



# Workers' Action <sup>5</sup> cents

ISSUE NO. 2

204

PUBLISHED BY THE COMMITTEE FOR A LABOR PARTY

JANUARY 1969

## Editorial:

### THEY'VE DONE IT AGAIN!

After four years of war abroad and virtual warfare at home under LBJ, another presidential election has taken place. As usual, nothing definite was decided, and no doubt there will be more of the same, or worse, for the next four years.

Nixon got in mainly because the American people were expressing their dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs in the traditional way - by voting for the other party. Nixon, presumably, has a "mandate" to change the basic situation and improve things. The "mandate," however, is meaningless.

Johnson, we must remember, was elected mainly because he was the "peace-candidate" in opposition to Goldwater, who wanted to "get tough" in Vietnam. LBJ's "consensus" (remember all those favorable opinion polls Johnson kept pointing to at the beginning of his reign?) was a lie and a fraud, and so is all that Nixon stands for today.

Just as four years ago, Vietnam was the major issue in this election. And who did we find posing as a "man of peace" once again, hoping to help elect his liberal henchman, Hubert Humphrey? None other than LBJ himself, who has given us war for four years and was forced out of the running because of it. Suddenly, five days before the election, there is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

IN UAW LOCAL 1364 -

## BLACK PANTHERS FORM CAUCUS AT FREMONT GM

"We have to break boss-rule in the union," says the spokesman for the newly-formed Black Panther Caucus in UAW Local 1364, the GM assembly plant in Fremont. The Panther leader, whose name we will withhold for his protection, says he wants to attract all the workers at the plant to a militant, workers' program.

This comes at a time when the union "bosses," headed by secretary-treasurer Floyd Bueno and his "blue caucus," are making a fake show of militancy against the international union and the company bosses.

The Black Panther caucus was formed early last fall to, "Attack any form of subtle discrimination or prejudice against the Black or Brown Brother," as stated in point 1 of its program. The program also says the

"B.P.C. is the instrument in uniting the Black and Brown Brothers and will do all that is necessary," and "The B.P.C. does not recognize the union as being above constructive criticism."

It made a strong impact right away and organized many of the black brothers at the plant. During the national election period, it mobilized Blacks to prevent pro-Wallace whites, a small but active group in the plant, from flooding a union meeting and endorsing Wallace. It is now trying to forge a broad coalition to appeal to all interest groups in the plant in the next union elections, scheduled for June.

The Black Panther Caucus is not the only caucus in the giant plant, which has some 5,000 workers. There are three others: a more

"moderate" group of Blacks, whose candidate for union president is being backed by the Panthers in a coalition election slate, a Mexican-American group and the "blue caucus," which is Bueno's group. Although there are white militants in the plant, most of the white workers are afraid of being branded "nigger-lovers" for joining with militant blacks in a united rank-and-file effort.

Recently a Panther member at the plant was victimized by the white racist group. Someone reported to the company that he had a gun at work. He was stopped and searched after work that day, but no gun was found. When he came back to work the following Monday, however, he was suspended. The case is being fought through the union grievance procedure, but as usual, nothing is being accomplished.

This is just one of many hundreds of stalled grievances at the plant, about which the union officers do as little as possible. The local leadership is getting itself off the hook by blaming the delays on the international, which is where most of the hang-up is now. The local officers initiated a move to with-hold dues to the international until there is some action on grievances.

"We know the local officers are a bunch of crooks," says the B.P.C. spokesman, "but they have covered themselves on this." The B.P.C. plans to run candidates for most positions in the union, including the exec. board, but not to oppose the secretary-treasurer himself. This they feel is unrealistic at this time, since Bueno is trying to look good before he retires, which will be soon. They feel they can "box him in," however, by filling enough of the other offices in the union, which is a realistic goal at this time.

Workers Action welcomes the formation of Black caucuses in unions. Simply by existing, these groups bring liberation for all working people a step closer. However, Blacks are going to have to choose, sooner or later, between the goal of a separate, black nation or "nation-within-a-nation," and the goal of a united struggle of the working class as a whole. If this choice is not made soon, mistakes made by the leadership of the struggle will endanger the cause of black liberation.

Demands should be raised which speak to the real interests of all workers. Blacks are in a good position to do this, since they are already playing a leading role and recognize more clearly the need for action. For instance, the rise of a demagogue like Wallace should be countered with the call for a working man's party which puts up its own candidates. This demand is not too advanced; it should be raised now, so that people can begin thinking about it. The hypocrites who run our unions always keep an eye on the future and what they have to do and say now in order to stay in power for many years to come. We, too, should keep an eye on the future course of OUR struggle. We will have more on this in our next issue.

### BROTHERS AND SISTERS!

We want to encourage rank-and-file movements for better unions. We have definite ideas on what generally needs to be done.

We aren't trying to dictate to anyone how to conduct their struggle. You know your scene and you have to live with the result. We do want to make it easier to exchange news about our struggles. Some of us can come up with ideas that others can use!

