

Essex: a
year later

Interview with
Georgia Ellis

P.5

WORKERS' POWER

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Nicaragua: The Start of Revolution

GET THE NAZIS OUT FOR GOOD



The new Nazi hate-quarters on Michigan Avenue in Detroit (below) is off to a bad start. Hundreds of people (above) demonstrated against the Nazi bookstore in a march hastily called by the Michigan Avenue Community Organization. The Anti-Nazi League, Labor-Community-Interfaith Council Against the Nazis, Red Tide and many other groups have picketed the bookstore. The Nazis themselves have become virtual prisoners in their own office, protected from the outraged community by lines of police.



Somoza regime on the brink of collapse

ANASTASIO SOMOZA, the dictator of Nicaragua, says he has crushed the Nicaraguan "Tet Offensive." But every day that he repeats this claim, there is new fighting throughout the country.

In Leon, in Masaya, in Jinotega and almost every other important town in the heavily populated western lowlands of Nicaragua, the anti-Somoza uprising continues and is receiving huge popular support.

It is much too early to accept the claims of Somoza and the American press that the fighting is dying out.

The uprising was co-ordinated by all the sections of the Sandinist National Liberation Front, the radical opposition movement.

POPULAR INSURRECTION

But the support they have received has made this a popular insurrection of the entire nation against Somoza, his National Guard, and American imperialism which keeps Somoza and the Guard in power.

Most important, Somoza's attempts to regain any base of support have failed.

Most businessmen have continued the anti-Somoza general strike, even paying workers to stay off the job. The Sandinists' uprising has not pushed even the conservative business forces back to support the gangster Somoza.

The strike has provoked a worsening economic crisis for the government. It does not have the money to pay government workers' wages.

Somoza attempted to arm public employees, to enlist their support in his fight to crush the Sandinists. Large numbers have resigned in protest.

Even some of the most repressive right-wing regimes in Central America, like Guatemala, are publicly denouncing Somoza and his tactics.

But the revolutionary process in Guatemala will not end with the fall of one right-wing strongman. Like April 25, 1974 in Portugal, it will be just the beginning. □

[For background and more analysis on the struggle in Nicaragua, see page 4.]

TO OUR READERS

In our last issue, we announced a new monthly schedule for Workers' Power.

Since the announcement we received numerous objections to the new schedule.

In response we have decided to continue to publish Workers' Power bi-weekly between now and our Convention in November.

Marilyn Danton
for the I.S. Executive
Committee

The view from inside Zimbabwe

Workers' Power interviews ZANU spokesman

Edson Shirihuru, Deputy North American representative of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), was inside Zimbabwe a month ago. He was at ZANU's military headquarters base inside Zimbabwe, and on patrol with the ZANU liberation army.

Shortly after his return from Zimbabwe, Shirihuru spoke at a picnic sponsored by the International Socialists and Southern Africa Liberation Committee in Detroit.

He also spoke with Workers' Power about the liberation war, as seen inside Zimbabwe itself. It is a picture of a white regime which is as vicious as ever, but with less and less ability to reverse the progress of the liberation forces.

Since Shirihuru spoke with us, there have been further dramatic indications of the collapse of government power. The white Minister of the Interior has now announced that the so-called "free elections" scheduled for this December will not be held.

It is somewhat difficult to describe the situation in Zimbabwe in general, because there are different areas.



Edson Shirihuru

There are what we call contested areas, and then we have areas of influence.

We are operating in over 85% of the territory. These are the liberated and contested areas. The areas of influence, which include the towns, are the other 15%.

In our liberated areas, we now

have administrative centers and bodies which are comprised mainly of local people. In certain cases we have ZANU comrades, freedom fighters, in the administrative centers, and also some centers which are purely local people.

We also have people's militias to defend their own areas. Everyone, men and women, is qualified to participate.

AREAS

Life in liberated areas is difficult. Every time we liberate an area, nothing can come from the cities to the liberated area. Transport is cut off.

People have to live on what is coming from Mozambique.

Then we have contested areas, where fighting is going on. These are usually areas where we are in the process of establishing administrative centers.

