle of our people—self determination. It may take us one hundred years, but self determination is our quest. We must gain control of the political apparatus in our communities. The youth and the masses are disorganized. We focus on creating leadership and then sending them back to the barrios and the movement to organize.

Neither major political party nor even a third party will pay attention to us if we simply have candidates in those parties. We believe that a community must be organized—for instance, neighborhood parents who get organized because of problems in their schools. If you organize a barrio it doesn't matter who is in charge of the public office, them or us; with the people organized they can press those people into making changes. We think that Jesse Jackson is a facade to make us think that the Democratic Party will bring us out of our oppression. We will never see change for our people by depending upon the Democratic Party. The Democrats already had their chance.

There is a spectrum of political trends in the Chicano/Mexicano movement. The Sandinista government has been able to maintain its unity even though it has an array of political views. Their reality was that people were getting killed, and this forced them to see the need for unity. In the same way our movement has come to the conclusion that there is a common denominator for unity...that common denominator is the repression and suffering of our people. Though the onslaught of police brutality is not systematic yet, it is just a matter of time before it becomes systematic. We have the extreme left, moderates and conservatives in the Chicano/Mexicano movement as well as influences from the Native American movement. There are clear conflicts and frictions because of this wide cross section. Everyone thinks they are the only ones that are correct. This is our reality. The only way to advance is for the leadership to come together regardless of their differences, to talk about how we can jointly take collective action.

Angela Sanbrano

Two of the more critical issues facing the Chicano and Mexicano people in the U.S. today are military spending and immigration. The drift into poverty forces the youth to join the military because there are no

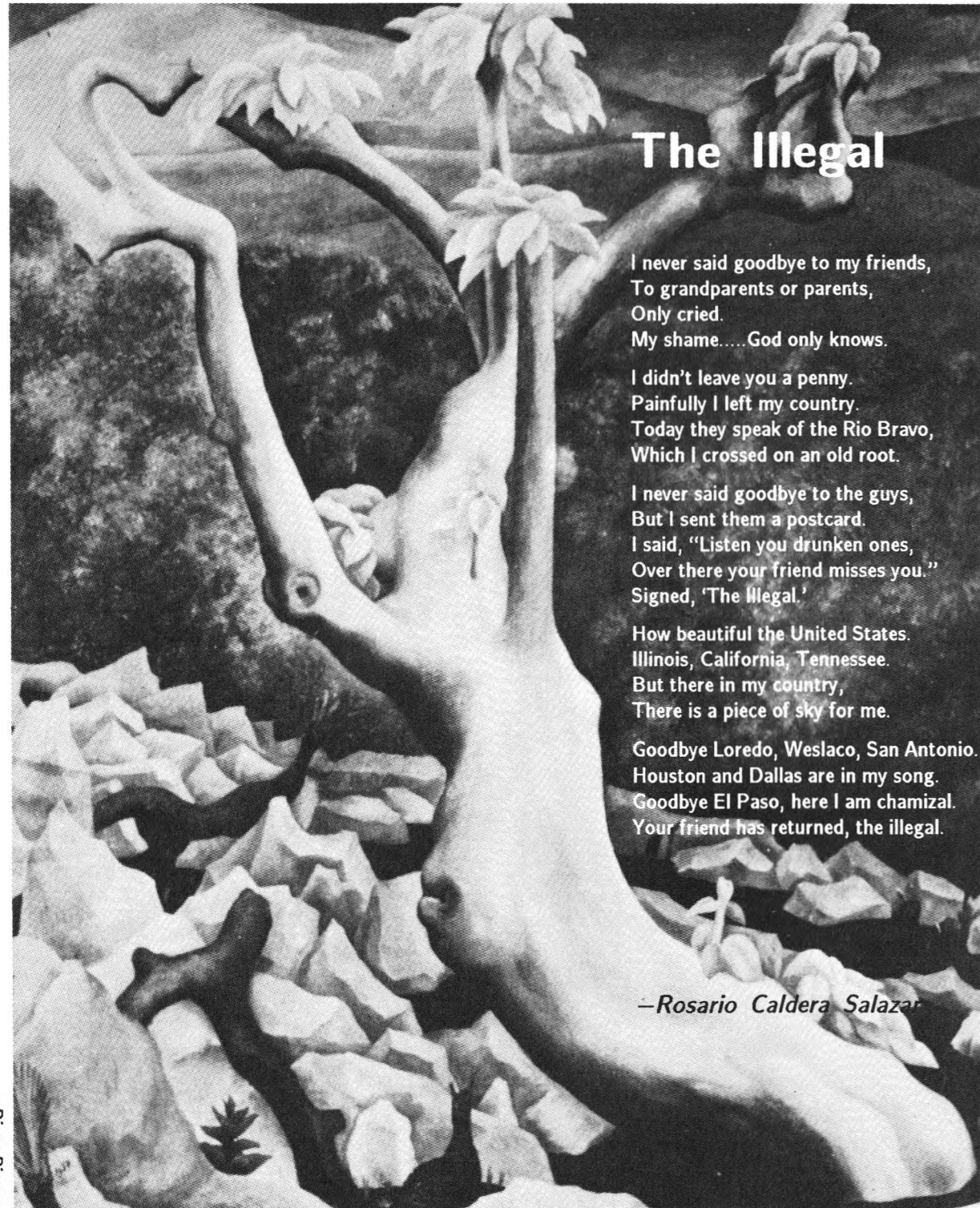
jobs. Military spending and the escalation of war in Central America deprive many people of basic necessities. In the last eight years over \$2-billion has been sent to Central America to fuel a war against the people of Central America which reduces the monies available for education, housing and health care. Another critical issue is immigration. Laws are adopted supposedly to stem the flow of undocumented workers entering the United States. What is ignored is the role U.S. intervention plays in creating the social, political and economic conditions in Latin America which force people to flee across the border. Either they flee war, repression and violence, or they come to escape oppressive economic conditions.

Given these conditions, the Chicano and Mexicano movements in the U.S. face a two-fold task. First, support must be given the advances made in Central America by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the liberation movement in El Salvador. This support must be given within the context of defending the right to self-determination, independence and sovereignty by stopping U.S. intervention in the region. Second, Chicanos, Mexicanos and Latinos in the U.S. do not want our sons, our brothers going to war in Central America against our sisters and brothers who are fighting for the same thing we're fighting for here in the U.S.—self determination and dignity. A victory for them is a victory for us, it is one struggle. For this reason, we have a great responsibility to educate and organize our communities to oppose U.S. intervention in the region. These are related tasks. It is easier for us to understand and really build solidarity once we know what is going on. Supporting the liberation movements in Central America and stopping U.S. intervention are central tasks facing the Chicano, Mexicano and Latino movement in the U.S. ■



Angela Sanbrano (second from right in photo) is National Coordinator of the Committee In Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) in Washington D.C. She has been doing solidarity work since 1983. Prior to that she was active in immigration, housing and police brutality issues at the community level in Los Angeles. Angela Sanbrano holds a law degree from People's College of Law.

Supporting the liberation movements in Central America and stopping U.S. intervention are central tasks facing the Chicano, Mexicano and Latino movement in the U.S.



Diego Rivera

The Illegal

I never said goodbye to my friends,
To grandparents or parents,
Only cried.
My shame.... God only knows.

I didn't leave you a penny.
Painfully I left my country.
Today they speak of the Rio Bravo,
Which I crossed on an old root.

I never said goodbye to the guys,
But I sent them a postcard.
I said, "Listen you drunken ones,
Over there your friend misses you."
Signed, 'The Illegal.'

How beautiful the United States.
Illinois, California, Tennessee.
But there in my country,
There is a piece of sky for me.

Goodbye Laredo, Weslaco, San Antonio.
Houston and Dallas are in my song.
Goodbye El Paso, here I am chamizal.
Your friend has returned, the illegal.

—Rosario Caldera Salazar

Rosario was one of 18 Mexican workers who suffocated to death in a Texas boxcar, while in search of work. The INS maintains control of the original copy of the poem he left behind.

Interview with Barry Harlow

A Look at Simpson—Rodino

Organizing Around the New Immigration Law

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (Simpson—Mazzoli—Rodino Bill) was passed by Congress in November 1986 despite years of active opposition by progressives throughout the country. While the Act makes it illegal for employers to hire undocumented workers, it also allows undocumented workers who have been in the United States since 1982 to become legalized. This process began on May 5, 1987. FM interviewed Barry M. Harlow, an immigration law attorney and activist in California for his views on the new law and its implications.

FM: How do you view the Simpson/Rodino bill?
Harlow: Taken as a whole, the bill represents a drastic attack against immigrants. There are some portions of the bill that are positive but they are far outweighed by the negative portions. Some people worked for the bill because they are pro-immigrant: they wanted to have legalization and considered employer sanctions inevitable. But the majority of progressives opposed it.

FM: How are progressives dealing with the law now?
Harlow: Short-term we are trying to stop deportations, support real implementation of the amnesty provisions, and continue to oppose sanctions which make it illegal for employers to hire undocumented workers after May 31, 1987. I am involved in efforts to legalize as many undocumented workers as possible. A lot of this work requires marshaling community support.

FM: What features of the law are having the most negative effect?
Harlow: The fees are too high. The application fee of \$185 per person and \$400-\$420 per family is really prohibitive. It reflects INS policy that the fees must pay for the legalization program. There should have either been lower flat fees or some way of scaling fees to income.

There are too few processing agencies. [Processing agencies are those agencies such as Catholic Charities that the INS has designated to file applications for people seeking to legalize their status under the act—ed.] The \$25 paid to the processing agency per application is ridiculously low, a gross underestimation of the time it takes. This is related to a more fundamental problem. The U.S. has forced thousands of immigrants to hide their very existence for years. Now the government is saying, "Prove you have been here." If the requirements for proof are not flexible and realistic, thousands of people who are eligible will not qualify. The burden on the agencies to help their clients produce documentation will be such that they cannot help the broad numbers that are eligible. For example, although now they are accepting copies, originally the INS accepted only original documents.

Disqualifying absences is another negative feature. The law provides that one must have resided continuously in the U.S. since 1982. The question is: what constitutes continuous residence? Many immigration law activists have taken the position that if someone has been gone for a period of, for example, sixty days, after living here since 1980, that person has continuously resided in the U.S. But the law allows only up to forty-five days, with an emergency circumstance exception, or cumulatively 180 days. That forty-five days is not fair and it is something we are going to challenge.

The law also can lead to the division of families. The INS is free to designate some members of the family as legal and others as illegal.

You also have to remember that the Immigration Reform and Control Act comes after years in which a very anti-Mexican immigration law has been in effect. The INS *did* do away with racial quotas. The system that replaced it was supposed to be very fair. There are 20,000 visas per year allocated to every country. There are 20,000 for Mexico and 20,000 for Liechtenstein! Well, that is absurd and that is why the backlogs for countries like Mexico and the Philippines are enormous.

Finally, I fear that the employer sanction provisions may be effective in getting the employers to police the immigration law. I am hoping this won't be the case. The whole idea behind the bill is to use minimum enforcement but to get employers to enforce it themselves.

FM: What will happen at the end of this current application period? Despite the weaknesses you cite, is it possible for the program still to prove a success?

Harlow: The final application date is May 4, 1988 for

those who entered before 1982 (the majority). For seasonal agricultural workers, the application deadline is November 30, 1988. It is clear that, to date, the INS has not been fulfilling its mandate in publicizing this campaign. They had millions of dollars that were supposed to be available for this purpose and neither the INS nor the people they have hired to do this job have taken it very seriously. Certainly, they should have set up a separate entity to administer legalization, instead of the INS. This is the last place I would want to get in touch with if I was an undocumented immigrant.

Success or failure will depend on how much political pressure is put on the INS. It will also depend on how much we collectively roll up our sleeves to get the word out and to help community organizations and churches. I think large numbers of immigrants will be legalized but I don't know at what point you could say the program was a success. I guess I would consider seventy percent or more success and thirty percent or less failure. At this point I can't honestly tell you whether I think the number of applicants is going to be closer to seventy percent or thirty percent. The reason is that the numbers of people applying are still low. But we are anticipating surges of applications as the deadline approaches and as people see that their friends and neighbors are getting approved. This is, in fact, what has started to happen.

I think it is worth the effort to legalize some people, even if at the end we end up critiquing the effort and criticizing the U.S. government for having sabotaged the campaign.

FM: How do you view the immigration bill in relation to national oppression in the Southwest?