Editorial Board

## STRUGGLE IN THE NMU

Over the past three years a rank-and-file movement has been growing in the National Maritime Union (NMU). This rebellious activity by the NMU members is the result of frustration and desperation which has been building over the past twenty years. Wages and conditions in the NMU are far behind every other seamen's union. At one time a leading progressive and militant trade union in the U.S., the NMU has degenerated to a sellout bureaucratic organization. Joe Curran, the first and only NMU president, controls the union with an iron grip, dictating rules, appointing officials, wheeling and dealing with the ship owners and phony politicians, and preventing freedom of speech by censoring the union's organ, The Pilot. "Fighting Fund Stamps" are supposedly voluntary political contributions, which in fact serve as a self-glorifying tool for Joe, while insuring himself against government and judicial attacks. With no other recourse, the members have started to take action themselves. Resolutions are being passed in membership meetings on the ships at sea and in the port union halls.

A Committee for NMU Democracy was begun by several candidates for office in the last union election led by James Morrissey. Since the Pilot and the other official means of communication were closed to the members, Morrissey put out a paper, The Call. A related group on the West Coast, the West Coast Committee for NMU Democracy, recently began publishing a hard-hitting, rank-and-file paper, The Beacon. This paper is important because of its militancy and open rank-and-file participation. (Names and book numbers are put on the line.) The following is one of the editorials from the Oct. issue of the Beacon.

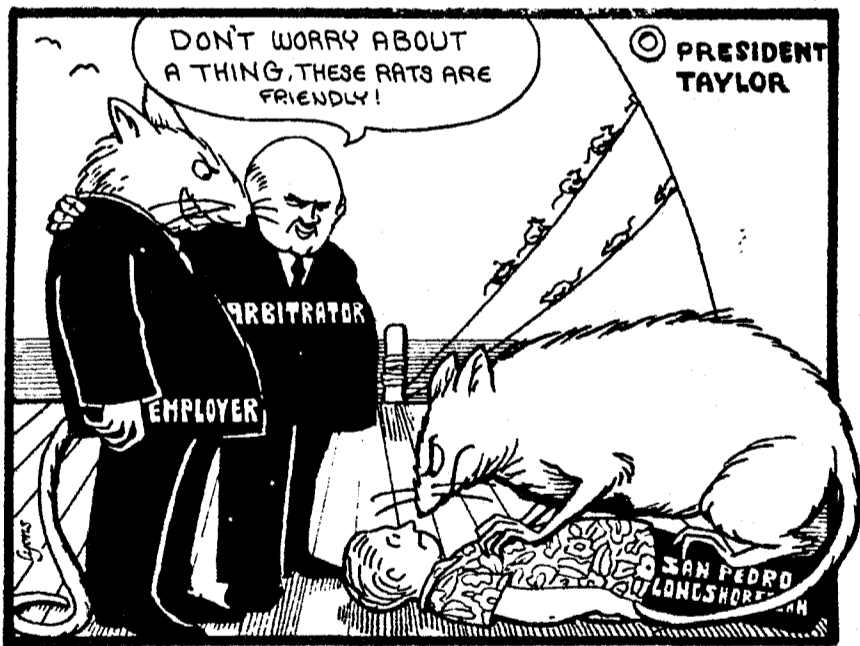
### POLITICS, PORK CHOPS & THE PIE CARDS

Every brother knows that having the most democratic, militant, progressive union will not take care of all the needs a seaman has. It takes more to protect seamen's interests both in relation to our jobs and our whole society. Besides a strong union, political action is necessary. We must control, to the best of our ability, the men who make the laws, administer them, and judge them, because this determines the conditions which we must work and live under. This whole idea is summed up by the term, "politics and pork chops".

At one time there was a section of the Pilot devoted to discussing political issues. Both before and shortly after Curran's so-called Rank-and-File Caucus took over there was a place for presenting opinions and positions on vital issues which affected the NMU, the entire labor movement, and our society as a whole. Today (and for many years now) there is no discussion or presentations for the membership. No, the officers must believe the members are not capable of reasoning or thinking. "Put up or shut up" our officers say when they ask (or tell) brothers to buy "fighting fund" stamps. Position after position is decided by the National Office and dictated to the membership. No debate, no vote - "that's it brothers, take it or leave it", the officials sneer. All debate, discussion, and even explanation have become reduced to nothing more than four words - buy fighting fund stamps - and if you do anything else, like object or disagree (especially on lofty, patriotic, political issues), then you

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

## Rodents on the Waterfront, or How to Spot a Real Rat



THE FRIENDLY RATS OF SAN PEDRO, STRICTLY IMPLEMENTING THEIR CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS ON HEALTH AND SAFETY.

Recently a group of longshoremen in San Pedro, the port of Los Angeles, discovered lots of rats in a hold they were working in when one of them was bitten. Some rats are usual, it seems, but this was too much! The men refused to work the hold. At this, the bosses locked the whole port out! This is a violation of the ILWU contract. An arbitrator was brought in, but all he did was say that since the rats weren't carrying any diseases, they were "friendly," and the men should go back to work in the hold.

This inspired the above cartoon, which was circulated on the docks in San Francisco and much appreciated. While San Pedro was locked out, many ships came up to San Francisco to be unloaded. The power of longshoremen is very great; if Harry Bridges had given the word, the port of San Francisco could have been shut down very quickly in protest. But Bridges didn't move. And no full report was made of the settlement,

either. Rumor has it that it was a "bum-beef," but who knows if the officers aren't telling? We wonder who's trying to hide something here, and who are the real rats on the docks. We know that the bosses are bastards, but what about the ILWU leadership?

The longshoremen's union has a great reputation, but something is rotten at the core, as the article on ILWU contracts in this issue shows. If Bridges is so militant, why didn't he call a shut-down in San Francisco when ships were diverted here from San Pedro? The bosses had already broken the contract by locking out the men in San Pedro. If it was a "bum-beef," why weren't longshoremen told the details?