Then we have areas where, if the Smith regime knows we have moved out, they will move in and massacre villagers. When we are there, they won't come in—no matter how small our forces are.

Then there are the towns, where it is just a matter of time. Salisbury itself we think will be in our hands very soon. So far we have two



Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), shown in black on map of Africa.

thousand forces inside Salisbury.

In our liberated areas, we now have training bases, manned by Zimbabweans. We no longer train in Mozambique.

In most cases our freedom fighters spend six or eight months in political education and orientation, with very little military training. After that, they get their military training.

SOLDIERS JOIN GUERRILLAS

We have a lot of Black government soldiers defecting to our side.

They tell us how low the morale is.

When we arrived at one of our camps in Zimbabwe, two Black soldiers from Smith's army arrived that evening, and we talked to them the following day.

They had been in a party of two trucks. They were riding in the second truck when the first struck a mine and was destroyed. Without waiting to see what had happened to the soldiers in that truck, they turned around.

On the way back they radioed their main base for reinforcements. When they met the reinforcements, they decided to go back to see what had happened. They arrived at a village and asked the villagers where the guerrillas were.

The villagers said, the guerrillas are over there—so the soldiers turned back and went the other way!

They radioed for more reinforcements. Some were sent, but when they met those reinforcements they all turned around and went back. The soldiers who told us this had never yet found out what happened to the first truck!

They no longer want to have anything to do with fighting us. That is how low the state of morale has become.

"Job Enrichment" At Lynch Rd. — More Cars, Fewer Workers

Chrysler Corporation recently decided to find out if it could improve the quality of its cars and increase productivity in its plants by adopting certain "European" management techniques. They have started a pilot program at the Lynch Road Assembly Plant in Detroit called "Participative Problem Solving."

Cloaked in the guise of "humanizing the workplace," Chrysler's program is aimed primarily at improving the company's competitive position. It was designed by Sidney Rubenstein, an industrial consultant specializing in quality control.

Traditional management techniques—treating workers like inmates and military-style discipline—have fostered a great deal of worker discontent. From a capitalist's point of view, worker discontent is a problem only if it interferes with production, reduces the quality of products produced, leads to revolutionary change in society, or otherwise threatens profits.

The Lynch Road program is the largest in the country so far. An earlier, similar program at a GM plant in Tarrytown, New Jersey, according to promotional literature, caused "absenteeism to decline 12 per cent, grievances plummeted from an average of 1000 a year or

so to two, morale started to rise, and quality of cars improved."

The following is an interview with Bob Machado, an assembly worker at Lynch Road, and a union activist. He recently completed a week of Participative Problem Solving.



Bob Machado.

About 650 people were in the program. We were broken down into classes of about 20, headed by a foreman and either a steward or a worker who had volunteered.

What they're interested in primarily is solving problems having to do with quality and, I imagine, although they won't say it, with

productivity. They want to get people together in little groups in each work area and figure out ways to make things more efficient. In return for our cooperation, they tell us that they're not going to be such assholes anymore.

About half the time we spent solving puzzles. The rest of the time they taught us their technique for solving problems. Something they call the fishbone technique. Break things down into machinery, manpower, method, and materials.

The say they're going to have meetings after work. They're going to be two hours. The first hour people will get paid. The union and company have agreed that people are going to donate the second hour.

They want to take care of all shop floor problems there. We should be nice to the foremen, and they should be nice to us.

The steward is supposed to be the first step in these problem-solving groups. If my steward is running around spending half his time working on how to get three screws in easier, or how to make sure a mirror is affixed well to the side of a car, he's going to have less time to deal with our problems.

A couple of stewards did not get involved in the thing, but the union as an official body has endorsed it. Bluestone (JAW International Vice President) is a big advocate of this stuff and goes to all these conferences around the country. He goes to the same conferences that this character Rubenstein goes to.

Fraser enthusiastically endorses the program. They think this is a way of humanizing the workplace. They believe that it is a better way to build a quality car. They believe that it's economically better for the company and better for job security.

It all goes along with the idea they've been pushing for years of increased labor peace. Fraser at the same time is talking about a one-sided class war. That has never been explained to us how those things gibe.