Harlow: If I were pushed, I would have to say that I do not believe that calling for a Chicano nation in the Southwest is a viable strategy. But I believe it is terribly wrong to deport Mexicans from the Southwest. They are deporting Mexicans from states like Texas and California that used to be a part of Mexico. In fact, forty-five percent of Mexico's land was stolen by the U.S. Mexico's economic growth was stunted by this seizure and then further hampered by other forms of domination by the U.S.

I tried to work out a legal argument on this point using the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo but unfortunately the language wasn't there. On the other hand, the terms of this treaty could be used to invalidate things like Proposition 63 in California which made English the "official language" of the state. The treaty provides that Spanish will be a language on an equal footing with English in the Southwest. A

state proposition is legally superseded by a treaty, which is accorded the same stature as federal law.

FM: What about the other immigration bill before Congress, Moakley-Deconcini? What are its major provisions and what would its effect be?

Harlow: This bill would provide what is called "extended voluntary departure," which means that permission would be granted for Salvadorans and Nicaraguans to remain in this country for a several year period. Most of the progressive forces active in immigration law support it. We clearly support it for Salvadorans.



Continuing political persecution and widespread abuses of human rights in El Salvador have driven out almost one-tenth of the population to the United States.

The bill has passed the House. It may pass the Senate because the coalition of supporters includes Duarte. He is very worried about all these Salvadorans returning to El Salvador. About 500,000 people—or one-tenth or more of the population of El Salvador—lives in the U.S.

Granting extended voluntary departure is a little more palatable to the U.S. government than granting asylum. The INS's own statistics show more than a ninety-seven percent denial rate for Salvadorans and a ninety-nine and a

half percent denial rate for Guatemalans by the INS. (The percentages are better when you go to the Immigration Court, which is a separate body.) The U.S. government simply cannot approve a high percentage of Salvadoran asylum applications because it would be admitting that the regimes it is supporting in El Salvador and Guatemala are using U.S. funds to murder their own people.

I had a client, a Guatemalan, who came from the same area in which the movie *El Norte* takes place. He witnessed his parents' being murdered by the Guatemalan army in a massacre that has been very well documented. When a person like this is not granted asylum, it is easy to expose the role of the U.S. government. In this particular case, the government's argument was that things were no longer so bad. It is true that things are not as bad anymore; the Guatemalan army is no longer massacring entire villages. But people are still getting killed.

FM: In conclusion, do you think the issue of immigration is an important area for progressives to be involved in?

Harlow: Yes, I do. The Moakley-Deconcini bill provides lots of opportunities to expose what the U.S. is up to in Central America.

Work around the Immigration Reform and Control Act has great potential for tapping pro-immigrant attitudes in the American working class. There have always been two contradictory traditions in the U.S. towards immigration. One is represented by the Statute of Liberty; the other by the Chinese Exclusion Act. The Chinese Exclusion Act was based on two precepts: racism and fear of loss of jobs. These same two threads are what support anti-immigration sentiment in this country today.

It is the job of progressives to promote the Statute of Liberty concept and develop it even further and defeat the sentiments behind contemporary equivalents of the Chinese Exclusion Act. We need to help people to see that somebody who is a worker is a brother or sister whether he or she is from Mexico or El Salvador. That is a long-term job, of course, but one well worth doing. ■

Rags, Riches and Immigrant Labor: Everything Under the Sun

by Peter B. Olney

...Southern California, home to everything fun—fun—fun in the sun—sun—sun; sidewalk surfing and grass skiing, bocce balls and bucking bulls, rocks for jocks and, of course, wheels of all kinds.—Leigh Montville, "Everything Under the Sun," *Sports Illustrated*, September 7, 1987.

A whimsical photo essay on southern California appeared in a recent issue of *Sports Illustrated*. Authored by *Boston Globe* sportswriter Leigh Montville, it ran twenty-one pages long, and each page was filled with images of bronzed, nubile Anglo bodies. The popular stereotype of southern California as a region where everyone lives the good life hanging out on the beach is alive and well. But the reality is very different. Beneath the veneer of ostentatious affluence, thousands live out a life of grinding poverty and exploitation.

The Up Side

In 1982, the latest year for which figures are available, the Los Angeles-Long Beach metropolitan area (an economic zone designated by federal authorities for purposes of comparison) emerged as the number one manufacturing region in the United States. Roughly 18,000 manufacturing establishments produced \$40.3 billion worth of goods in 1982, compared with only \$32.3 billion in the Chicago metropolitan zone, the nation's second largest center for manufacturing. Between 1970 and 1980, while the entire United States had a net addition of less than a million manufacturing jobs, the five-county Los Angeles region added over 225,000. New York, by comparison, lost nearly 330,000. Since 1970, employment and production in high technology have expanded to make greater Los Angeles the world's largest "technopolis" with more engineers, scientists, mathematicians and technical specialists than any other urban region. The twin ports of San Pedro and Long Beach are now

Peter Olney is a labor organizer in apparel in the Los Angeles area.

among the fastest growing in the world, having surpassed New York in total tonnage. And like lower Manhattan, Los Angeles has become a "capitol of capital," a center of control and administration for international banking and finance.

The Down Side

Coupled with this picture of rapid expansion and growth is a kaleidoscope of urban restructuring and development which reflects the experience of many other cities in the United States and worldwide. In Los Angeles we not only find the high technology of the Silicon Valley and the expanding sunbelt economy of a city like Houston (at least until the recent oil bust), but also the far reaching industrial decline and deteriorating urban neighborhoods of cities like Detroit and Cleveland. For instance, Los Angeles once was the second largest auto assembly center in the country; today there remains just one assembly plant in Van Nuys and it is currently the site of a vigorous labor and community struggle against a threatened closure by General Motors. Los Angeles used to be the second largest tire manufacturing region in the country. Today rubber has disappeared entirely, along with much of the southern California steel industry. In the four years from 1978 to 1982, over 75,000 jobs were lost to plant closings and indefinite layoffs.

Today much of the Los Angeles County economy closely resembles the conditions of a Third World export processing zone, in particular the "maquilladora" industrial workshops of the Mexican borderlands. Of the more than six million estimated undocumented workers residing within the boundaries of the United States, thirty-six percent live in Los Angeles, providing an abundant supply of exploitable labor.

The Rag Trade

Los Angeles' largest light industry and one of the principal beneficiaries of immigrant labor is the apparel industry. While the common perception of the "rag trade" is one of an industry in decline within the boundaries of the United States, nothing could be further from the truth in California and especially in Los Angeles. In the ten year period between 1972 and 1982, employment in apparel declined nineteen percent nationwide while it rose thirteen percent in California. Eighty percent of the jobs in the apparel industry in California are concentrated in Los Angeles County. Only New York City employs more workers in ap-

parel.

Los Angeles has made its mark in the fashion industry in the sportswear (including swimwear, obviously) "middle" segment of the garment industry. This "middle" segment occupies a position between the "high" fashion of New York, Paris and Milan, and the mass produced, high volume, easily replicated merchandise mainly produced in the Far East. The California look is very popular nationally and worldwide. A noted "beachologist" who specializes in market surveys for the swimwear and actionwear companies recently told of visiting a town just outside of Toronto, Canada, many miles from the Pacific ocean, and seeing young adolescents on skateboards with puka shells around their necks!

Today much of the Los Angeles County economy closely resembles the conditions of a Third World export processing zone, in particular the "maquilladora" industrial workshops of the Mexican borderlands.

Recent reports in the business press and the trade journals indicate that many apparel firms are bringing their outsourced production back to the Los Angeles basin. "Today, we are producing 20,000 dozen pieces a week in Los Angeles compared to 4,000 to 5,000 a week three years ago," says Steven Gordon, president of Domino of California. "It's due primarily to price and fashion. The look of the product is more important than ever before, and being able to turn a design into a product quickly. We make fifty to sixty percent of our product here compared to twenty percent three years ago."¹ He went on to cite a twelve to thirteen week turnaround time for production in the Far East, compared to four weeks in Los Angeles. Another factor favoring the return of apparel production to the LA basin and the United States generally is that the weakened dollar makes raw materials, labor and other production factors more expensive abroad and imports conversely more expensive domestically.

Another important national feature of the apparel industry is the organizational disintegration of production.² This despite the fact that the top twenty apparel firms in

the U.S. control forty-one percent of sales, indicating increasing concentration of ownership. Liz Claiborne, a hot apparel stock on the New York Stock Exchange with about \$1 billion in sales annually, directly employs only one hundred people. The jobber-contractor mode of production is more predominant in California than in the nation as a whole.³ The average shop size in the apparel industry in Los Angeles County is twenty-six, while nationally it is forty.

The percent of fixed capital to overall capital in the average apparel shop is six percent compared to a national industrial average of twenty-five percent. This is what you would expect in an industry that must produce for six different fashion cycles: Fall I and Fall II, Holiday, Cruise, Spring and Summer. In this kind of specialized fashion, responsive flexibility is of the essence. A manufacturer who has sunk capital resources into heavy plant, equipment and labor expenses does not have the flexibility to respond to the capricious whims of the fashion market.

Latino Immigrants Keep Apparel Industry Humming

But the principal factor driving the Los Angeles apparel boom is the fact that the LA manufacturer can reap the rewards of a Third World export processing zone right within the boundaries of the continental United States. Until Guadalajara recently surpassed it, Los Angeles was the second largest Spanish-speaking city in the world after Mexico City. Approximately 120,000 workers work in the rag trade in Los Angeles County; about 96,000 of these are undocumented Latinos, most of them women. The rest of apparel employment is Chinese, Vietnamese and, increasingly, Korean. The average wage in apparel hovers around \$4.00 per hour although the weighted average is probably closer to the minimum wage. Fly-by-night contractors that can not meet payrolls and women trundling bundles of sewing home are common phenomena. Working conditions are similar to those of the classical sweatshops that originally gave rise to the organization of the ILGWU (International Ladies Garment Workers Union) in New York City at the turn of the century.

Getting Organized

Of the 120,000 workers employed in apparel, ninety percent are involved in the production of women's clothing. One percent of these workers are organized in some thirty-odd shops under contract with the ILGWU. The union has

been in Los Angeles since the 1920's when the ILG's leaders in New York sent out colonizers to organize runaway sportswear production that had relocated from New York seeking the haven of sunshine and the open shop. At one point the ILGWU had 12,000 workers under contract in southern California. But its base was largely in Coat and Suit production, a sector which has been demolished by shutdowns and imports. In recent times the union has not succeeded in organizing any substantial portion of the industry. While one could scapegoat imports as the cause of the union's decline elsewhere in the country, the growth of the apparel industry in LA belies this explanation.



Approximately 120,000 workers work in the Los Angeles apparel industry; about 96,000 of these are undocumented Latinos, most of them women.

In an industry as large and complex as apparel in Los Angeles, there are no easy roadmaps to organizing. But based on the recent investigatory work and organizing experience of the ILG, a few observations are possible.

Small-scale and often unstable contractors are difficult to organize, and once organized, easily go out of business. The atomization of production makes for organizing nightmares. The capital and control of the industry lies in the hands of a small number of publicly held firms and the major retailers, but the sewers, cutters and pressers do not, for the most part, "legally" work for them. There are, however, chokeholds in the production process that can be attacked, organized and used as leverage points in the whole industry.