At base, the Bridges leadership is really no better than most other union leaderships, which are uniformly rotten. Wheeling and dealing must go! Return the unions to the rank-and-file!

**WORKERS ACTION**  
P. O. Box 8174, Emeryville, Calif.  
Phone: 548-1403

Published by the Committee for a Labor Party, a group of rank and file trade unionists who are trying to improve their unions, and who are working for the creation of a political party of labor.

To the editor,

What's the Brother and Sister crap? The only workers who I have heard saying "brother and sister" are black workers. Black workers are my fellow workers, not my brother or sister.

I hope you will have an article about the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, where the Russians would not allow the Czech workers to keep their workers' councils.

It looks like Nixon will be the next President. It was Nixon who helped draft the Taft-Hartley Act as a congressman, ate grapes at the Delano strike, and supports government-free business.

With the wages remaining constant, prices soaring, automation making millions of workers unemployed, and Nixon being President, there will be more and more strikes across the nation, until (like France this summer) the whole country is shut down by a national general strike. But in the U.S., the workers will be militant and violent, where in France the workers were peaceful in the general strike.

The businessmen have runned and screwed up this nation for too long. They had their revolution in 1776. Now it is time to have ours. We must get together, and work for a Workers' Government of the U.S. which will provide a good and equal life for everyone.

Enclosed is \$1.00 for my subscription.

You said, "We call the attention of our readers to the fact that we welcome letters to the Editor from rank and file union members." Only 1/3 of the workers in this nation are union. There are many radical workers who are not union. Why don't you just say that you'll welcome letters from any worker.

Also you said that you want better unions. But to have a damn good union might mean that workers will have to form unions outside of their present, bureaucratic unions.

The U.S. Dept. of Labor says that 4 1/2% of our nation is unemployed. But this is based on "those who are unemployed and are actively seeking work." They do not include those who have given up hope of finding a decent job, and those who are working part time and want full

time work. If the U.S. Dept. of Labor would include these, the new figure would be about 10%. A large part of the 10% unemployed are black, and this 10% number will rise.

Fellow Worker

*Fellow Worker:*

*You raise many important questions, and I would like to answer them at least briefly here.*

*The words Brother and Sister have been used in the labor movement since its very beginnings and show the feeling of solidarity between workers.*

*We couldn't get an article in this issue about Czechoslovakia. We agree the Russian invasion should be condemned as a foreign intervention in a country's internal affairs; but it should be pointed out that the Czech workers never had councils as instruments of their power and probably never would have under Dubcek, who only wanted the control that the Soviet Union bureaucrats had for himself. You mentioned Nixon becoming President as a drastic factor for workers, when actually it wouldn't make any difference if it was him or old Humph who got in (see editorial, pp.1-2). Workers were not "peaceful" in the French General Strike - they welded factory gates closed, occupied the plants, and kept the bosses hostage. The trade union bureaucrats sold out so DeGaulle didn't have to order the cops and army to attack.*

*You are right, and we do want letters from all workers, organized and unorganized, but the movement for an independent political party for workers can only take place if workers in the unions start the ball rolling. They already have an organization. Of course, most of the unions only belong to the workers in name and to the bureaucrats in fact; but just by raising the labor party slogan along with the other demands we need, the fight for rank-and-file controlled unions will be made, or at least become clearly necessary. Before we abandon the trade unions which exist and were built by the sweat and blood of workers, we should fight to take them back. They're ours! It will be tough, yes, brother, but we must make this fight first.*

*The Editors*

To the Editor:

I bought your paper at the PFP nominating convention and enjoyed it and think it can perform an important service.

The most important point at the convention was that the white man has not done enough in his own community, and for me I think it starts in the lily white labor unions, namely the building trades unions. Unfortunately I don't know anyone that shares my opinion in my local.

I think that if Labor history had been taught in the schools there would be little trouble in identifying the Black Panthers with the struggles of the early labor movement and might possibly be the reason that more people cannot sympathize with the BPP.

Let's bring back Big Bill Haywood and tell the bosses "I won't work until my black brother works."

I dig your paper.

Brother J. Glazier

## Letters to the Editor:

We call the attention of our readers to the fact that we welcome LETTERS TO THE EDITOR from rank and file union members. Our space is limited; please be brief!

Dear Comrades,

Please enter a ten issue subscription for me to your anti-capitalist paper Workers Action, to begin with No. 1 July 1968. The price of one dollar is enclosed.

May I also have your rates concerning bundle orders and your terms for distribution and sale of Workers Action at newsstands and bookstores.

for workers' power  
Tom B.

Gentlemen:

Thank you for sending us your first issue of Workers' Action, and let us extend our best wishes for your efforts to build up rank-and-file control of the unions and a genuine workers' party.

Sincerely yours,  
Edward Weber, Curator  
University of Michigan Library  
Labadie Collection

Friends:

In our "Pis & Freedom" office of confusion I saw a Workers' Action and thought I'd reply. I joined the painters' union in Chicago in 1900 at 14 - but they really trained the apprentices - all of which is lost through "bigger profits" paints. Our slogan was "an injury to one is an injury to all". But today a journeyman will kill a "brother" to get his job. I am 82 now and retired from my trade of paperhanger.