I'm going to the first meeting. I'm going to make sure that there's somebody there saying that we've got problems to deal with.

When we got back to work after the classes it was the same old thing. Foremen still ride your ass, still make you do ridiculous stuff. That's precisely the sort of thing that they said they wouldn't be doing. Most people said "Uh huh, we'll see."

We're seeing. They want something for nothing. They've got such a history of abuse that people aren't inclined to take them seriously.

People know goddamned well that Chrysler's not going to do it unless they're going to get the lion's share of the benefits. In the last analysis, the number of cars they want with fewer workers.

And they want the meetings to become a substitute for the grievance procedure. That's one of the big problems with it, that it bypasses the union, and yet the union approves it.

Labor Dep't Asks New Detroit Teamster Vote



by Mark Levitan

DETROIT—The Department of Labor has filed suit in federal court here, charging that officials of Teamsters Local 299 used money from employers in their election campaign last fall. The suit asks that the election be re-run under Labor Department supervision.

In addition to taking money from employers, the suit charges that incumbent Local 299 President Bob Lins' slate also used dues money and "failed to refrain from discriminating in favor of or against any candidate with respect to use of lists of members."

Local 299 is often in the news because it is the home local of both Jimmy Hoffa, former president of the Teamsters Union, and of Frank Fitzsimmons, its current president. It is also the home of a sizeable rank and file reform movement.

Opposing the Lins slate in last year's election were two groups: Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) and the Concerned Members. The TDU slate, urging rank and file unity, ran candidates for three out of seven offices. Heading the slate was well-known Teamster activist Pete Camarata.

The Concerned Members ran a full slate, splitting the rank and file vote. Consequently their leader, Pete Karagozian, lost to Lins by 244 votes out of more than 7200 cast.

PROTEST

Immediately after the results were announced, TDU and the Concerned Members submitted a protest to Teamster Joint Council 43. Predictably, the Joint Council rejected the complaint.

BOB LINS IN TDU??

BOB LINS, president of Detroit's Local 299, says he wants to join Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). That was what Lins said when he showed up at a September 10 Detroit TDU meeting with the rest of the local's executive board, business agents, and a large number of assorted flunkies.

Their purpose, of course, was not to support TDU, but to disrupt it. In their immediate purpose they were successful. TDU leaders were forced to adjourn the meeting when the Lins gang made it impossible to carry on a serious discussion.

But his antics may cost Lins support in the local. One Local 299 member said most Teamsters regard the disruption as a "dirty trick" and as irresponsible behavior for a local official. He said it indicates that union officials are becoming seriously alarmed about the growing strength of the rank and file movement in their union. □

The next step was to the Labor Department, which held an investigation and found "probable cause" that the federal law governing union elections had been violated.

Now the Labor Department must prove to the Federal Judge that these violations did occur and that they affected the outcome of the election.

SPEEDY JUSTICE

TDU members in Local 299 are pleased, but not over-confident. Cases like these are rarely decided quickly. For example, the Labor Department suit filed against Teamster Local 468 in May of 1977 still hasn't come to trial.

Even the Department says that these suits drag on for 18 months to two years.

With this kind of speedy justice the court could decide to hold a new election at about the same time as Lins' term of office would be over anyway.

In that case, there would be two major differences over the last election. First, it would be supervised by the Labor Department. That might well make it a more honest election, though experience with the Labor Department has shown that fairness is by no means guaranteed.

More important, the relative strength of the various slates would be considerably different. Since the elections, Bob Lins' support has steadily eroded while TDU has



The Labor Department says this trailer—used in Teamster Local 299 President Bob Lins' election campaign last year—was financed in part by contributions from employers. The Lins campaign is also charged with having used union dues money—in the form of cars, equipment, and employees' time.

grown rapidly.

TDU's strength has grown on the basis of such activities as reforming the local's by-laws and organizing around next year's contracts, while Lins is likely to continue to flounder on the same issues.

The big unknown in the next election would be what position Pete Karagozian and the Concerned Members take.

ONE OF MANY

The 299 suit is one of many the Labor Department has filed against Teamster Locals which held elections late last year. They include Locals 70 (Oakland, California), 251 (Providence, Rhode Island), 800 (Pittsburgh Steelhauleders) and 796

(Tampa, Florida).