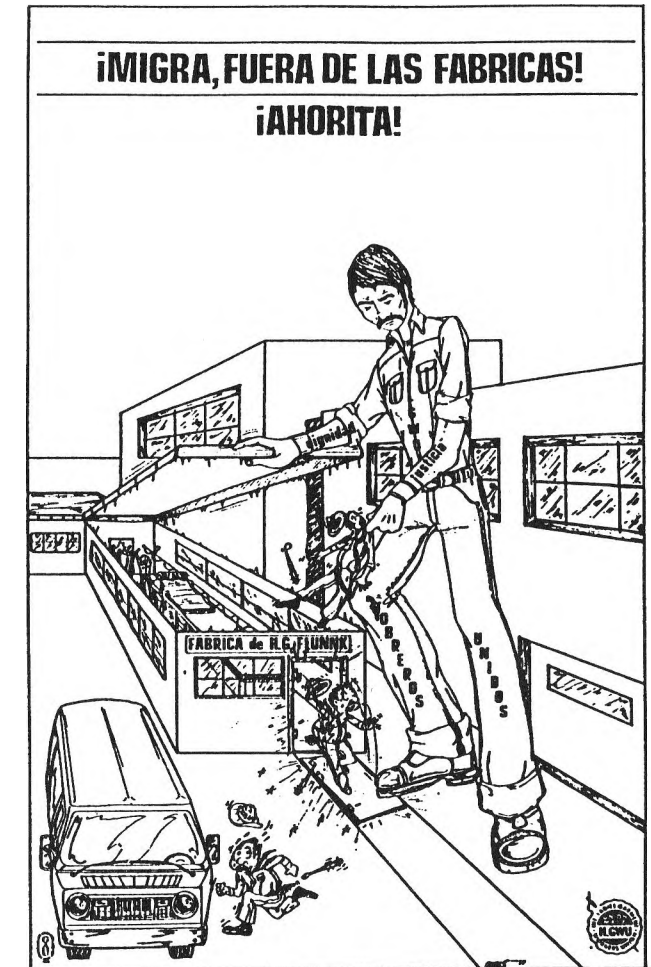
While the apparel workforce is overwhelmingly Latin,

undocumented and dissatisfied, understanding the intricacies and subtleties of this potential labor powderkeg is no easy task. Workers throughout the industry are universally underpaid (sometimes sub-minimum wage) and oppressed. However, experienced organizers point to the difficulty of moving people towards organization and action. For instance, new arrivals are often less ready to organize than their brothers and sisters who have been here awhile. The change from their conditions of life in their home country may be very different and slightly improved. Rural and urban differences are also a factor. The caricature of the urban worker is one of a laborer ready to try new things, but also ready to move laterally to other jobs if the conditions are not right. The rural workers may be slower to move but more fiercely loyal. The presence of politically-driven exiles from El Salvador and Guatemala, often with radical political experiences and consciousness, is another dynamic.

The effects of the new Simpson-Rodino Immigration Reform and Control Act remain to be seen. Already the new law has had a dampening effect on the willingness of immigrant workers to organize. Given that workers who entered their jobs prior to November 6, 1986 are grandfathered into that employment, their willingness to organize and risk losing a semi-secure job is dubious. Some speculate, however, that the effects of the law are more severe now, prior to its full implementation and enforcement. Simply put, there is no way that much of LA's industrial base could survive if there was rigid enforcement. The exploitation of the Latin worker is the basis for the California lifestyle so prominently featured in *Sports Illustrated*.

These sorts of obstacles militate against a random shop-by-shop strategy. Targets have to be carefully investigated and selected. Right now the ILGWU in Los Angeles is engaged in a five month strike against a large textile "converter." Textile converters take raw greigh goods (undyed, unbleached fabric) from the southeastern mills and prepare it to order for local manufacturers. This is a sector that it totally unorganized and employs upward of 20,000 workers in Los Angeles. The workers at Ideal Textile, all undocumented Latin men, went on strike on March 26, 1987. They are holding firm for union recognition with active picketing underway and a very powerful boycott of firms using Ideal company fabrics in the manufacture of their garments.

This is a battle for a beachhead. If the union can control the flow of raw materials, it can exercise some control over the rest of the industry. A victory at Ideal will prepare the way for a general onslaught on this sector with organizing committees being set up in every "converter" possi-



Migra, out of the factories! Now!

ble. Congressional hearings on health and safety conditions in plants where noxious dyes are used might be initiated. The basis exists to build a social movement throughout this sector based on workers' shared bond as immigrants fighting for legal status and their common exploitation as workers. A similar approach was successfully applied by 1199 in New York City in the 1960's when that union linked Black people's struggle for civil rights with the fight to organize the New York City hospitals.

Conclusion

Much has been made of the projection that the United States will become a service and brain center for the American empire. While certainly there have been traumatic structural changes in the economy, the United States is not about to lose its manufacturing base. The impor-

tance of factors beyond the wage differential—like quality control, delivery time, and flexibility—insures that there will always be a place for domestic production to meet the demands of the largest market in the world: the U.S. of A. Often competition from imports and vanishing production are offered as excuses for unions' inability to maintain their foothold in a changing workforce. Apparel is an important industry to look at because of the richness of countervailing trends at work. But perhaps more important, the possibility of organizing immigrant workers in the growing apparel industry in the Los Angeles basin holds out immense promise for American labor. ■

Footnotes:

1. Cited in the LA Business Journal, September 7, 1987.
2. Vertical integration is the operation of a single firm at more than one stage of production. The most comprehensive type of vertical integration

would include control of the productive stages from the processing of raw materials to the completion and distribution of the finished product. Vertical disintegration is just the opposite: the fragmentation of the production process.

3. Jobbers are those with responsibility for their own designs, who acquire the necessary fabric and related materials and arrange for the sale of the finished product. Contractors are those who receive cut garment part bundles from jobbers and perform all necessary operations to process them into finished garments.

Sources:

Benjamin Mark Cole, "More Manufacturers Make Home in LA," *Los Angeles Business Journal*, September 7-13, 1987.

Leigh Montville, "Everything Under the Sun," *Sports Illustrated*, September 7, 1987.

Peter Olney, "A Targeting Proposal for Los Angeles County," Report prepared for the Western States Region of the ILGWU, February, 1987.

Edward W. Soja, Allan D. Heskin, Marco Cenzatti, *Los Angeles: Through the Kaleidoscope of Urban Restructuring*, UCLA, Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning, 1985.

Statement by the Mixtec Indians in the U.S.A.

It is commonly known in Mexico that we, the Mixtec Indians of San Quintin, an agricultural valley in the northwest border region of Mexico, are attempting to organize ourselves independent of the official labor unions (CMT, CNC, CCI).

Experience has taught us that these unions have never responded to our needs. Instead they have supported the interests of the landowners. They have spied on our operations. They have allowed the landowners to disguise armed thugs as union representatives in order to destroy our efforts to organize, to kidnap us, and even to murder our members.

In the face of this repression we began in the early 1980s, to organize ourselves in the valley of San Quintin. We Mixtecs identified an alternative union that truly represents our interests. It is the CIOAC, Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos (Independent Union of Farm Workers and Small Farmers).

Harvest after Harvest, we Mixtecs migrate from the south of Mexico to the valley of San Quintin. There we live in cardboard shacks, without any kind of

public services. We have neither medical services nor schools. Our day to day existence is a frightening battle with disease and ignorance. We also have a complete lack of rights as workers and are extremely underpaid for the work we do.

Beginning in March and April of 1987, with the assistance of the secretary general of the CIOAC in San Quintin, Maclovio Rojas, we staged a series of work stoppages. These were directed against the Garcia and Belerra families (landlords of the region). Our goal was to increase the salary we were paid for our work.

This fight concluded in a victory for the workers. But as an answer to the indomitable dignity of the Mixtec, our co-workers Rojas, Mendez, Rojas Castillo, Cano, Santiago and Velasquez were kidnapped and threatened with death by the "white guards."

On the 4th of July, 1987, Maclovio Rojas, secretary general of the CIOAC, was assassinated in a very well planned "car accident." The state judicial authorities, governor Xicotencatl Leyva, and even the President of Mexico, Miguel

de la Madrid Hurtado, have shown indifference toward clearing up the murder of Maclovio Rojas and bringing those responsible to justice.

Therefore we, the Mixtec members of the CIOAC and of many communities in Mexico and here in the United States, ask the following:

We ask for a show of solidarity from the social and political organizations of the United States.

We demand JUSTICE, that those who ordered this murder be detained and brought to trial.

We demand respect for the health and safety of the rest of our Mixtec co-workers who were threatened.

We demand that our constitutional rights be respected, and that our chosen union be given legal recognition.

—Excerpted from CIOAC Press Release, San Diego, August 1987

For more information, write c/o Box 5383, San Diego, CA 92104.



Towards A New Mexican Socialist Party

Left Unity in Mexico

by Victor Roha

In March 1987, five Mexican socialist parties met in Mexico City to initiate what could become the most significant political merger in the history of the Mexican Left. Each party met separately that weekend and then together to discuss the formation of a new Mexican Socialist Party (the Partido Mexicano Socialista). The following are interviews with representatives of three of the parties attending with some additional commentary on the events of that weekend and introductory background on Mexican politics today.

Political Background

Mexico's nationalist revolution of 1910 brought to Mexico a rhetoric of revolution and national liberation, of independence from the giant to the north and of the rights of campesinos, workers and the landless. However it never fulfilled its promises of broad social change and economic justice and left the country saddled with single party rule.

The Partido Revolucionario Institucional, or "PRI-gobierno" (PRI government) as the Mexican Left likes to call it, has never lost an election. Until this year every president has chosen his successor to pillage the national treasury. For instance, the CIA estimates Lopez Portillo took about 3.3 billion dollars from the Mexican treasury. Entire unions affiliate with the PRI so that their leaders may receive party and government money. The educational system, state and local governments, the health system, the nationalized oil companies, trade and commerce are all under the hegemony of this single dictatorial party. Mexico has ceased to be a revolutionary country in any true sense of the word. [As we go to press, President Miguel de la Madrid has just pointed "el dedazo," the big finger, to name as his successor, Carlos

Victor Roha was raised in Latin America and has traveled extensively throughout Central and South America. He has been a political activist doing labor and solidarity work of the last seventeen years. The interviews were transcribed by Emily Rader, an occasional contributor to FM. She lives in Los Angeles where she works as a ward clerk and on getting her Master's Degree in English.

Salinas de Gortari, the 39 year old Cabinet minister responsible for the country's current austerity program. Salinas' measures have hardly made him a popular figure, even in his own party, but his victory is all but assured.—ed.]

Perhaps the PRI's most progressive aspect is its foreign policy. Though the PRI generally plays Washington's junior partner, for whatever reasons it has also become its diplomatic sparing partner. Mexico supports the Contadora peace process. The PRI would not have the U.S. rule lock, stock and barrel over Central America as the Reagan administration has attempted.

Current Economic Crisis

With the demise of OPEC (from which Mexico, although never a member, benefited), the Mexican economy tumbled and with it tumbled the living standards of the vast majority of working people. The country is now saddled with the second largest foreign debt of any developing nation over \$100 billion dollars. It takes half the government's income each year just to pay interest on this debt.

A privileged few escaped the crisis. The top two percent plundered the economy; an estimated seventy billion dollars has been sent out of the country to banks in the US, Switzerland, and the Bahamas. By ravaging the country, the Mexican bourgeoisie caused the value of the peso to plummet thus destroying the real income of the Mexican people. Five years ago the peso exchange stood at about twenty-five to one. Today it stands at 1600 to one. Inflation is running 130% each year. The price of basic commodities, once subsidized by oil revenues, are rising. Tortillas the staple food, kerosene to cook with, gasoline for transportation, and the ever-scarcer supplies of meat are climbing at a steady 7% per month. The produce of this agricultural nation, fruit and vegetables, are being snatched off the domestic market, bought off the plates of hungry people by big chain stores in the US that can bid up the price. And the Mexican government and the international money lenders stand by and applaud, saying Mexico needs the US currency.

But the largest source of US dollars comes from Mexico's most exploitable resource: its people, its workers. Mexicanos scramble across the border to eke out a living in the US doing the dirty work, the dangerous work: scrubbing floors and cleaning toilets, washing dishes, stooping in the fields and living out in the bush. These are the people sending money back home to sustain their families and their country. The migrant worker is a lifeline for survival.

It is in this context that the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill is a sinister attack on the Mexican people. It denies a hungry people their right to subsistence only because they were born on the "wrong" side of an artificial, imaginary line. This line bisects what was their historic homeland, their nation. This borderline now divides the First World from the Third World, a line between the exploiting country and the exploited, a line perpetuating a monstrous inequality. This line says that on one side of the border you work for three to eight dollars an hour while on the other side you sell yourself for three dollars a day if you are fortunate enough to find work. Such barbarous treatment of human beings is neither accidental nor ordained by a higher being; it is perpetuated by the racism and national chauvinism at the core of US capitalist ideology which preaches and promotes the notion of our superiority.

Seen in its essence, the border represents America's apartheid. The US bourgeoisie is "critical" of South African whites for fencing in and depriving blacks of basic human rights based on the notion of white supremacy. But even liberals in this country promote fencing off people of color to the south.

In this political and economic context, the emergence of the PMS could have great significance for Mexican politics. The highlight of the weekend meeting was scheduled on Sunday to bring the five parties together under the same roof for the first time. The national auditorium was rented for the occasion. Spirits were sky high as each group arrived. Chants from those assembled and those arriving would break out to drown out the normal city noises. Mothers and children were everywhere. As the doors opened the flood of delegates fanned out into the gigantic auditorium.