I helped present 5 resolutions to the A.F.L. national convention in 1947 at San Francisco. Labor party resolution #150 or #160 recorded word for word battle with Pres. Green and M. Woll - chairman of Resolutions Comm. at A.F.L., of which Joan London is probably still secretary.

The main trouble with "Labor" A.F.L.-C.I.O and the rest is political immaturity. I have participated in A.F.L. picket lines and conventions for 60 years, and still do, but their political backwardness is so bad, they will first have to cut their shackles to the major parties to get started, and of course this, the labor party would do. Of course my resolutions were not the first to be presented to the A.F.L. - but all were defeated, as the bureaucrats cannot permit rank and file control. There is much to be said and I'll be glad to keep in touch with you. I would like to get Labor conscious of political needs as Labor alone cannot pull itself out of its plight economically, it must be political, and I'd like to see Labor debates on strategy and goals.

H.B., Santa Cruz

Dear Sirs,

I enclose a small sum toward your publication. Can you possibly send me 20 to 30 copies of your first issue? There are a number of trade union militants here who I am sure would like to see it.

We may have some copy for you in a couple of weeks. In case you aren't up on the news here, the transit system was shut down by a strike for the first time in 40 years .... In addition, the entire railway express service of Chicago was closed down by a wildcat .... All of these strikes are against the union leadership; there are no demands against the companies.

Will write again in a few weeks.  
Fraternally,  
Steve Schultz  
c/o Box 6044, Main P.O.  
Chicago, Ill. 60680

## EDITORIAL:

### THEY'VE DONE IT AGAIN!

(continued)

a bombing halt, and the U.S. is negotiating at the same table with the NLF (Viet Cong)!

The war, of course, was not ended by the bombing halt. The halt was simply a trick to make it seem like the war was ending, and thus help elect Humphy-Dumphy. Bombing has been increased drastically all along the "Ho Chi Minh Trail" in Laos (which is supposed to be neutral), where it has been going on secretly for some time. Fighting is also being stepped up in the South. The papers are blaming this on the NLF, of course, but they they blamed the whole war on the NLF, when the U.S. shouldn't be there in the first place.

The bomb-halt fraud failed, but this is no credit to Nixon, whose program for Vietnam is really no different from Johnson's or Humphrey's, and who is now cooperating with the administration to carry forth the very same policies. The credit is due the American people, who are overwhelmingly against the war and Johnson's policies.

#### DEFEAT IMPERIALISM!

The only just solution to the war is a complete victory for the Vietnamese people. The U.S. is systematically oppressing - and murdering - the working and poor people of Vietnam. At present, the NLF (Viet Cong), which is certainly not above criticism itself, is leading the struggle against the U.S. Because of this, they

should be supported by all those who want to see a just end to the war. The war is no good except for the big business rulers of America and the generals and war profiteers (and their lackies in Saigon); and the Vietnamese deserve to win.

The big corporate rulers of America will never admit to this, of course. They will try to end the war with some compromise deal that allows them to maintain their interests in Southeast Asia, such as their substantial economic investments and the rule of private property gen-



TWEEDLE-DUM and TWEEDLE-DEE

erally. (Economic investments in Vietnam are increasing. Cam Ranh Bay, once a sleepy village, is being expanded into a major Southeast Asian commercial center). This imperialism is what caused the prob-

lem - and the war - in the first place! Nothing will be solved without a defeat for the U.S.

All three major candidates, Humphrey, Nixon and Wallace, held just slightly different variations of this same identical policy: preserve U.S. national (that is, capitalist) interests in the most efficient way possible. This isn't limited to just foreign affairs, naturally. Domestically as well, both major parties, and the racist demagogue Wallace, were direct representatives of the powerful big business bosses and capitalism generally.

The official AFL-CIO leadership - the fat-cat bureaucrats who are running and ruining our unions - was backing Humphrey all the way. They claimed he and the Democrats, as usual, were "labor's friends." "Humphrey has a 100% perfect voting record on all issues of interest to labor," they said, "whereas Nixon is an old and bitter foe of the working man." But the rank-and-file wasn't taking the bait. Workers are fed up with their complacent "leaders" and the Democratic fakers as well.

After all, how much horse-sense does it take to see through the bureaucrats' hypocrisy and the Democrat's lies? While conditions worsen, they preach satisfaction and contentment with their leadership! How hypocritical can they get? Humphrey may have a "perfect" voting record (which we doubt), but what did he ever do for the working man as vice-president? The answer is NOTHING!

Humphrey said he supported the Farm Workers' grape boycott, while Nixon sneered and ate grapes in public. The farm workers supported Humphrey overwhelmingly because of this. But at that very same moment, the federal government, under the current Johnson-Humphrey horse-show administration, was buying up millions of dollars worth of grapes, in record numbers, "for Vietnam!" The purchases amounted to a major subsidy for the hated, scab-labor growers. Also at the same time, the picket lines set up to keep grapes from being loaded onto ships were quickly struck down in the courts. By these things, Humphrey and the Democrats were assuring the growers that they didn't really mean all that "pro-labor" stuff.

#### ATTACK ON LABOR COMING!

The worst is yet to come, however, and a different election result would not have changed the outlook one bit. The biggest employers and corporations are massing all their organized force to attack labor and roll back wages and job conditions (although it's hard to imagine them getting much worse!) and everything else working people have ever fought for and won. The squeeze is on, and the capitalists aren't planning to let a penny of it come out of their bulging pockets.