Right now a number of Federal agencies—the FBI and Justice Department, as well as the Labor Department—are climbing all over the union investigating various forms of corruption, the Hoffa kidnapping, and violations of labor law.

So far the feds seem to be going after the little fish in the union hierarchy.

The strategy of the Carter Administration is not to go after Fitz and Company, but to hold the threat of prosecution over their heads. They hope that will keep the union from demanding too much in next spring's contract bargaining.

As Carter's anti-inflation man, Robert Strauss, put it, "He [Fitz-

simmons] is desperate for respectability and I am not too proud to give him some if he helps me."

LOCAL 337

The Labor Department was also asked to investigate the election in Detroit's Local 337 where a rank and file slate ran against Bobby Holmes, the Local President and International Vice-President.

In Local 337, collusion between the employers and incumbent union officials was much more open and pervasive. Yet no suit has been filed.

Justice is not just slow; it's selective—tailored to meet the needs of Carter and the businessmen he represents. □



NEW YORKERS SAY 'NO' TO CONGRESSMAN

NEW YORK CITY—On Saturday September 10, 150 people marched through lower Manhattan and Greenwich Village in a demonstration for abortion rights. The demonstration was called by the Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse (CARASA). The purpose of the march was to make people

aware of the anti-abortion and anti-women voting record of Congressman John Murphy, through whose district the march took place. Murphy was a leading supporter of the Hyde Amendment, cutting off Medicaid funding for abortions.

THE END OF WASHINGTON'S PET DICTATOR

by Joel Geler

CIVIL WAR has erupted in Nicaragua. The Somoza dictatorship's National Guard, trained and equipped by the United States, is bombing and strafing every city and town taken over by liberation fighters.

The death toll is certain to rise into the thousands. Whether Somoza can survive still another round is uncertain. But the revolution in Nicaragua has begun—and the fall of the 45-year-old regime is now only a matter of time.

Three weeks ago the resistance movement, the Sandinist Liberation Front, seized the National Palace and took most Congressmen hostage. The Front demanded the release of 120 political prisoners, opponents of the dictatorship.

With the whole nation supporting them, Somoza was forced to release 59 political prisoners. He had already tortured and murdered the other 61.

Tens of thousands of Nicaraguans demonstrated their support for the palace takeover and for the Sandinist Front, refuting the claims of the American press that this was the action of an isolated group of terrorists.

GENERAL STRIKE

This spectacular action was only the latest battle in a 17-year-old war conducted by the resistance movement against the dictatorship.

The next day a general strike was declared in the country. In the working class neighborhoods in the cities, uprisings and barricade fighting broke out.

The city of Matagalpa saw an insurrection in which the popular forces took over the city for five days.

Somoza's response was to bomb his own population into submission, a desperate act of terrorism by a regime without any popular support.

Like the last general strike in January, this strike was also supported by Nicaraguan business. After years of supporting the dictator, major businessmen have gone into opposition, not wanting to go down with the Somozas.

Nicaragua's capitalists hope that by joining the opposition at the last minute they will be able to take over the government and prevent the radicals of the Sandinist Front from ruling the country.

Moreover they have their own complaints against Somoza's corruption and theft. Using his control over the government he has been able to take over a major share of Nicaragua's business and to destroy his competitors.

Somoza family holdings now include one-quarter of all Nicaraguan lands and factories, a personal fortune worth more than \$500 million in a country of incredible poverty.

U.S. SUPPORT

Somoza's government rests on its only remaining support, the United States and the National Guard. Both the Guard and Somoza were created by American imperialism.

In the 1920's U.S. Marines occupied the country to force it to pay money it owed to U.S. banks. They put down a guerilla war, led by General Sandino, against the occupation of the country.

The U.S. then organized the National Guard as a local force to keep down the people and protect

their continued exploitation by American companies and banks.

The Guard has continued to be trained, and financially supported, by the United States, which calls by the tune. The U.S. installed the Somozas to head the Guard and run the country as agents for American interests.

