

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
January 25, 1978

TO STEEL FRACTION HEADS, TRADE UNION DIRECTORS, AND ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

1. Coal Strike

As the United Mine Workers strike enters its third month with no end in sight, the need for labor solidarity is greater than ever. The January 27 Militant carries an appeal to all its readers who belong to unions to introduce resolutions of support to the coal strike in their locals and to do whatever else may be possible to organize solidarity.

The same issue also reports the initiatives taken by unionists in Pittsburgh, Morgantown, and Detroit to organize strike support meetings. The enthusiastic response to these actions shows the potential for undertaking similar activities, with broad union endorsement, in other areas.

As Lew Jones explains in the Militant, it is worthwhile to raise a support resolution and propose sending a token financial contribution even if more active solidarity is not likely to immediately follow--or even if the resolution is not passed. What is most important is to begin a discussion with our co-workers on the job and in the locals about:

- * the significance of the attack on the mine workers,
- * the issues in the strike,
- * how this battle affects all working people, and
- * the need to revive traditions of labor solidarity.

Of course, if more ambitious support activities can be launched--sending a bigger contribution, taking a collection, inviting a UMW speaker, calling a rally, or whatever--that's even better.

Enclosed is a sample resolution that may give comrades ideas for drafting their own resolutions for local use. Please keep the Militant posted on all resolutions passed in your area, meetings scheduled, etc.

2. Bakke Case

Union comrades in some areas have already had some success in initiating discussions of the Bakke case, proposing anti-Bakke resolutions, and involving other unionists in anti-Bakke activities. (For example, see attached "Steel notes" column.)

The issue of affirmative action and the "reverse discrimination" hoax is of special importance in the USWA because of the consent decree in basic steel, which has set the pattern for some

other USWA-organized industries as well. In addition to participating in discussions with co-workers, we should seek out opportunities to raise this issue in the union--perhaps through the civil rights committee, or wherever we may get a favorable response.

Neither the AFL-CIO nor the USWA International has taken an official position on Bakke. While Albert Shanker of the Teachers union and various other bureaucrats are virulently pro-Bakke, other unions have taken anti-Bakke positions at least on paper. These include the United Auto Workers, United Mine Workers, International Union of Electrical Workers, National Education Association, United Farm Workers, and AFSCME. In light of this diversity of "official" union opinion, it is entirely in order to propose that local unions discuss the issues themselves and take a position. Some may wish to invite speakers to present both the pro- and anti-Bakke positions.

As more active building of the April 15 anti-Bakke protests gets under way, we will have more opportunities to involve steel unionists in these protests.

3. Marroquín Defense

The party and YSA have launched an aggressive national defense campaign to win asylum for Héctor Marroquín. Members of our steel fractions can help obtain endorsements from local figures in the labor movement for Marroquín's appeal and sign up co-workers on petitions. Defense committee literature points to his role as an activist in a Teamster organizing drive in Houston, as well as a student leader in Mexico.

Discussing the defense of Marroquín on the job can help us raise the issues of undocumented workers and U.S.-backed political repression in Latin America. Local steel fractions should consult with comrades leading the Marroquín defense work in their locals and decide how they can best aid this effort to save the life of our comrade.

4. Tasks and Priorities

Solidarity with the coal strike, anti-Bakke work, and defense of Marroquín are three major campaigns of the party this winter and spring. Every steel fraction can find ways to take these political issues into the industry and into the union.

There are no schemas, however, for how this can be done. Each fraction will have to discuss and decide--based on its own size and experience, the character of the locals we are in, nature of the work force on our jobs, etc.--how to realistically accomplish our goals in these campaigns. How much we can project doing will vary. It may range from talking to co-workers and circulating some literature to getting the union itself behind a major action. Only the local fractions, in consultation with their branch and

local leaderships, can decide this.

It is important to keep in mind that we are not bringing "outside" concerns into the union. The issues in all three of these campaigns are of vital concern to the entire labor movement. But the class-collaborationist union bureaucracy fosters a narrow outlook on union problems and is hostile to discussion of social issues and genuine labor solidarity.

Everything we do to win our co-workers to see the importance of labor action on these issues contributes to raising class consciousness and strengthening the unions. One of our biggest challenges, locally and nationally, is to find effective ways to explain the connection between day-to-day problems of the workers and our social and political answers.

Comradely,

Andy Rose 

Andy Rose
Trade Union Steering
Committee

RESOLUTION

- Whereas: 180,000 members of the United Mine Workers of America have been on strike for mine safety, health care, better wages and pensions since their old contract with the Bituminous Coal Operators Association expired on December 6; and,
- Whereas: our brother and sister miners are engaged in a struggle that will affect the future of the union movement and of all workers, the coal operators having determined to destroy the mine union if possible thereby delivering a crippling blow to all of us; and,
- Whereas: the UMWA, under the leadership of John L. Lewis in the 1930s, inspired and helped organize the modern industrial union movement (especially the United Steelworkers of America); and,
- Whereas: the striking miners today are without strike or health care benefits and are badly in need of moral and financial support from the rest of the union movement which is deeply indebted to them; and,
- Whereas: the recent AFL-CIO convention in Los Angeles adopted a resolution in support of the miners, signaling all affiliated unions to support the mine strike in every way possible; therefore, be it
- Resolved: that local _____ of the United Steelworkers of America hereby expresses complete solidarity with the UMWA strike and contributes from our local treasury the token sum of _____ (which is the maximum we can give at this time) to UMWA national headquarters for the strikers; and, be it further
- Resolved: that we urge the USWA International to consider massive financial and physical support of the coal miners strike, thus helping to bring about an early victory; and, be it finally
- Resolved: that copies of this resolution be released to the press and circulated as widely as possible in the hope of arousing more support for the coal miners.

Send to:

Arnold Miller, President
c/o UMWA
900 15th St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20005

Steel notes...

STEELWORKERS DISCUSS 'BAKKE': The October meeting of United Steelworkers Local 1294 in Kansas City, Missouri, was not your usual union meeting, reports local member Bruce Lesnick. What made it unusual was that an important social issue of interest to the membership was discussed.

A resolution was introduced urging the local to go on record against the *Bakke* decision. The *Bakke* decision by the California Supreme Court struck down an affirmative-action program in a California medical school, ruling that it was "reverse discrimination" against white males.

A written motivation for the resolution argued: "If Bakke wins his case [before the U.S. Supreme Court], it will lay the basis for dismantling all affirmative action programs. These programs were established to counter years of discrimination against women and minorities in education, employment, and promotion. The fact that Black unemployment in August of 1977 was reported at 14.5% while unemployment among white workers remained at 6.1% points to the inequities that still exist."

The workers who proposed the resolution said that for the labor movement to "oppose inequities and infringements of rights wherever they occur" would strengthen the unions.

Local 1294 includes some 400 workers at Butler Manufacturing. A large proportion are Blacks and women. The discussion among the 35 union members at the meeting was intense, lasting more than thirty minutes. In the end it was agreed that all would benefit from more information on the *Bakke* case and affirmative action. The motion was tabled for further discussion and a vote at the November meeting.

In the meantime, supporters of the resolution have mobilized to turn out the membership for the vote. A leaflet has been distributed to nearly all Butler workers with the resolution, the motivation, and an anti-*Bakke* editorial from a local newspaper. Despite company restrictions on leafleting and the likelihood of heavy layoffs before the November local meeting, the response has been good.

"That's worth coming for," said one Black worker who had never before attended a union meeting.