Who's Who in Mexican Politics?

PMS: Partido Mexicano Socialista. The Mexican Socialist Party is the new party formed by the merger of the MRP, PMT, PPR, PST, PSUM, and UIC.

MRP: Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo. The Revolutionary Movement of the People was a mass revolutionary party concentrating on campesino, squatters and union grass roots organizing. The MRP traces its roots to supporters of Mao Zedong and the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

PMT: Partido Mexicano de los Trabajadores. The Mexican Workers Party was a large revolutionary nationalist organization. The former head of the PMT, Humberto Castillo became the first presidential candidate of the PMS. PMT's strength was among peasants and the "popular sector."

PPR: Partido Patriotico Revolucionario. The Revolutionary Patriotic Party was initiated by forces connected to 1970s guerrilla groups. Its main strengths were in the student and solidarity movements.

PST: Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores. The Socialist Workers Party was until recently considered part of the government's loyal opposition. The majority of the PST's membership broke off to join the PMS after it was formed. They had very strong work among the squatters movement.

PSUM: Partido Socialista Unificado de Mexico. The Unified Socialist Party of Mexico was itself a product of a recent merger of several parties including the traditional Communist Party of Mexico. The PSUM had the most developed infrastructure and the best ties among organized labor.

UIC: Union de Izquierda Comunista. The Union of Left Communists is a split from the old Mexican Communist Party that rejected some of the "liberalizations" of the PSUM. They are the most ideological and pro-Soviet of the above listed parties to join the PMS.

PRT: Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores. The Revolutionary Workers Party is the largest of the Trotskyist groups in Mexico. The PRT participated in unity discussions with the other parties but did not join the PMS.

PRI: Partido Revolucionario Institucional. The Revolutionary Institutional Party is Mexico's ruling party. In essence, it is the government's party, never having lost a national election.

PAN: Partido de Accion Nacional. The Party of National Action is Mexico's strongest right-wing party. PAN (which means bread in Spanish) is populist in approach, well-financed and is presently the strongest opposition to the PRI government, winning governorships in several states in recent years.





Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo

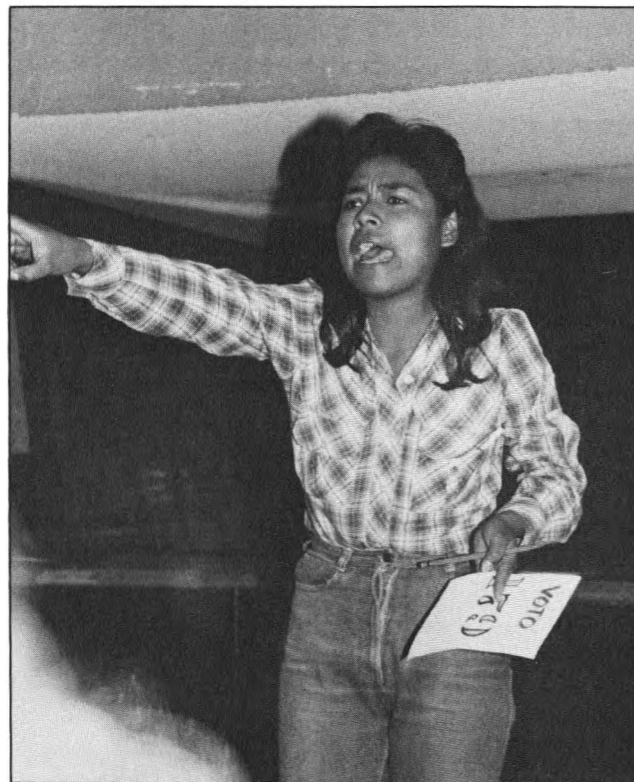
It is the practice in Mexico that conference leadership be elected by the body. A committee of the elected (mesa) is seated in front to make critical decisions when issues of parliamentary procedure get sticky. At the conference of the Revolutionary People's Movement, to my surprise, two young people, aged seventeen and nineteen, were nominated and elected to chair the main debate on the unification proposal. The room was filled with more experienced cadre. I recognized many middle-aged founders of the MRP standing in the wings. These were exceptionally adroit leaders both ideologically and in mass struggle, but they had opted for the young to lead the conference. I was a bit perplexed but later came to understand the long-term wisdom of their choice.

The youths' down-to-earth style, their ability to speak the language of the rank-and-file contributed to broader participation. The ability to bring leadership up from the bottom was one of the factors that had transformed the MRP and its base. At one time it was almost entirely composed of students and intellectuals. At the time of the congress they had very few students and were composed primarily of colonos (people from the poor communities or "colonies" surrounding the cities), campesinos, some unions and what they call the "sector popular" (housewives and folks from grass roots organizations.) These two comrades showed themselves to be effective leaders, forceful, jovial, insightful and articulate.

I was later able to watch the young man organize and motivate a caucus of farm workers, many of whom were twice or three times his age. I watched the young woman captivate an entire assembly when she spoke. She minced no words as she castigated some of the intellectual leadership for its lofty rhetoric and esoteric formulations. "Whose party is this?" she demanded. "It belongs to the 'pueblo'." The intellectuals accepted her criticism and smiled.

All those attending were selected and elected representatives of party branches, workplaces, communities and ejidos (cooperatives that result from land takeovers.) The document being discussed proposed the

unification of the MRP into the PMS. Debate was heated; counter-proposals were put forward. Each document was distributed, then read aloud. All listened intently. One quarter to one third of the delegates could not read or write, one participant confided to me. There were rows of middle-aged women, a few clusters of students, and whole sections of straw cowboy hats that are the traditional garb in several Mexican states.



FM photo

The youths' down-to-earth style, their ability to speak the language of the rank-and-file contributed to broader participation.

For more than a day and a half it looked like the forces against unification might turn the tide and win the majority against merger. This was true even though the MRP had been among the initiators of the multi-party negotiations. The older founders had become divided on the issue once it became evident that the PSUM, their historical rival, was going to join.

Pedro Velasquez, Secretary of International Relations of the Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo, spoke with me about the MRP and the process of unification.

FM: Please tell us a little of your history—where the MRP comes from and how it arose.

Velasquez: Around twenty years ago, there was a political conjuncture of great magnitude in Mexico—the popular student movement of 1968. In 1968, various popular groupings, various currents of the mass movement concentrated themselves around the student struggle for democracy, particularly at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. From this struggle there arose a multitude of comrades who set themselves the task of building new popular organizations. We sought to generate the social force to reach revolutionary and socially-transforming goals in this country.

Before then numerous small and medium-sized groups existed. In 1968, these began a process that resulted in an explosion of popular organizations the length and breadth of the country. During the early 1970s, there arose such organizations as the Popular Neighborhoods Union, the Union for the Organization of the Student Movement, the Farmworkers' Union, and the Workers' Union. Some groups took other routes—armed struggle, for example, and building organizations like the September 23 Communist League and other small groups.

In fact, two lines were advanced in the 1970s concerning the revolutionary process in Mexico. One favored arming ourselves, but this second strategy was practically flattened by the government.

The strategy adopted by a large number of comrades now part of the MRP was one of building mass social organizations, of organizing the people, of developing the political struggle of the masses with the idea of gathering forces for a new revolutionary process in our country. Though it formed in 1983, the MRP traces its origins to those times.

FM: Given this strategic orientation, what political work has distinguished the MRP from other parties involved in the unity process?

Velasquez: The oldest experience we have, and in which we have an important and bigger influence, is in organizing among the *colonos* living at the edge of some of the large cities [ie, for better government services and or rights to the land in these very poor neighborhoods or rural areas—ed]. The majority of our most experienced cadre have

been concentrated here, since before the MRP formed. Lately we see the *campesino* sector of our organization growing rapidly. The MRP decisively and firmly adopted the line of basing ourselves on the *campesino* movement as one of the main sources of revolutionary struggle in this country. This policy has generated enormous growth, practically doubling our forces.

FM: Turning now to the unity process, in which I understand the MRP played a big role in initiating, what are your views on the necessity of merger and the manner in which it can happen?

Velasquez: Our main hope is that we can imprint a particular character on the militancy of this new party and its political line. We look for influence of public opinion within the widest sectors. This implies fundamentally the organization of the voters who vote for the new party, the Mexican Socialist Party. This practice is not common now in the registered parties, and there is much criticism that the parties only come during election times to ask for votes but otherwise don't have systematic, deep, organized work among the voters.

We have had some experiences recently in the state of Hidalgo. We made electoral alliances with the other parties before going towards fusion, and this had good results. We got 14,000 votes for our comrade, Jose Hernandez Delgado, as candidate for governor, and now a critical task is to organize the voters.

FM: What problems have you had to overcome in forging unity with the other parties?

Velasquez: One of the MRP's principal problems, which we have been attacking for several years, is that we have sometimes been doctrinaire. We didn't conceive of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought as a theoretical, methodological tool for concrete analysis of concrete situations, and we didn't use the tools of empirical, investigative work. We only evaluated the situation in highly abstract and general terms, and in that sense we were doctrinaire and dogmatic. This has been one of the main problems we have needed to resolve.

FM: Do you have a message for the North American Left?

Velasquez: Though we have many ideas in common since we are revolutionaries, big differences exist between our societies, and there are big differences in our attitudes. For instance, the relations between center and periphery is always becoming more polarized, more differentiated, and

the gap between the industrialized countries and our countries is widening. We have tactics and strategies that are somewhat different since you are in the imperialist center and we are in the periphery.

A phenomenon of popular revolution is appearing throughout Latin America: a unity of popular forces is appearing as a general tendency. Also, there is the possibility and necessity of all of Latin American uniting against North American imperialism. I believe North American revolutionaries have a critical task in relation to us, which is to base yourselves on our struggles. Not just those of Latin Americans, although it is the most immediate area, but the national and social movements happening all along the periphery of the system—in the Philippines, in Africa, in Asia, in the Middle East, etc.

Also, since the North American press functions out of the interests of the dominant political groups, North American revolutionaries need to project a different vision of Mexico, that of Mexico as the periphery, of millions of unemployed people, of misery, of hunger. This would help us as Mexicans to succeed in Mexico.

In addition, some joint, focused work at the U.S. border would make us feel part of the same organizations. After the formation of the new party, we will be able to begin to influence millions of Mexicans, millions of Chicanos,

and hundreds of thousands of people of other nationalities who live mainly in the southern U.S.

FM: It's true that the people of every country can learn from the struggles of others. Recently some students from California visited the MRP in Baja California in Mexico and returned with a whole new outlook on their heritage and on revolutionary politics. This type of exchange is essential to the internationalism we want to promote.

Velasquez: Yes, it is a fact that the borders between our countries don't exist except for custom operations. There is economic integration, especially in Northern Mexico, because of U.S. industry. There is also cultural and some political integration. You know the influence that the government of Texas has over the town government of Tamaulipas here. In order to overcome the inequality and oppression this integration brings, we should adopt a position of making the border disappear, of having a relation of integration, but a better one. We are not nationalists defending our territorial space, but we are also objective, so we are nationalists confronting the empire because it is our enemy. We think a different economic system must develop, in which there will be a real integration of the peoples of Latin America.



FM photo

The MRP had done excellent organizing among campesinos and urban squatters.

Women Against Machismo

I was fortunate to have dinner at midnight with a group of women from the MRP. This was a time for them to casually exchange war stories. A number of younger women pumped a woman, now in her fifties, for her experiences in the Marxist and revolutionary movements of the sixties and seventies. Then the tables turned and it was the younger women's turn to tell of their successes. They were from Mexicali, the parched city snuggled against the US border where Imperial Valley stretches into the Gulf of Mexico. In Mexicali alone, the MRP has three hundred party affiliates. I was in awe as they described how in a matter of a few years they grew from a small base into a substantial and unusual one. Mexicali's MRP is composed predominantly of women and has almost entirely female leadership.

The struggle against machismo is not so well developed in the rest of the country. The next day, after fourteen hours of plenary session, the resolution to merge was finally approved. Though the intellectuals were divided, time and time again the rank-and-file leaders rose to speak in favor of unity. "There are so many parties and so many front groups all working against each other," they argued, "that the people's movement is being held back. There must be unity on the Left!" By the end the rank and file had their way. The vote for merger was almost unanimous.