Jimmy Carter has continued these policies, sending millions in aid to the Guard and loans for Somoza in the last few months to

try to save the dictatorship. Three months ago Carter declared that Somoza was a human rights convert.

Now the State Department has offered its service to mediate the dispute and carry out a "democratic solution," by which they mean keeping the Sandinists out of a future government to replace Somoza.

The Nicaraguan opposition has correctly turned down this offer, stating that the only thing the U.S.

should do is get out of their country and let them run it themselves.

The resistance movement understands that its struggle is against U.S. imperialism, of which Somoza is only the local agent.

REVOLUTION BEGINS

The overthrow of Somoza, whether it comes immediately, or in months, will initiate a social revolutionary process in Nicaragua.

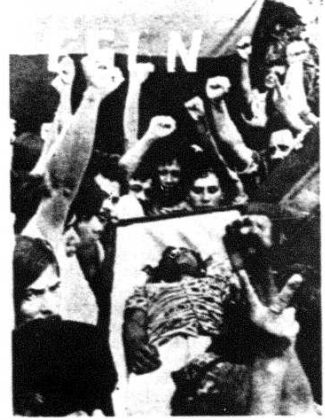
It will not just be a political change on top.

Somoza's vast economic power will have to be destroyed. His land expropriated and given to the peasants who work it. His factories nationalized. His National Guard dismantled.

The demands of the radicalized working class will force through a social upheaval that the liberal opposition and American imperialism will have difficulty in containing. □



These young people (above) are among the millions of Nicaraguans who are demanding an end to the rule of the wealthy dictator Anastasio Somoza (below, left). The U.S.-trained National Guard (below, center) is the only force left that supports the Somoza regims. The revolt, which has now turned into civil war, is led by the Sandinist Liberation Front. Below, right, a dead Sandinist is mourned.



Vote Sales Up In Heavy Trading

by Dan Posen

A BRISK TRADE in federal judgeships and other political favors has sparked a recovery of confidence on Capitol Hill.

The basis for the trade revival in Washington is Jimmy Carter's so-called "breakthrough" energy bill compromise. That's the bill that will allow de-regulation of natural gas prices and send your fuel bills through the roof again.

Due to opposition from consumer advocates who say the bill would ruin ordinary energy consumers, and from some energy industry lobbyists who claim it doesn't give them enough, the bill is in danger of failing.

To meet this threat, the

Carter White House has staged a political garage sale, selling off odd favors for votes on the gas pricing bill.

CHOICE ITEM

Senator James McClure of Idaho, first in line, snapped up the choicest item, a pledge by the Administration to spend \$1.5 billion on research toward a fast-breeder nuclear reactor for that state.

Next in line was Senator Hatfield from Montana. Hatfield happens to be retiring from the Senate—fand wouldn't you know, Jimmy Carter had just what he was looking for as a way to spend his golden years.

Namely, a federal judgeship.

In return for Hatfield's vote for gas de-regulation, Carter promised him one.

So it's little wonder if legislative interest has perked up again. After the Korean bribery pipeline got cut off a while back, a fellow had to wonder if being in the Congress was worth the time and trouble any more.

But now, back for a brief pre-election session, our elected representatives are again confident that, to paraphrase Calvin Coolidge, "The business of politics is business."

Let's just hope Carter's supply of favors to be sold isn't running low. If he only had enough federal judgeships to give Sadat and Begin, his troubles might be solved. □

ESSEX WIRE:

ONE YEAR LATER



A YEAR AGO, members of United Auto Workers Local 1663 were on strike against the Essex Wire Corporation in Elwood, Indiana. The strike raged for nine months. The company brought in armed guards who beat up and shot at the strikers. A young mother, Carol Frye, was wounded and permanently disabled by a guard's bullet.

After fighting courageously for months, the strike was finally broken on December 21, 1977. Carolyn Forest, administrative assistant to UAW President Doug Fraser, negotiated a settlement that gave the strikers only pennies over the minimum wage and an open shop. The strikers were forced to go back to work alongside the scabs who took their jobs and broke their strike.