As Dick Meister, S.F. Chronicle labor correspondent, put it, "The country's unions are bracing for what

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



## A COMMON OPPRESSOR

During the past year college students have begun to use union strike tactics in order to force the college administrators to meet their demands. The editors of Workers' Action see this as an especially important development in that for the first time in many years college students are identifying with workers, rather than with the bosses.

The following is an excerpt from a strike leaflet put out by striking students at San Francisco State College:

In reality white, black and brown working people pay taxes to finance a university which is just another one of the bosses factories. The university trains students to become plant managers, efficiency experts, social workers, teachers, etc. These skills are not taught to help people, but to control, manipulate and make sure that people accept things as they are. For example, teachers are trained to tell our children that the only heroes in America are the Rockefellers and Fords, big businessmen who make their fortunes off the backs of working people. What is not taught is the militant struggle of millions of working people for unionization, maximum wage laws, public education. The bosses who run our schools don't want us to get the idea that it was only because of the united fighting strength of community people that these things were won, and that the real heroes are the working people.

### THE MIGRANT THEATER

needs people for  
"WOBBLY"

a play about the I.W.W.

no experience not necessary

phone 548-1403

Berkeley, Ca.

## EDITORIAL (Cont.)

is shaping up as a massive, unprecedented drive by business and industry to cut back their powers." (Chronicle, Mon. 11 Nov. 1968, p. 10). The biggest corporations, like General Motors and AT&T, are behind it. The "sponsors of the drive" say the election of Humphrey would have "virtually doomed" their campaign, which has already spent \$500,000, but we don't believe it. The biggest corporations and political donors give money to both parties. It's called the "two-party system," only both parties belong to the same bosses! Neither party will lift a finger to stop a policy which the bosses think is essential to preserve their power and interests. What has either Johnson or Humphrey done to stop the vicious, union-busting lock-out being waged by the Hearst empire for over a year now against the Herald-Examiner workers in Los Angeles? The answer, again, is NOTHING!

The traitor bureaucrats, liberals and Democrats will try to blame this reactionary anti-labor offensive on the Republicans. They are going to say we should go back to electing our "friends," the Democrats. But we're not falling for their shell game again! It was the Democrats, in coalition with "our" satisfied union "leaders," that got us into this mess in the first place. They set us up for the punch, and then do nothing!

Next time, labor needs a party of its own. Labor should run its own candidates, on its own program - democratically arrived at by the rank-and-file - with its own permanent political power. Let's stop relying on those "friends" who are never there when you really need them; let's do it ourselves instead! We can run this country better than all the pentagon generals, politicians, bureaucrats and capitalists put together! Down with Republican hawks and Democratic hypocrites! We need WORKERS' POWER!

## NMU STRUGGLE (Cont.)

must be a commie or a foreign agent....

### THE PHONY POLITICS NMU PIE CARDS BACK

Why do the pie cards want to support the Johnson administration 100% on the war? - not over 50-60% of the people in the country do (and probably fewer of the NMU membership). Why do Curran and Co. support the phony civil rights laws? - progressive American blacks and whites, even the late Martin Luther King, dismissed the government's so-called efforts as a hoax - most brothers see this. Why do our officials stoop so low as not to take more militant action than to lind arms with or rather hide behind the skirts of big business in "demanding" a better merchant marine? - why don't we fight as working men - as seamen? Why do our union bureaucrats want to support (or rather, kiss the ass of) phony, anti-labor, racist politicians like Johnson and his entire crew, including Hefty Hubert? - all in our name, in the name of the NMU.



JOSEPH CURRAN

Yes, all these politicians have said and repeat over and over very nice words about the young men - almost entirely working class men - who "must" die in foreign jungles, the plight of "underprivileged" Americans - mostly black, and even "unconstructive" labor laws. Meanwhile the war continues and escalates, the conditions of the poor remain the same or get worse (outbreaks in black communities, Appalachia, etc.), and workers are hit harder with government and court actions (the railroad workers', sanitation workers', and teachers' efforts show workers must still fight for the right to strike.)

Our own NMU pie card officials tell us how we have been sold out time and time again... Joe Curran states himself that "...most politicians are completely incompetent when it comes to considering the human problems and the long range implications of a process like automation. Unions are the one organized force which can make the process make sense" (July Pilot, p. 2). "After stalling for nearly three years on promises of a 'positive' new maritime policy for the nation, the White House late last month proposed a new policy that can be summed up in one word: 'Murder'" (June 4, Newsletter).

These congressmen, the judges, and especially this administration, which our union leaders are so critical of, were backed and supported by these very same NMU officers. The Johnson-Humphrey ticket was given huge "NMU support". Yet, they have failed us and even attacked the interests of workers, unions, and specifically seamen and the NMU. Again, our

bootlicking officials back, not only the same assortment of phony politicians, but some of the very same ones who sold us out before! The Pilot tells us that, "When he (Muskie) is Vice-President of the United States, maritime labor will have a good friend in the center of the action" (October Pilot, p. 16). However, every brother knows that, as Vice-President, Humphrey did nothing - absolutely nothing - in the way of specific action for maritime workers or workers in general. Did he object to the outlawing of railroad workers' strikes? Did he make specific proposals to repeal the anti-labor laws "papa Joe" has told us about? Did he make specific criticisms about the brutal treatment of doubly oppressed black workers? The answer is NO - Humphrey never did! He easily spouts "noble" words and spills crocodile tears - but he does nothing and thereby he works with the racists and anti-labor elements. Nixon, Agnew, and Wallace are just as bad as Humphrey and Muskie (no, worse) - they're just more open about their racism and anti-laborism.