Then it was time to elect MRP representatives to the PMS party's transitional Central Committee. When all those elected turned out to be men all hell broke loose. Led in part by the Mexicali women, criticisms were leveled at the organization as a whole for its failure to promote the leadership of women. Despite the midnight hour, the issue was not swept under the rug. For almost two hours, delegates criticized many aspects of style and method, traditional mentality and the old boy network. The role of women, they said, had been belittled.

There were some delegates from rural backgrounds who saw it differently, but most delegates were well aware that some failings existed and that some important tasks lay ahead if they were to rectify the situation. The women cadre emphasized that after work and while doing political organizing, they were still the ones running the households. "If the struggle does not transform your personal lives as well as society," a comrade hammered home, "we will have failed in our objective of liberation for all."

Partido Mexicano de los Trabajadores

The Partido Mexicano de los Trabajadores (PMT) gathering was impressive in its size and scope. There were 700 to 1000 representatives present. It was clear that the PMT had done some exceptionally good organizing work among the campesinos and at the same time could count a large number of intellectuals and people of influence as members. The rhetoric of socialism was far less apparent than at the MRP congress, but I got the clear sense that this revolutionary nationalist organization had evolved through heated class struggle. The PMT is a crucial lynch pin in the unified formation, not only because they were probably the largest organization but because they are widely respected among the left as well.

At the conference, I spoke with Luis Hernandez, Relations Secretary of the National Committee of the Partido Mexicano de los Trabajadores (Mexican Workers Party).

FM: Can you tell me a little about the history of the Partido Mexicano de los Trabajadores?

Luis Hernandez: The PMT formed in 1974; in September we celebrated thirteen years of political life. The PMT aspired to constitute itself as a revolutionary party of the masses. While the rest of the Left in 1974 thought we needed a cadre party, we thought that a cadre party was totally insufficient to take political power in Mexico.

A party needs to speak a simple language, at the level of the lowest class in Mexico, which is the majority. Education in Mexico is at the third grade level. We needed to take this into account, and also that people are not politicized. Along with a simple language, we needed to be a party that could gather strength from the history of the country, its national heroes, its national roots. For example, the electoral symbol we use is an Aztec symbol that means union and movement. We put aside all academic language and try to support ourselves with socialist theories in general terms, taking into account that each country has its own particularities, its own circumstances, and that in any case, any form of socialism would have to be adapted to Mexico. Our work is most advanced among campesinos [farm workers and poor farmers—ed.], among workers and among housewives.



FM: How do you see the fusion of the various parties that united? What does this unity mean for PMT's base?

Hernandez: Fusion in the first place recognizes our incapacity to make ourselves into mass parties. Looking at the parties individually, we see from their votes in elections that we don't represent anything big. It is very simple logic that, if separated we don't represent anything big, it is better for us to be united.

We see unity as an opportunity. Besides being a sum of the apparatus and the militants of all the parties, the unity can be a multiplication because it has awakened interest. There are people outside party politics who now tell us, "I am going to join that new party." There are organizations who have been anti-party who now say, "We are going to promote participation of our people in this new political party." We hope to gather the best of each of the five organizations, then we hope to make ourselves into a magnet. We hope to attract from among the restless people, the people who want a change in this country.

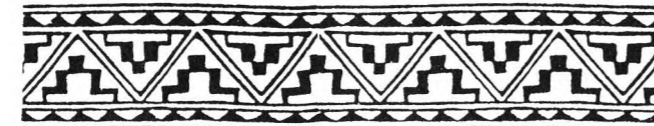
FM: What difficulties did you have to overcome to arrive at this agreement?

Hernandez: Sectarianism was the main difficulty we encountered. When we began to propose unity, we had to restrain ourselves from a lot of sectarianism and dogmatism.

Within the PRT, we had less of those problems because we started this process three years ago. A National Assembly of the PMT resolved at that time that we would look

for unity, but some comrades weren't convinced of this. It wasn't that they didn't want unity at all, but they might not have been convinced about unity with PSUM, for example, and preferred we prioritize unity with the PRT, say.

The majority in the PMT believes that we must be consistent: unity with all those who want it and up to where they want it. We proposed unity, for instance, to the Partido Popular Socialista and the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores, which are considered to favor the government. We proposed unity to them out of eagerness to be consistent and out of our belief that, though we ultimately aspire for a unity of the people, at this time, unity proceeds at this time in the Left.



Partido Socialista Unificado de Mexico

It was the Partido Socialista Unificado de Mexico (PSUM) that caught me most by surprise. Their congress was held on the ground floor of a towering Mexico City hotel. Delegates here all sat at long tables with white table cloths and decanters of water. There were a very large number of "encorbatados" (people with coats and ties.) There were only a few sandled campesinos. For years the old Communist Party, which had formed the core of the PSUM, was accused of being the government's "loyal opposition." They were said to fear alienating the PRI government from their ally the Soviet Union. It was visible that this party had money and significant resources, including its own greyhound-style bus with a red and yellow hammer and sickle. This kind of socialism was one that delegates from other congresses were worried would dominate the new party. They feared a socialism that was eager to carve a niche within the nationalistic and legalistic framework of the Mexican status quo.

The PSUM will undoubtedly be a strong element within the PMS, but I met many who insisted that the PSUM was quite divided internally and contained a strong and militant opposition which would be willing to unite with other currents to form a revolutionary majority. It must also be pointed out that the PSUM has followed a distinctive path from most of Latin America's pro-Soviet parties. To its credit, the Mexican CP condemned the Czechoslovakian invasion and distanced itself from a number of Soviet foreign policy positions.

The PSUM was created by the merger of five existing organizations and in doing so further demarcated itself from pro-Soviet parties, breaking with a strictly hierarchical party structure and allowing for more internal democracy. Its critics insist that the PSUM never overcame its revisionist heritage and courted the PRI for reforms instead of challenging the government's right to exist as a representative of the people. They charge the PSUM continued to look more like staunch nationalists than Marxist revolutionaries. A number of forces that had merged began to leave the PSUM and the rank-and-file sought change. For the PSUM, merger into the PMS represents a shift to the left.

We spoke with Luciano Concheiro, who is the PSUM Central Committee member in charge of external relations.

FM: I understand that the PSUM formed out of several fairly diverse groups. Can you give me a brief account of this history?

Concheiro: The PSUM began in 1981 with the merger of five socialist organizations. Some were factions which had split off from the Communist Party in the 1940s—that is to say, they were a product of the divisions that Stalinism created. Others came from the socialism of Lombardo Toledano and the theories of the Popular Socialist Party from which they split. Another of the PSUM founders, the Popular Action Movement, was not socialist but a revolutionary nationalist group, made up of labor union activists.

The transformation of the PSUM grew out of a recognition that the Left cannot work divided. The first premise was that we had to get beyond the idea of a vanguard party—the party with a capital "P," above and beyond everything else. Basically, the communists recognized that the development of the Communist Party had limits, and it was time to move on. Concerning the relationship of the party to the masses, the new idea was for a mass party, not a cadre party. And in order to be a mass party, the PSUM had to completely rethink the CP's authoritarian relationship and replace it with one based on respect.

FM: Moving to the present moment, I would say that there are very few examples worldwide of the unification of parties on the scale now occurring in Mexico. Large scale mergers did take place in Nicaragua prior to the seizing of power and in El Salvador, where there is also a very advanced armed struggle. But these are exceptions. And even more seldom do

we see parties merge where they are still a long ways from gaining power, as in the case in Mexico. Could you describe what factors have pushed forward the unity process here?

Concheiro: The national crisis has obliged us to forge unity. The right wing has managed to mobilize people around the current situation, including the demand for national sovereignty and economic problems. The government has slid further to the right, and the right wing parties (principally the PAN [Partido de Accion Nacional, or National Action Party—ed.]) is even to the right of the government.

Working people have demanded unity from the Left in the course of practical struggles. We have come to realize that when the Left offers multiple fronts [ie, mass organizations—ed], the workers are confused. We will never lead the people's struggles when we don't have joint action. But it is the country's swing to the right and the actual circumstances suffered in the mass movement that obliged us to reflect.

It is also true that the whole Left has been thinking of and working for unity for the last ten years. It has been ten years since the proposition of the unity of the Left was advanced. Since anti-unity positions also were born, we had to rediscover the idea of unity at a theoretical level. We had to launch specific work projects together, evolve in our concepts of communism and political parties, and evolve our perspectives about certain countries as well. Those who proposed unity were principally those who had relations with the Chinese communists, and they insisted on autonomy [from the CP of the Soviet Union]. But it is also true that for twenty years now, the Communist Party of Mexico has had its own political line. Going back to Czechoslovakia in 1968, the CP in this country was one of the first in Latin America to demarcate itself from the Soviets, yet without breaking relations with them. The Party also grew closer to the Chinese and had other relations that marked its autonomy. Within the other parties here, similar things occurred: each one was evolving.

FM: Your own case seems fairly unique. The fusion of such separate political tendencies takes a lot of courage, especially with others that for many years have criticized you for being reformist and following after the Soviet Union.

Concheiro: Yes, from the point of view of the "Maoists," we were the best of enemies. But we have understood that the enemy was in front of us, not among us. It is in practical, day-to-day work that we must define our politics, and

not only in old theories. We need to create a Mexican socialism, and we have to think about the Mexican reality, with all its differences. Events in Nicaragua and El Salvador that you refer to also have influenced us very much. We feel part of those Latin American revolutions. We are a party that was in Nicaragua, participating in the depths of the revolution, in the hospitals and in economic help. We know very well about the Nicaraguan revolution.

FM: What about solidarity with the people of North America? What importance do you give that solidarity, and how can it be strengthened?

Concheiro: We see it as of fundamental importance. We think that this is one of the great problems which we need to resolve. We lack extensive knowledge of the class struggle in the United States, but we believe that there is a lack of knowledge of our struggle in your country. We are very clear in our internationalism. We must support the struggles that occur there and here. There exists an interdependence between our peoples, as well as between our nations. After all, our sovereignty is always for sale in the United States.

We also have allies in the United States as well. We understand that today the Simpson-Rodino law synthesizes this problem. This subject is one which is on the minds of all Mexican political activists, not just those on the Left. Simpson-Rodino is a problem for all Latin Americans, for our whole country, for what is really at play here is our national sovereignty. Simpson-Rodino directly attacks the undocumented workers, but as a consequence it also attacks North American workers generally. We believe it is an attack by the ruling class on all of us. The AFL-CIO is blamed as one of those who helped get this law passed. But sooner or later, the North American working class as a whole will have to bear the burden.

This situation should help us see that we need contacts with the United States. We have to get rid of ideas that everything in the United States is bad. For your part, you have to get rid of the idea that everything in Mexico is corruption. In Mexico, we have a noble people with traditions of struggle, with a lot of history. North Americans also have proud histories and traditions of struggles for justice. Mexicans and Latin Americans should not be foreigners. We do not want this physical border between our people. We have to see ourselves as part of a greater whole; we are one people.



Although I was not able to arrange an interview with the Partido Patriótico Revolucionario (PPR), I did attend their Congress. Compared with some of the other meetings, the congress of the PPR was spartan. Like the MRP, there were few comforts in the union hall where they met. Security was tighter than in any of the other assemblies, probably reflecting the roots of the organization which arose from remnants of the 1970's guerrilla groups. Here intellectuals seemed to predominate, but there was little doubt that these were very committed revolutionary activists. The atmosphere was strikingly intense. The foyers were sizzling with debate between sessions. This was a group that broke off from the Mexican Communist Party in the 1970s and according to others they were the most doctrinaire, ideological and pro-Soviet of the five parties. It was evident that, while clearly the smallest of the groups, they had done grass roots organizing and won over a sector of popular support.

Also, since last Spring, a sixth revolutionary party has joined the PMS. The Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST) was one of only a handful of political parties powerful enough to have garnered the legal right to run candidates in elections. For a number of years the PST had been considered relatively pro-government despite the fact that it had a reputation for militant organizing among marginalized sectors of society. Their tactics were not to create front groups to make it easier to organize but to win people directly into their socialist organization. For this reason their very sizable membership is considered to be particularly well disciplined. At the PST's Third National Congress heated debate erupted between the rank-and-file and the leadership over the proposal of unity with the PMS. Though a small fraction of the leadership will maintain the name and structure of the PST, the vast majority of the organization voted for unification and abandoned it for the PMS. This huge regroupment of activists with a history of mass struggle is a tremendous shot in the arm for the PMS whose membership is now estimated at 100,000 to 125,000. ■



Mr. Werlein-Jaen was born and raised in Panama, and has lived in the United States since 1980. He was in Panama for the first three weeks of August 1987, when he interviewed Ricardo Arias-Calderon (president of the Christian Democrats), Mauro Zuniga (a leader of the Popular Action Party), Nestor Jaen (a radical Jesuit), and an anonymous trade unionist. Mr. Werlein-Jaen works in this country with the Progressive Student Network.