On Labor Day, one of the leaders of the strike, Georgia Ellis, addressed a meeting of the International Socialists in Detroit. She spoke about what has happened in the plant since the settlement and the need to prevent future sellouts like the one at Essex.

Here are some excerpts from her speech.

"THE HARDEST THING that I have ever done in my life was to go back into the Essex plant.

"I thought I couldn't possibly go back in that place, to go back in there with armed guards who had shot at us and scabs who had carried shotguns and tire tools and beaten our women in the face. We knew that one of them had shot Carol; we didn't know which one.

"And yet some of our women said, 'If you don't go back, how can the rest of us?'

"I thought about it a while. I thought this company wants us to go back totally crushed. Complete, absolute, unconditional surrender. I knew we couldn't do that.

"We called our people and said, 'Essex beat the UAW, they did not beat our solidarity.' We went back with our chins up. We put our UAW shirts on, we put our buttons on, and we walked in and we dared them to do anything.

"The scabs stood and sneered at us, so we sneered back. When the

guards asked our number, we said: '38-24-34.' Or '38½.' Or maybe the next day, everybody gave the same number.

"We don't speak to the scabs. We refuse to sit at the same table with them. We didn't let them into the union.

"The scabs had been working 12 hours a day. Seven days a week. Suddenly they are working for our wages, five days a week, 40 hours. They say to us, 'Hey, is this all you get? Hell, let's go on strike.'

"Some of the scabs quit, some were fired. Right now, we're down to 30 scabs out of 110. It worked!

"I checked with an Essex plant in Belleville, Ohio which is represented by the IBEW. They went through the same type of strike that we did. They went back with a large percentage of scabs. But they went back the way that Essex thought that we would: with their heads down, their tails between their legs. You crawl, you're



For 9 months, this scene was a battlefield for UAW Local 1663 and one of the most vicious, anti-union employers in the country. Today the road in front of the Essex plant is quiet and deserted. But inside, the battle of the Essex workers is far from over.

Georgia Ellis.

scared.
"Right now that plant is 75% scabs."

BUILD THE MOVEMENT

Recently, Georgia Ellis ran for president of Local 1663 and lost by seven votes. She said she ran because "you can't say that damn union doesn't do anything if you're sitting at home." Today Georgia is committed to building the rank and file movement.

"I have travelled since the Essex strike. I have talked to college students, miners, textile workers, steel workers, women in other UAW locals, and women's groups. I have found that this same situation at Essex is true in every union throughout the United States. Strikes are being separated, isolated. The International simply isolates you and lets you go down.

"Big Three auto workers say, 'Oh no, this can't happen to us.' 'I say, they don't have to.

They'll take your contracts and give them to women who will work for \$3.00 an hour and you'll have nothing to negotiate with.

"My own brother who works at the Delco plant which employs 15,000 people came home four weeks ago and said, 'I'm losing my overtime. We lost a contract.'

"And I said, 'You're damn right you did. You lost a switch contract and we have it. Why would they pay you \$9 an hour and overtime when I will run six machines and make that part for \$3!'

GIANT GUTTED

"This is happening every day. It isn't just Essex. Every Labor Day you see pictures of a big burly giant carrying a hammer who is supposed to represent the labor movement. That figure is an illusion. You take a razor blade and you cut the biggest, strongest man in a thousand places on his body and he will bleed to death.

"Our labor movement has been gutted, abandoned, destroyed until we've got nothing.

"Unless we stand up and make our leaders rebuild the labor movement it's going to collapse and we're all going to be hurt. It's entirely up to the workers.

"You have to have seen the people I've seen in the past few months, from the heart-broken miners' wives in Harlan County—and I've talked to them—to the men in Mitchell, Indiana. Mitchell is a little town, and in that town is a

school bus plant. These men do the same work you do right here in Detroit; they are organized by the UAW. But they only make \$4 an hour.

"They went on strike, 520 men. They had scabs, police, injunctions, shooting. But it was very carefully kept quiet.

"I drove through that town. There's a large sign on the edge of town that says: 'Welcome to Scab City.' And when you leave there's a sign that says: 'Aren't you glad you don't live in Scab City?'