### WHY PIE CARDS BACK PHONY POLITICIANS

So, why do our leaders - the NMU officials - back men who have never and will never do anything really in the interest of seamen and workers in general? - by their own admission! The answer is simple: Our officials are traitors. They are no longer workers or seamen, and don't want to think of themselves as such. They look to the government and even ship owners for protection. What do they want to protect? - their plush standard of luxurious living and power holds. What do they need protection from? - the NMU members, when they wake up, or just get fed up with catching crumbs from our officers' pie. It is not an accident that Curran & Co. are breaking their backs pushing Humphrey and Muskie, contributing to Democrats and Republicans alike (with our Good Causes and Fighting Fund), just at a time when they're caught with their pants down in a court case for being too obvious in dictator practices over the membership. It is also no accident that the implication of the court decision is extremely favorable to the officers.

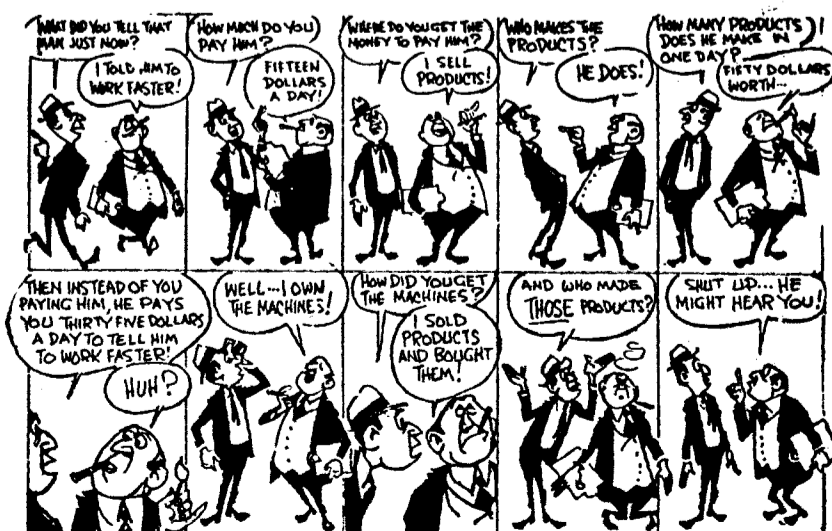
Our NMU officials look like beggars in a street gutter trying to appear extra "responsible" and super patriotic, so they will be trusted by the business-government establishment to control the NMU members. The fighting fund has become a bootlicking sell out fund. Not only do our officers want to keep their "good reputation", but they must also be careful not to allow militant union action which could land them in prison or (perish the thought) cut off their salaries. Of course the pie cards, politicians, and ship owners must put on a show at times. Otherwise we might see the truth too plainly, kick out our bureaucrats and find militant leaders who will really fight for our interests. That's politics and pork chops!

### POLITICS AND PORK CHOPS FOR THE MEMBERS

But it is too late. The truth is very plain to many of the brothers; and more brothers are beginning to see the light all the time. That is why the Committee for NMU Democracy is growing. The spreading and growing of local groups of NMU brothers, on ships and in the ports, is the best sign of hope and strength

for the NMU and therefore for our future - on the job and in retirement. We must see why the pie cards try to shove these anti-labor positions and policies down our throats. We must stop this and take strong measures to correct it by:

1. Building a Workers' Party - a political party of, by, and for labor. Joe Curran points out that "For more than 20 years every administration in Washington has been quietly cutting away at the U.S. merchant marine..." (October Pilot, p. 2). But politics come first with politicians, so when it comes to cutting the budget, the decisions are generally based on what is likely to do them the least political damage without regard to how much damage the decision might do the country" (September Pilot, p. 2) - not to mention labor! - eh, Joe? "Certainly a new economic policy is needed, one that will increase employment, give opportunity to millions of young people to develop useful skills, reduce welfare rolls and increase real consumer purchasing power in our country" (July Pilot, pp. 2-3). Joe Curran tells us all this, yet, he, his cronies, and now little Joey continue to appeal to the phony politicians who have been ignoring them. LET'S BUILD A PARTY OF OUR OWN! (Just as we must have a union of our own - no corporation parties and no company unions!)
2. Supporting and defending the struggle of black workers in their community. While revolts against oppression are limited to the black ghettos and poor white areas such as the Appalachia mining area, it won't be long before cops try to swing their clubs through union picket lines (maybe ours next year). The blacks are only the first, we will be next. We should investigate and support the Black Panther Party for their constructive community organizing efforts. (Incidentally, the Panthers are the only mass party made up of workers and concerned with workers' interests.) Humphrey and Curran, and other phonies cried afterward, but Martin Luther King died during the fight for the right of workers to strike and get a better contract in Tenn.
3. Condemning the war in Vietnam. Workers and their sons fight in this war for the most part. Their lives have been lost for absolutely nothing of benefit to them. All of us pay higher taxes and higher prices, because of the war. There might be a few more jobs and overtime hours - but less to show for this extra work. The companies pay taxes to the government but get it right back in government contracts and subsidies, along with the added profits from jacked up prices.
4. Attacking the anti-labor laws which keep us from using our rights as workers and seamen. These are only a few suggestions. Many of you brothers probably have more. Let's have a full discussion and open debate on these and other issues so important to us. A referendum vote is meaningless unless all positions have been heard and full information is made available. This is what politics and pork chops means (and not what the pie cards mean) - NMU democracy and militancy... and labor power!