Torrijismo, the U.S., and the Popular Movement

Crisis in Panama

by Lamoin Werlein-Jaen

It is Monday, June 8, 1987 in Panama City, Panama. On Via Espana, thousands of people battle with riot-clad soldiers. In Chorrío, a sprawling ghetto, the army is met with bottles, bricks and stones. In a modest middle-class neighborhood on the other side of town, entire families demonstrate against the regime. Over at the National University, rioting students have set fire to their barricades. Meanwhile the Chamber of Commerce is calling for a general strike.

Behind these events is a country facing growing political and economic instability—instability which adversely affects virtually every sector of society. At base is the military regime's inability to meet the needs of a restless population and a national economy under pressure, while at the same time serving U.S. imperialist interests. With the economy continuing to deteriorate, the IMF banging at the door, and no ruling consensus to be found, the U.S. moves and all hell breaks loose.

The current political crisis erupted on June 7, 1987 when Col. Roberto Diaz-Herrera, who was removed from the military high-command the previous week, held a press conference to denounce Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, current leader of the ruling Panamanian military. Diaz-Herrera's denunciation centered around four principal accusations: first, he recounted in detail just how the 1984 elections had been rigged. Second, he told how Noriega and the CIA had conspired to assassinate Gen. Omar Torrijos-Herrera. Third, he accused Noriega of ordering the assassination of the opposition figure Hugo Spadafora, whose headless body was found near the Costa Rican frontier in September of 1985. Finally, he implicated Noriega in drug trafficking operations centered in Panama.

Opposition Movement Takes Hold

These declarations drove the masses into the streets. The sentiments of the people took form in a multi-class rebellion which carried with it a

mixed bag of interests and motivations. As the news of the denunciations spread, Panama City was hit by four consecutive days of large-scale rioting. Within two days the disturbances spread to the second and third largest cities, Colon and David. By the fourth day the crescendo of calls for *JUSTICIA! JUSTICIA! JUSTICIA!* became unbearable for the military. The armed forces instituted a state of emergency and placed the country under martial law. Demonstrations were brutally repressed; hundreds of people were arrested. The violence, however, only served to inflame the opposition.

By the first week of July, Panama City once again erupted into riots, with the National University hit hardest. Some 300 persons were arrested, with reports of rape and torture from the jails, but the opposition moved to solidify its strategy. A general strike on July 27 and 28 was reported to be 80% effective. Mass mobilizations involving 200,000 and 50,000 people were held on August 9 and 17. Daily vigils were held throughout, and minor but frequent skirmishes erupted.

The mass movement against the regime has taken organizational form in the Crusada Civilista Nacional—the National Civilian Crusade. Reflecting the multi-sector nature of the opposition movement, the Crusada has tenuously united several diverse forces in Panamanian society. The principal parties are the right-wing Panamenista Autentica Party (the electoral arm of the quintessential patriarch of Panamanian politics, Arnulfo Arias Madrid), the so-called centrist Christian Democrats, and the left-nationalist Popular Action Party. Endorsing, though not a part of the Crusada, is the small Socialist Workers Party. Sectoral representatives include several student groups, some professional organizations, several independent trade unions and the Chamber of Commerce.

As may be expected, most view the Crusada as a short-term alliance of temporary convenience. In fact, the only thing the Crusada has been able to agree on is that Noriega should be ousted. Whether new elections should be held, a new junta set up (and who it would include), or the 1984 elections should be honored still remain to be decided. Within this process the Christian Democrats positioned themselves well. They invoked their reformist tradition which serves to legitimize them in the eyes of the masses while maintaining their ties to the right wing. They are, after all, part of an international movement which includes some of the most reactionary elements in Latin America.

Left and popular forces have been somewhat divided in their approaches to the Crusada. Some sections of the Left

feel that they cannot at this point vie for hegemony over the opposition movement. They argue, however, that the Panamanian bourgeoisie is not sufficiently mature to gain state power. They suggest that the only thing the oligarchs have to offer is more of the same IMF-imposed policies that Noriega has attempted to institute, and that the masses will not stand for it. Those holding this view see a long struggle ahead. Tactically they seek to solidify the left pole of the opposition in order to be able to challenge the oligarchs after the military has been overthrown, but they favor a united front. Others on the left have taken a more cautious approach. While also opposing the regime, they remain too skeptical of certain right-wing elements to openly support the Crusada. These left forces are privately skeptical of the united front strategy.

Waving the Nationalist Banner

The military regime has responded to the crisis with repression but in order to deflect the popular opposition, with the raising of the nationalist banner as well. Repression has been quite severe. As well as the hundreds of arrests mentioned earlier, there have been reports of torture. All opposition newspapers, TV and radio stations have been closed. In repressing the demonstrations, the military's anti-riot "Doberman Squads" have resorted to rubber bullets, birdshot, tear gas, and police dogs. We have also seen soldiers in civilian clothes terrorizing people in the most brutal ways.

Even so, the regime's nationalist posture is more significant. Within days of the eruption of the crisis, the military proclaimed that Yankee interference was behind the disturbances. Then the military branded the opposition as entirely "white oligarchical," manipulated by the U.S. Never mind that some of the largest demonstrations occurred in the poorest sections of Panama City. The regime mobilized the military's forces into the streets under the nationalist banner. "Not one step back in the face of imperialism" proclaimed Noriega as he spoke to a crowd of government supporters. This is the same Noriega who conspired with the US to assassinate General Omar Torrijos-Herrera, the same Noriega who has imposed draconian austerity measures at the behest of the IMF, the same Noriega who has grown stinking rich with several mansions, a fleet of fancy cars and millions of dollars in several bank accounts, and finally the same Noriega who reportedly has been on the CIA's payroll for many years.

In executing this strategy, the military has used (sometimes forcibly) the power base developed by Omar

Torrijos-Herrera during the 1970's. The ruling clique consists of an odd assortment ranging from so-called "Left" forces to oligarchical types. The principal organizations involved are the Partido Democratico Revolucionario (Democratic Revolutionary Party) which is the political arm of the military, the Partido Liberal (Liberal Party), Partido Republicano (Republican Party), and the Partido del Pueblo (Party of the People-Communist Party of Panama). Furthermore, the only national trade union federation (CONATO) is part of the ruling coalition. A section of the traditional oligarchical class has also remained with the military.

Another important element in the ruling coalition is the state bureaucracy. Given the Panamanian government's heavy involvement in the economy, the bureaucracy has become a substantial force. The state has interest in several industrial and agricultural enterprises, owns all public utilities, has a large regulatory body as well as ownership of a substantial portion of the communication media. A final important component of the ruling alliance might be called the "crony capitalist" sector. This group includes those whose wealth and business come from corruption and crony favoritism.

The U.S.—Bases and Banks

The third major actor in the course of events is the United States. The U.S. has very important geo-political and economic interests which it has sought to protect by attempting to manipulate both sides in the crisis. The U.S. wants to maintain effective control over the canal plus, and it wants to keep the US army Southern Command stationed in Panama. This complex of five bases has become very important for U.S. war preparations in Central Amer-

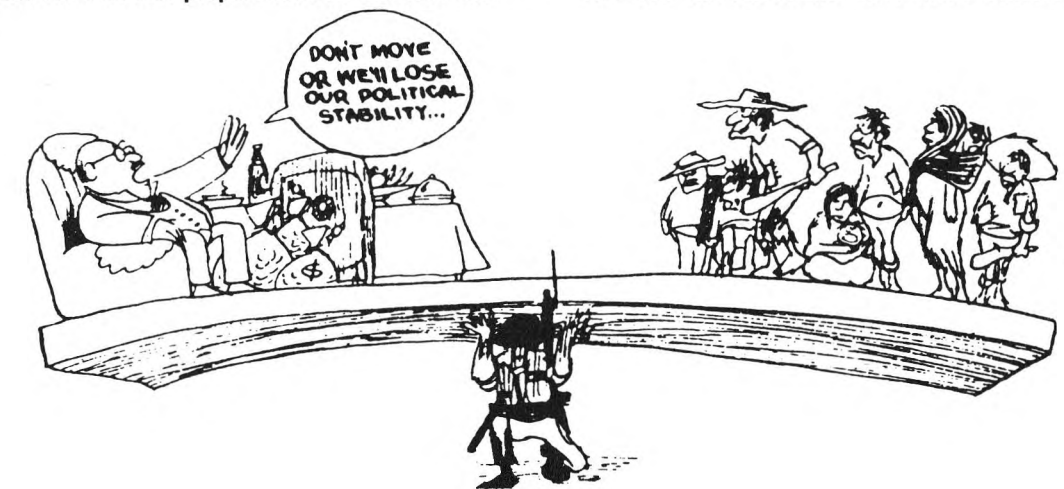
ica. In addition, the U.S. seeks to protect the massive foreign banking center in Panama. Over the past decade Panama has become the most important financial center in all of Latin America; over one hundred foreign banks have offices in Panama City.

For the U.S., Panamanian stability remains important whether it is achieved through a liberal democracy or a fascist military regime is unimportant. In fact, some observers claim the U.S. no longer feels Noriega can control the situation and is therefore abandoning. Others argue that the U.S. government is split on how to deal with Noriega, with more reactionary elements in the CIA and the Pentagon still supporting him while more liberal elements are seeking a new formulation. One thing is certain: the Panamanian military cannot hold together without U.S. support—the U.S. trains, arms and finances the military. Furthermore, the U.S. Southern Command exerts strong influence in the Panamanian military high command: most, after all, were trained in the U.S.-run School of the Americas.

El Torrijismo

In order to understand the parameters and alignment of forces in contemporary Panamanian politics, we must look at the regime of General Omar Torrijos, which lasted from 1968 until 1981. In Panama this came to be known as "El Torrijismo." Defying easy categorization, the Torrijos period incorporated both progressive and reactionary features.

More than anything else the 1968 coup was about placating the United States. The coup was essentially designed to counter two important historical developments: one was the nationalist movement centered among stu-



dents and organized around the issue of control over the canal; the other was the young trade union and peasant movements. In 1958, students had launched "Operation Sovereignty," which mobilized popular support against U.S. control over the canal. In 1964, Operation Sovereignty led to riots in which U.S. troops killed twenty-two students. By 1968, student agitation once again reached dangerous levels. Leaders in the peasant and trade union movements began to link their economic strengths with the greater nationalist struggle. Instability was growing and the oligarchs, led by Arnulfo Arias-Madrid, could not halt the process. The U.S. was getting edgy.

On October 10, 1968, the Panamanian military, led by Colonel Omar Torrijos-Herrera and Chief of Staff Colonel Boris Martinez, launched a coup against the Arias government. Initially the regime was divided on how to proceed. Then in February, 1969, Martinez announced he would initiate an agrarian reform program and would not halt student anti-U.S. demonstrations. Torrijos, it seems, was not ready to anger the U.S., for within two days, Torrijos exiled Martinez and purged the government of "left" elements.

From here Torrijos began in earnest to develop a power base and program. He began by neutralizing the Left. According to Mauro Zuniga, a leader of the Popular Action Party, "Torrijos exiled, brought out, or killed most left opposition leaders." In January 1970, the prominent Panamanian lawyer Ruben Miro was assassinated. Then in 1971, Father Hector Gallegos, a leader in the peasant cooperative movement, was kidnapped and never found. But this was only one side: Torrijos also appointed several other "left" leaders such as Escoban Bethancourt and Materno Vasquez to government ministries; Bethancourt was appointed Minister of Labor. Furthermore Torrijos lifted the ban on the Communist Party and brought some C.P. members into the government.

Next, Torrijos moved to consolidate a base among the urban and rural laboring classes. In the mid-1970's, the Torrijos regime set up CONATO, which became the only national trade union federation. Other government-led organizations were developed among peasants, students and professionals, and a separate political party (the PRD) was created for the military. This power base was to serve Torrijos well: it redirected the nationalist and labor movements towards more moderate pursuits, while at the same time giving him a measure of independence from U.S.-controlled interests. Torrijos then went on to develop his social project.