"It's very scary when you live in a town of 2500 and you're a UAW member and you think, 'I'm backed by a million two hundred thousand people and I'm very strong.' Suddenly you realize a million two hundred thousand people don't

lying in the street and say that I did it, but then that does not necessarily mean I did it."

Carol Frye, the young mother who was shot during the strike, is now back at work despite the fact that there is a bullet in her neck. "She had to make a living, Ellis explained. Carol is under orders from her doctor not to lift weights over 15 pounds, not to stoop, and not to stand for extended periods.

At first the company refused to let her come back to work under these restrictions, saying that the union wouldn't stand for it. "But we asked for a vote from all of our union women," Ellis said, "and we said if she sat on a stool and polished her fingernails and we had to do her work we would take her back!"



even realize you're there. The union is only as strong as the people who are in it."

ARBITRATION DRAGS

Eleven members of Local 1663 were fired during the course of the strike. The contract only said that their cases would be arbitrated. Now, nine months after the settlement, arbitration still drags on.

"The UAW promised us the arbitration would be done in a month," Ellis remarked. "It's going to be a terrible battle before it's over. One of our men will probably be going to prison before it's over because he was charged with shooting a helicopter.

"I asked the police what evidence they had and they showed me colored pictures of a helicopter with bullet holes in it. They could also show me a picture of a body

Workers' Power

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The Democratic Party -

Can It Be Reformed?

by Sandy Boyer

In the last issues of Workers' Power, Socialist View showed why the Democratic Party is the party of big business. We said that big business controls the Democratic Party through money, through ideas, and through economic power.

But the leaders of the American labor movement and some radicals still insist that working people should continue to support the Democrats.

This article will examine the arguments for supporting the Democratic Party.

Michael Harrington is the most prominent left-wing advocate of working in the Democratic Party. He is a member of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee. He presents the arguments of the liberal labor leaders in the clearest and best thought out way.

Harrington's group, the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee includes liberal Democrats like Representatives Ron Dellums of California and John Conyers of Michigan, as well as labor leaders like William Winpisinger, President of the International Association of Machinists, UAW Vice President Irving Bluestone, and Victor Gotbaum, Executive Director of AFSCME District Council 37 in New York City.

INVISIBLE?

Harrington has two basic arguments why radicals should work in the Democratic Party.

First he says that COPE, CAP and the rest of labor's political apparatus is really an invisible labor party inside the Democratic Party. Radicals are supposed to work with this "labor party" to improve its program and move it to the left.

Harrington's second argument is that the Democratic Party "claims the allegiance of the overwhelming bulk of the organized reform movement." Therefore "the best strategy for the democratic left is to seek to win the Democratic Party in such a way as to exclude its right-wing permanently."

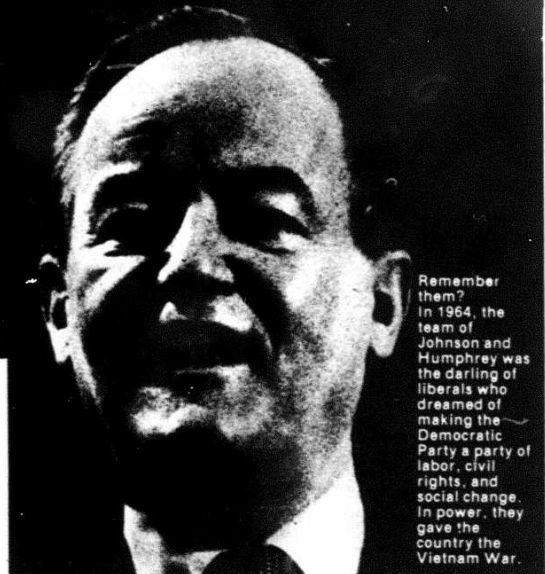
He believes that leftists can help transform the Democrats into a party run by an alliance between labor, Blacks, and liberals that will fight for and carry through major social reforms.

Harrington's invisible labor party idea is really just a play on words. All he means is that labor has an organized apparatus (COPE, CAP, etc.) inside the Democratic Party pushing its candidates and programs.

This isn't exactly news. The only reason it remained "invisible" is that no one else dreamed of calling it a labor party.