From PROGRESSIVE WORKER (Canada)  
March, 1968

# CAMPUS UNION FAILS CRUCIAL TEST

by Marilyn Robertson, AFCSME Member

Can and should a union at the organizing stages—300 out of a possible 5,000 members—under any conditions go out on strike? This is a question faced over the last months by AFCSME Local 1695, non-academic and technical employees at the University of California, Berkeley.

## U.C. Racism

The question was raised by the Cal campus strike called by "Third World" (black, brown and yellow) students in opposition to the discriminatory practices of the Administration in college admissions and hiring, and the de facto racist content of education. Only 2.5% of students and 9% of employees (the University is Berkeley's largest employer) are from minority backgrounds, while minorities represent 25% of the community as a whole. Students demanded the establishment of a Third World College that would serve the interests of the minority community and, initially, open admissions for minority students. They called upon unions of campus employees to strike with them.

AFCSME was admittedly weak and small, its membership middle class with little understanding of traditional trade union struggle. On the other hand the membership had a number of potential strengths. It understood the divisive nature of racism in the working class, and that the racism practiced by the University affected them, too, even though the protest against it was initiated by students. They overwhelmingly sympathized with the Third World demands. In addition the union had many "labor" issues to fight for. Cal employees have no collective bargaining agreement, no dues check-off, no unemployment insurance, no social security coverage, and no employer-paid pension plan. Pay-days come only once a month even though state law requires that employees be paid a minimum of twice monthly. In short, University employees have no rights at all.

There was only one principled and practical course: to strike. Racism is not only a "moral" question, but a question of the very survival of the union movement. Black and white workers must be organized and united. For AFCSME to side-step this question would be particularly disastrous. The idealistic younger workers the union must win in order to organize and build would be repelled by a union that copped out on this issue. So would the student allies that are essential for the union to win struggles of its own. And, if the spearhead of the militant student movement at S.F. State and Berkeley were smashed by the rising wave of repression--Reagan in California and Nixon and the nationwide, million-dollar anti-union campaign of the National Association of Manufacturers--no campus union would have a ghost of a chance of getting control of its working conditions.

## Leadership Crucial

The role of the AFCSME leadership was crucial if the inexperienced membership was to be led forward in the struggle and organized to win. Proper leadership would not only mean advances in the struggle against racism and winning important trade union demands; it would also help build the union. It would create respect among militant students, and strengthen the position of those who see that the student movement can only go forward by solidarizing itself with the workers' movement. But the AFCSME leadership instead of leading the union forward, at every step held it back; not only undermined the struggle, but even undermined the very future of the union by attacking the principles of trade union struggle! And they did this consciously and purposefully. The AFCSME leadership is not a well-meaning but naive and inexperienced

group of young people. Rather, the leadership is composed of highly conscious "politicos", many of them affiliated with organizations claiming to represent the vanguard of workers' struggle. Their treacherous misleadership was conscious, willful and traitorous. Rather than attempting to win the membership to the indicated actions, they capitulated to the backwardness they attributed to the membership.

## Meetings, Meetings

The union met frequently during the course of the campus strike which began January 22. Motions to strike made at the first three meetings were met with fear, hostility and ridicule by the leadership. At one point--at a time when the campus was under actual military occupation, complete with gas and beatings--newly-elected union president Phyllis O'Donnell objected to discussion of a strike motion on the grounds that it took time away from discussion of "realistic" proposals (a letter to Heyns, a proposed third-force "Blue Ribbon" committee to intervene, and off-duty hours picketing of a police station or City Hall). Of course it was necessary for the political future of these "workers' leaders" to "make the record" against racism. This they did--verbally. Resolutions were passed supporting the strike demands. Union members wore "support" buttons and arm bands, "joined the line" during lunch breaks--while continuing to work! The TWLF struggle was reverentially referred to, while the TWLF's main request--that employees stop work and join the

pus, settlement of the Third World demands, an in-service training program to up-grade minority workers, and "trade union" demands.

At this meeting the leadership reaped the fruits of their previous defeatist role. Their argument all along, catering to and creating backward fears among the rank-and-file, was that to strike would mean probable loss of jobs of all strikers and destruction of the union. The strike motion was voted down! Even so, a majority voted to strike. The strike vote lost only by the undemocratic requirement of a 2/3 vote. This is a feature included in bureaucratic-inspired union constitutions to prevent rank-and-file majorities which have become militant from taking action which the bureaucrats for their own reasons oppose.

A new strike vote meeting was set for one week away. In the meantime the AFT strike continued. At this time president O'Donnell stated she did not know whether the motion to respect the AFT lines still held or not. Executive Committee member Florence MacDonald made a motion that the membership return to work (that is, cross AFT lines) starting an hour and fifteen minutes late in order to first picket. More embarrassment. The issue was finally settled by tabling the MacDonald motion and by viewing the past motion regarding AFT lines as still in effect but up to the individual as to whether it would be respected or not. This was a preview of things to come.