The Torrijos regime moved into a period of populism

and reform. In order to placate his newly acquired power base, he initiated broad reforms—particularly, a rural cooperative program; wage, price and rent controls; and a progressive labor code. In addition the regime nationalized all public utilities and created a State economic sector. Torrijos now exercised some degree of control over the economy. These last two measures also added to the regime's power base a large State labor force (which currently numbers 150,000 employees).



Pictorial Parade

Gen. Omar Torrijos' regime lasted from 1968 to 1981 and was characterized by both progressive and reactionary features.

Torrijos' Independent Foreign Policy

Perhaps the most progressive feature of the Torrijos program was its foreign policy. Especially in the late-1970's, Torrijos gave financial, logistical and military support to both the Nicaraguan FSLN as well as to rebels in El Salvador. Torrijos also opened up relations with Cuba during this period.



In May 1976, during the Canal Treaty negotiation process, students marched through the streets of Panama City with banners: "Not One Yankee Base" and "Joint Defense: A Betrayal of the People."

Several reasons probably lay behind these decisions. Most important, Torrijos needed to develop international support during the Panama Treaty negotiations. From that point, the relationship grew substantially, including strong commercial ties. Some sources on the Panamanian Left have suggested that the U.S. has also benefited from the relationship: as long as Cuba is tied in with the military regime, the Panamanian Left is denied an important source of support. For its part, Cuba uses the Panamanian free-trading zones to circumvent the U.S.-imposed embargo and thus gain access to Western technology.

The case of Nicaragua is different. The Nicaraguans' position seems tied to the crisis in Central America. The Sandinistas have maintained relations with the Panamanian military since Torrijos gave them military support. Furthermore Panama's role in the Contadora process has also impelled the Sandinistas to maintain good relations with them. Thus Nicaragua's Pres. Ortega emerged from a recent Contadora meeting expressing solidarity with the Noriega regime "against the interference of the U.S."

The Post-Torrijos Period

Torrijos' economic and foreign policy reforms served the regime well as he embarked on his most important project—the late-1970s renegotiation of the Panama Canal Treaties. During the negotiations Torrijos was able to bring all his accumulated domestic and international al-

lies to bear on the process, thus gaining some concessions from the U.S.

Even so the Torrijos program contained within it the seeds of its own destruction. First, foreign borrowing financed almost all of the massive reform projects of the '70's as well as the State developmental schemes. Panama soon had the largest per-capita debt in the world. Part of Torrijos' strategy was to allow Panama to become a major financial and trading center to create jobs while providing additional sources of revenue. But this meant turning Panama City into a massive foreign banking center with over 120 foreign banks operating by 1982, while the Colon tax-free trading zone was dramatically expanded. Panama's dependency on Western capital steadily deepened. The debt crisis of the 1980's threw the country into a tailspin.

The second factor which led to the demise of "El Torrijismo" was the Canal Treaty negotiation process itself. In the latter stages of the process, Torrijos caved in to several demands which were read as "the selling out of the country." The treaties did indeed contain major setbacks: they legalized U.S. intervention "in order to maintain the regime of neutrality," and they ensured the maintenance of the U.S. Army Southern Command. The U.S. military bases would remain, to the fury of the nationalist movement.

So it was that as we entered the 1980's, the nationalist movement was moving against Torrijos while at the same time the world economic recession was taking its toll. With

instability on the horizon, Torrijos mysteriously died in a 1981 plane crash.

During the post-Torrijos period, the situation has become increasingly unstable, as the Torrijos coalition slowly decayed. The world economic recession (which continues to adversely affect Latin America) and the ensuing debt crisis have been the central factors affecting the process. In the 1980's, as the economy progressively worsened, dissatisfaction spread rapidly.

The first major clash of the 1980's occurred in May of 1984, after the first elections in 16 years proved obviously fraudulent: the former vice-president of the World Bank, Ardito Barletta, allegedly won, and two weeks of rioting ensued. Then in November of 1984, the military imposed austerity measures at the behest of the IMF. The masses responded in the streets, and the coordinator of popular organizations (COCINA) was put together to lead the struggle.

As the situation deteriorated, the military unleashed a wave of repression. A leader of COCINA and member of the Popular Action Party, Mauro Zuniga, was kidnapped and tortured. Another opposition leader, Hugo Spadafora, was assassinated as he returned from exile. In 1986, COCINA once again led the masses into the streets as the military attempted to repeal several reform laws instituted by Torrijos.

Thus the stage was set for the June 1987 explosion. In-

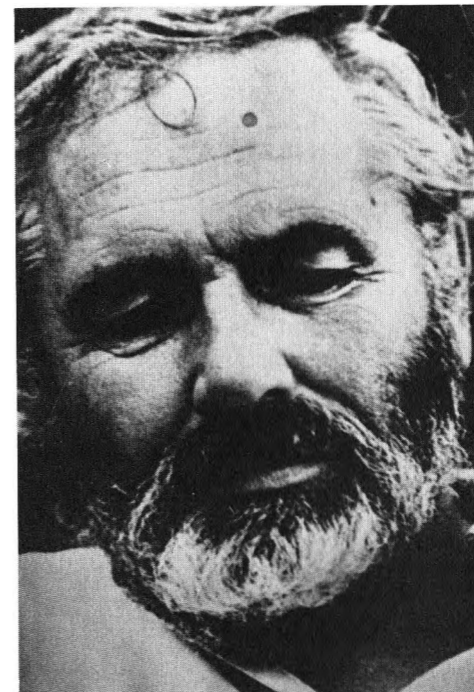
deed, Mauro Zuniga wrote in January of 1986, "If at this point, the degenerating regime attempts to energetically apply the measures of the IMF, the popular protests will lead to a massive social explosion." And so it came on June 7, 1987.

How the crisis will develop from here is difficult to tell. The balance of forces does not at this time favor any one side, indicating that a long, drawn-out struggle lies ahead. The oligarchical forces will likely attempt to woo the U.S. in the hope that they will decisively move against Noriega. They need the U.S. because the continuing crisis and instability will ultimately damage their interests as well. Furthermore, the prospect of the popular classes taking over the streets alarms them as much as it does the military. The organized Left does not appear strong enough at this point to take power. They will continue to solidify the left pole of the opposition while quietly building up their forces. The U.S. will continue to play both sides until they find a stable formation—stable, that is, for the military bases and foreign banks...

Look for the crisis to deepen. It will! ■

Sources:

In addition to personal interviews over the summer in Panama as well as newspaper and magazine articles, the author also relied on the following books: *El Drama de Panama*, by Mauro Zuniga, *The Panama Canal: the Crisis in Historical Perspective*, by Walter Lafaber, and *Panamanian Politics: From Guarded Nation to National Guard*, by Steve C. Ropp.



On the Death of Truman Nelson

Searching Out the John Brown in Us

by Alexander Lynn

In the autumn of 1964, when I was 13 years old, my father brought me to one of those political rallies in Harlem which were held on almost a daily basis at the time. This one was in an auditorium which was packed, standing room only, with Black people. There was only one White person in the hall, and he was one of the speakers. Preceding Leroi Jones and Malcolm X to the podium was Truman Nelson, a White revolutionary, who was widely accepted as a legitimate participant in what was then beginning to be popularly called the Black Liberation Movement. After the rally was over Nelson was escorted out of the auditorium by the Fruit of Islam, the security force for the Black Muslims.

Truman Nelson passed away July 11, 1987. The obituaries in the *New York Times* and the *Boston Globe* spoke to the wide use to which Nelson put his talents: he was a poet, actor, novelist, essayist and public speaker. But they never came near the guts of Truman's life work—the practical revolutionary that he was.

After ten years as a lathe operator and shop steward in General Electric's Lynn plant in the late 1930's and 1940's, where he was an organizer for the United Electrical Workers, Nelson plunged himself into the Black American's freedom struggle. At the time he was becoming the foremost authority on John Brown. He wrote two history books proving that Brown's years of organizing Black slaves and Whites to overthrow the slaveocracy through violent revolution was an activity at the very root of the American spirit and tradition, the real birthright of the oppressed and working people of the United States. Nelson believed that the rising of the Black people in their millions in the 1950's and '60's was an extension of this revolutionary morality, residing in the soul of this country. And his chronicling of this movement served the dual purpose of helping to organize it, on one hand, and on the other, of making it intelligible to White America.

In explaining Brown's raids into southern border states, Nelson

Alexander Lynn is a longtime activist.

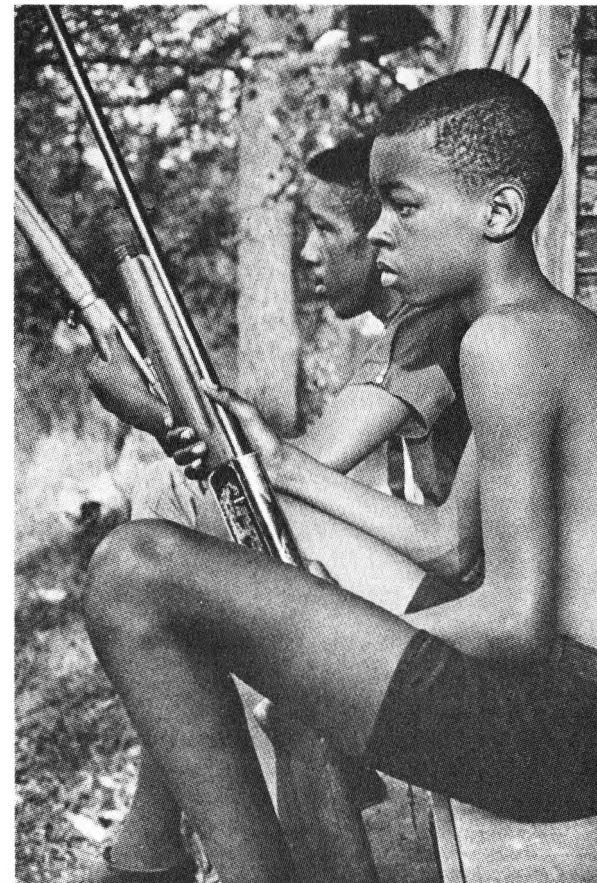
quoted Frederick Douglass: "...he met persecution with persecution, war with war...assassination and homeburning with terrible and signal retaliation until even the blood-thirsty propagandists of slavery were compelled to cry for quarter." This was in 1857 when Brown's activities were forcing the country into the bloody inevitability of the Civil War.

A hundred years later in the summer of 1957, in the small town of Monroe, North Carolina, the local chapter of the NAACP, led by Robert Williams, organized a rifle club for the purpose of defending the Black community from the nightriding of the Ku Klux Klan. The next Klan raid was met with well organized armed resistance from the Black population. The Klan was defeated militarily and their night raids stopped. Nelson saw this action as prophetic, coming 100 years after Brown's. He was on the scene immediately, and became, against the national media's slander of the event, the propagandist for it. Nelson agitated in meetings of activists around the country about the real content and meaning of Robert William's dictum—"We must meet violence with violence, lynching with lynching." Nelson knew that this was a turn in the freedom struggle.

In the spring of 1964, just prior to the great Harlem rebellion of that summer, there occurred in Harlem the events that came to be known as the Harlem Fruit Riot. It was reported as a "race riot," organized by "white haters," with the purpose of "creating anarchy" and "murdering white people." Nelson was on the scene, and chronicled the event in a book called *The Torture of Mothers*, the only thorough account at the time written from the point of view of the besieged people of Harlem.

July 15, 1967, Nelson was sitting in front of his TV when the newsreels of the great Newark rebellion were blaring from the screen: thousands of state troopers and National Guardsmen armed to the teeth; hundreds of buildings in flames, smoldering or in ashes; ubiquitous street battles between police and Black youth armed with rocks and "cocktails"; a housing project quarantined, blockaded by the U.S. military—no one allowed to go in or out, electricity, water shut off, no food allowed in...

Watching this, Nelson let flow from his pen his bombshell of an American history book, *The Right of Revolution*. Here he demonstrated the link between the founding fathers, the logic of the American Revolution, up through the revolution against slavery—the Civil War—with the contemporary struggle of the Black masses fighting in ghettos all over America against an occupying army—the U.S. police, national guard, with bayoneted M-1s, M-16s, machine guns, armored personnel carriers, tanks, bazoo-



Norris McNamara

Two young men on guard against the Klan on the steps outside Freedom House in Monroe, NC, where Robert Williams organized for Black people's right to armed self-defense in the late 1950s.

kas, and grenades.

While most of the liberal and even "radical" White groups denounced the "directionless" violence of the people, Nelson practiced the method of a Marxist historian. He went into the people's midst to champion their attempt to take the future of the country into their own hands—to make their own history. And then he wrote about it in such a way that the lessons of the people's actions were accessible to a broader population and to later generations. He was a great, inspirational speaker, and, as he explained, he learned how to speak from the great Black revolutionaries of his time (Malcolm and others). He said they had brought back the tradition of powerful oratory, "the beauty of utterance," from the time of the abolitionists, the Frederick Douglasses and Theodore Parkers. It was a clarity of language native to him, too, as a working class man, self-educated, a sixth grade drop-out, or, as he liked to say, "a graduate of the Lynn Public Library."

Nelson believed, as did his mentor, Old John Brown, that the "revolutionary morality" was the birthright of the masses of the people of the United States. He doggedly advocated that White Americans were being viciously wrenched away from their real heritage when they were led to view the Black Liberation Movement, as well as the Vietnamese Liberation Movement, as something which needed to be stamped out. (His book *The Right of Revolution* was found on Ho Chi Minh's desk on the day the great Vietnamese leader died).

The case for disseminating Truman Nelson's contribution today is based on the need to know our heritage—to

have a real identity and object as a class and as a people. The history of this country is constantly being rewritten by the "powers that be," revolutionary events adulterated for the minds of any Americans not on the scene, even as events unfold. Today, twenty years after the 1960s, the "American consciousness" has been relieved of the memory of the "Black Liberation Movement." Today, in our children's history books we are given a steady and exclusive diet of Martin Luther King, "turn the other cheek," "if blood must flow let it be black blood," of the "Civil Rights Movement." That hundreds of thousands and increasingly millions of Black people actively participated in a part of



Danny Lyon

Nelson's writings can help more people to wake up to the John Brown within them. In this 1960s demonstration in Atlanta, a white woman stepped forward to defend the Black demonstrators against the mob.

the freedom struggle which *renounced* such tactics, barely merits a footnote in today's newsreels of the 1960's. The fact that fifteen cities burned to the ground in 1966, 126 in 1967 and 131 were laid to waste by uprisings of Black populations in 1968 (according to federal figures of the time) has been expunged from the "official" history. That as the '60's grew older more and more Black people broke with the "civil rights" tactics and joined organizations such as the Organization of Afro-American Unity, the Revolutionary Action Movement, the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords Party, the Congress of African People, and the Detroit Revolutionary Union Movement—organizations born of the urban rebellions, organizations committed to human rights rather than mere civil rights, committed to a new and higher social order—all this has been conveniently written out of American history.

It was to this movement and these people that Truman Nelson's work was devoted, and this constitutes the heart and meaning of this man's life.

The history of this country is constantly being rewritten by the "powers that be," revolutionary events adulterated for the minds of any Americans not on the scene, even as events unfold.

This is why it is imperative that people read Nelson's books today. If it is not established clearly what his practice was, what his goals were, then that leaves it unsaid why his books, almost all out of print, must be revived and read today by the youth and by the "historically displaced"—those of us who have been denied knowledge of the positive, progressive, liberating American spirit which runs like twine up through the history of this country.

Speaking of this country's history in general and the 1960's Black uprising in particular, Nelson stated,

...The story heroic individual episodes, and in particular the ones in which they were joined by whites, have been dropped from the historical canon, or deliberately misrepresented. All the lessons of the trial-and-error method of self-liberation have in this way been expunged, and it has become harder and harder for the black people to act out their own revolutionary identity, and almost impossible for the whites. Both of us have had to accept as our own history the spurious one of our masked oppressors, an American identity of bloody victories, genocides, conquests and hundred-year struggles for markets and opportunities for human exploitation.

Our roots cry hungrily for the juices of another identity...for the merging of our consciousness with other and earlier Americans who were not exploiters, who were not racists, who were not victims. Many of us live with a fire in our deeps, in our sub-guts...

Speaking of this same "fire," abolitionist Wendell Phillips stated: "Virginia did not tremble at an old grey-headed man at Harper's Ferry; they trembled at a John Brown in every man's conscience." In 1968, speaking of the African-American peoples revolution, Truman Nelson pointed out: "They are calling out the John Brown in us." Unfortunately, there are too many U.S. citizens who are not aware of the John Brown in them, of the liberating American spirit "in our deeps, in our subguts." This is why Truman Nelson's works must be revived.

Among Truman Nelson's books, besides *The Torture of Mothers* and *The Right of Revolution*, were *The Sin of the Prophet*, about the Boston abolitionist minister Theodore Parker; *The Passion by the Brook*, about the Brook Farm utopian colony; and *The Surveyor*, on John Brown in Kansas. For information regarding the efforts to reprint Truman Nelson's works, or on posthumous publications please address inquiries to: The Truman Nelson Foundation 21 1/2 Lakeshore Drive, Colchester, VT 05446. ■

Editor's note: The author's father, attorney Conrad Lynn, served as defense counsel to some of the young men falsely charged with two murders in the aftermath of the so-called "Harlem Fruit Riot" mentioned in the article. The story of those events can be found in his fascinating memoir, *There is a Fountain*, published by Lawrence Hill and Co in 1978.

Morrell Meatpackers On Strike

No Going Back to the Jungle

by Joe Alley

When Local P-9 in Austin, Minnesota was put into trusteeship last year following their courageous fight against George Hormel & Co., many thought that this might sound the death knell for rank-and-file resistance in the meatpacking industry. Instead, events have proven just the opposite. Over 7,000 workers have been on strike at four packing plants in the midwest for the greater part of 1987. What fuels this continuing wave of militance?

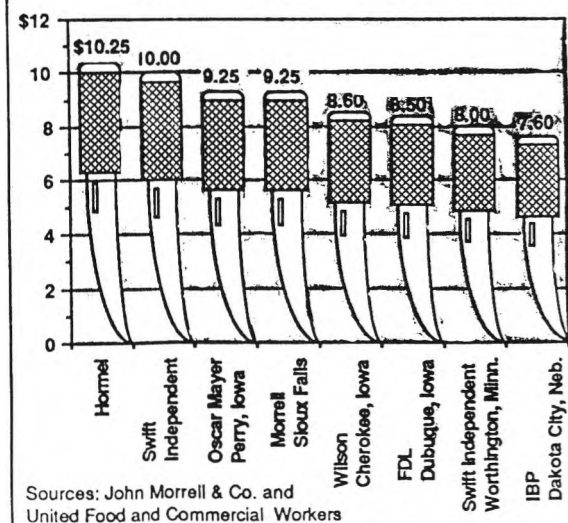
Meatpacking in the Reagan Era

Lewie Anderson, UFCW vice-president and head of the union's Packinghouse Division has argued, "...there is absolute collusion among the top packers to systematically destroy the wages of workers in the meatpacking industry. I think that they conveniently use each other as excuses of why they are driving wages down."

While there is some truth in Anderson's observation, there is more to it than that. The meatpacking industry has become extremely competitive. The industry has undergone nothing short of a revolution over the past decade or so. Giants like Iowa Beef (IBP), Hormel and Morrell have changed all the rules. IBP spurred the revolution by pioneering high volume, low wage plants, first in beef and then in the pork industry. Four years ago, Wilson Food Corp. trampled on the master agreement for the industry when it filed for bankruptcy and proceeded to slash its labor costs dramatically by throwing out its union contracts. Companies like Hormel and Oscar-Mayer can pay workers more because the profit margin is about ten times greater for processed beef and pork than it is for fresh meat packing like Morrell does. Meanwhile, the Excel Corp., a subsidiary of Cargill, announced that it would try to compete with IBP in Iowa by opening a new plant and paying under six dollars an hour for the most dangerous manufacturing job in the country.

Joe Alley is an FM contributor from the Midwest.

Meatcutters' wage comparisons



Sources: John Morrell & Co. and United Food and Commercial Workers

Argus Leader/Joel Brown

The pressures of competition are pushing the packing companies to do what would have been unthinkable twenty years ago. They are prepared to replace a fully trained, loyal workforce with a plant full of scabs. In fact, they often approach strikes with this perspective in mind, whether it be at Morrell, Cudahy, Iowa Beef or Hormel. Reagan's busting of PATCO certainly gave the official sanction to bringing in replacement workers to bust a union. (It has gotten so common now that even the football owners are doing it.) This step, of course, could not have taken place had the companies not already broken the national pattern agreements that existed in most major industries. The threat and use of scabs has made long strikes more difficult, even in companies where the strikers have some economic leverage. A recent settlement at IBP where the company brought back the entire workforce after filling the plant with scabs was the exception—and this is probably more attributable to the 100-300 percent turnover rate characteristic of IBP than to any other factor.

With the financial support of their conglomerate owners, companies may opt to take staggering losses in the short-run to boost their long-term profitability. Another part of current corporate strategy is to use labor disputes as justifications for either shutting down plants or phasing out less profitable parts of their operations. This is what happened at Hormel's Ottumwa and Fremont plant when large numbers of workers honored the picket lines set up by P-9. The company shut down the entire pork kill operations.

Fighting for Union Survival

It is this context that makes the current strike of Morrell workers so inspiring. With 1986 profits of twenty-eight million dollars, John Morrell is a classic case of corporate greed. Its treatment of workers' safety has become a total tragedy. Recently Morrell, a division of United Brands, was hit with a \$690,000 fine by OSHA for keeping a false set of injury records. (IBP still holds the record, however, with an OSHA fine of \$2.9 million several months ago.)

John Morrell is unique in the meatpacking industry in handling the entire production process—slaughtering, butchering and packaging—for beef, pork and lamb. One livestock analyst recently had this to say about the company:

They either have to spin off slaughtering, and increase their processing operations, or broaden their base in slaughtering and go as far as closing plants, locking out the unions and hiring replacement workers—scabs—if they're going to play with the likes of IBP.

In response, Morrell has shown a hang tough determination. It closed down plants that did not meet their corporate "restructuring" plans. It skillfully learned how to play off one local against another. Morrell's only other plant located in Arkansas City, Kansas was hit by a long strike last year. Workers were eventually forced back on the job with a wage cut and minus a clause that would allow them to go out on a sympathy strike. After effectively isolating Arkansas City, Morrell then set out to win concessions from Sioux City this year. Their plan was then to go after their ultimate target next year—the flagship plant in Sioux Falls. But things have not worked out according to the company plan.

Sioux City, Iowa, members of UFCW Local 1142 struck Morrell this year to prevent a wage cut of \$1.25 an hour. Then, twenty-five hundred workers of UFCW Local 304A in Sioux Falls, South Dakota went out on a sympathy strike with them. They are not motivated simply by a desire to help their fellow workers at another plant, however. Local 304A had already been forced to make wage concessions totaling \$2.44 an hour, and they realized that, with their contract up in 1988, they must fight together now or face more concession demands alone next year.

After about four months on strike, Morrell brought in about two thousand scabs, despite intense confrontations on the picket line and organized harassment of scabs by the strikers. The company claims that production is now about eighty percent of what it had been before the strike. The union claims that these are grossly inflated figures and that Morrell has lost about eight million dollars since the

start of the strike. Despite this, it is a very difficult situation right now for the strikers, trying to live on forty dollars a week in benefits from the International and with no end to the strike in sight. The Morrell strikers have shown an incredible degree of unity up to this point, with only about sixty strikers returning to work. Yet it is clearly the company that has greater resources to endure the financial hardship, and the union is beginning to recognize this.

P-9 was certainly ahead of the pack when it launched its campaign two years ago. Other unions like Local 304A have now realized that their very survival is at stake. The

sympathy strike represents a tremendous escalation of their struggle and a big obstacle to packing company plans to turn the industry back into the non-union, low paying and extremely dangerous "jungle" depicted by Upton Sinclair at the beginning of this century. The outcome will be decided over the next several years. For now, Local 304A and the UFCW International have announced a national boycott of all Morrell meats. The AFL-CIO is supporting this effort and is spreading the word nationally. ■

Don't Buy Morrell Meats!

Back issues available at \$3.00.
Send for complete list.

FORWARD MOTION
P.O. Box 1884
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

"Forward Motion contains thought-provoking analysis and a good progressive point of view. If it wasn't worth reading, I wouldn't buy it. Forward Motion is worth it."

— Mel King