## Strike? Who, Me?

The final strike meeting a week later (late February) followed the most

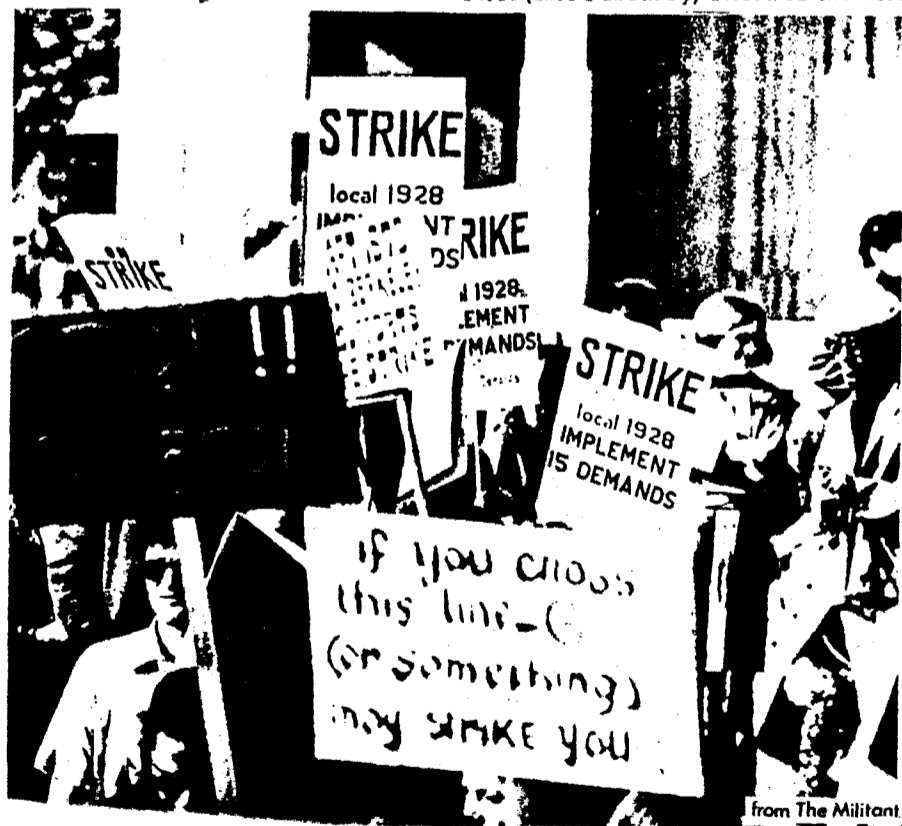


MARILYN ROBERTSON, one of the few campus employees to honor picket lines from the beginning of the recent campus strike.

This time the strike vote passed by a 2/3 majority. Now a new stage of treachery opened up. Some in the union have claimed the passage of the motion itself was part of a deal--that in order to preserve their reputations the leadership agreed to allow scabbing on their own strike in exchange for votes "for" by people actually intending to work. Whether or not there was an actual "deal", in effect this was what happened. It was made plain by the leadership that members who "had to" could continue working and still remain valued, respected and socially acceptable union members, particularly if they contributed to the strike fund. This failed to educate the inexperienced membership of the essential of trade union struggle, that during a strike, on which ultimately, the power of a union lies, everyone strikes. No one can "afford" to miss work. Unity in a strike assures that the strike is as powerful as possible, especially necessary in the case of a small, weak union such as AFCSME. To make scabbing acceptable jeopardizes those who stay out, and opens the way for those initially striking to go back to work en masse at the first economic pinch. President O'Donnell even went on to say at a work meeting the following Sunday that the strike was symbolic only and not intended to try to shut down the university. In short, the leadership took a "no win" position, hardly one to sustain the membership during what was anticipated to be a long hard strike ahead. In addition, the recruitment drive, that was for the first time organized during this period, stressed that those joining did not have to strike. This is building on sand. AFCSME also continued "officially" to allow scabbing on its sister union, the AFT. Even AFCSME president O'Donnell crossed the lines to work one afternoon where in her opinion the work to be done was "important". The union became a union of scabs, as the majority of the membership crossed AFT lines, having been told by the leadership that respect for AFT lines was "suggested" only.

## Quicksand

The strike on the Cal campus is now over. No gains were made. It has been a defeat for the movement, a defeat for the campus unions, and a god to the forces of reaction. The AFCSME leadership has placed the entire union in jeopardy. It has built on quicksand. Worse than having an un-



Picket line scene during recent campus strike at U.C. Berkeley

strike--was ignored.

By the fourth meeting, weeks later, things were so bad that, at last, a motion to call a strike meeting passed almost unanimously. The AFT had already voted to strike after a peaceful picket line of their members had been set upon by cops and the picketers arrested en masse. At the same AFCSME meeting a motion to respect AFT strike lines also passed overwhelmingly.

Reluctant though they were to lead a strike, the leadership in order to preserve their individual political reputations at this point and not be by-passed by the membership, came into the fifth meeting with a strike motion. The demands included shutting down the cam-

pus, serious campus violence to date. Many employees had now experienced gassing. Some were even forced to work near temporary imprisonment areas for students set up in campus buildings.

## WORKERS ACTION

P.O. Box 8174, Emeryville, Calif.

Subs - \$1.00 for 10 issues

YOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

WE NEED - Articles, stories, research, clippings, cartoons, sketches - even stories over the phone - about YOUR job. We also need money to print the paper. We also need criticisms you may have. (You can write or phone in!) Remember - this is a rank and file effort! THIS IS YOUR PAPER!