The fact that labor has unsuccessfully tried to influence the Democratic Party doesn't change the fact that it is a big business party.

After all, even in the British



Remember them? In 1964, the team of Johnson and Humphrey was the darling of liberals who dreamed of making the Democratic Party a party of labor, civil rights, and social change. In power, they gave the country the Vietnam War.

Labor Party—an increasingly poor excuse for a working class party—the unions can actually determine the party's policies. They have the overwhelming majority of votes at the party convention and provide almost all the party's financing. Any resemblance between this and COPE and CAP is purely coincidental.

FIGHTS FOR WORKERS?

The more serious argument is that the Democratic Party can be transformed into a party that fights for the needs of working people.

If that were true we would agree with Harrington. But if it isn't, this whole argument for working inside the Democratic Party collapses.

The labor movement has been trying to reform the Democratic Party along these lines since the 1936 without success.

This year, with a Democratic President and a Democratic Congress both owing their election to labor support, the AFL-CIO hasn't been able to pass one of its priority bills. Labor law reform, tax reform, common site picketing and national health insurance have all gone down the drain.

Harrington's strategy has been tried several times by labor and liberals on the local and state level. Each attempt to reform the Democratic Party has been a disastrous failure.

UNITED AUTO WORKERS

In the late 40's, the UAW and

the Michigan CIO decided to go into the Michigan Democratic Party "to remold the Democratic Party into a real liberal and progressive party."

The UAW and the other CIO unions mobilized their members to work in the Democratic Party. In Wayne County (Detroit) 70% of the party leaders and functionaries were union members. Most of them were UAW members.

Together with a group of liberal Democrats, the UAW and CIO virtually took over the Michigan Democratic Party. They were able to elect their own party chairman and their own candidate for governor and other major offices.

But instead of being able to "remold the Democratic Party into a real liberal and progressive political party," the UAW wound up supporting conservative pro-business programs.

They agreed to eliminating taxes on business, instituting a sales tax, and imposing a flat rate income tax that was more regressive and less favorable to low income groups than a graduated income tax.

David Greenstone describes this process in "Labor and American Politics" saying that by the mid-sixties "both labor (the UAW) and business had recognized that a permanent basis for co-operation in Michigan politics had almost imperceptibly replaced the earlier bitterness."

The UAW had largely taken over the Michigan Democratic Party organization. But it was the UAW—not the Democratic Party—that changed.

As the UAW became powerful in the Democratic Party it had to take responsibility for the party's actions—not just its paper program. It began assisting big business in keeping the political and economic system running smoothly.

Finally this meant accepting "compromises" with business on things like tax policy even when these compromises benefited business, not the UAW membership.

Almost imperceptibly—one compromise at a time—the UAW had stopped fighting for the needs of its

members or of working people in general. Instead it was forced to work out "a permanent basis for co-operation" with business.

NEW YORK REFORMERS

Another attempt to transform the Democratic Party has been New York's Reform Democratic Movement.

It was started in the late '50's and early '60's by liberals who wanted to smash the old Tammany Hall machine and create an internally democratic and politically liberal Democratic Party.

Last year New York got its first Reform Mayor—Ed Koch. Koch was one of the first leaders of the Reform Movement and has stuck with it ever since.

When he ran against Mario Cuomo, the machine candidate, in the Democratic primary, the only issue they disagreed on was the death penalty. Koch was for it.

Since taking office Koch has been indistinguishable from his machine predecessor Abe Beame.

He meekly accepts the fact that the banks—not he—run the city. Every city expenditure must be approved by the Emergency Financial Control Board which is run by the banks.

GRAVEYARD

Many more examples could be given. The anti-war movement went all out to elect Lyndon Johnson in 1964. The Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy campaigns captured and controlled the left wing in '68. The National Organization for Women supported

and helped elect one Democrat after another and then got sold out on the ERA. The list goes on and on.

The Democratic Party is the graveyard of American social movements. It is where they are tamed and taught to work inside the limits set by big business.

Every group which tries to transform the Democratic Party winds up being transformed by it. The closer they come to dominating the Democratic Party machinery the more they are forced to subordinate their own goals to the power of big business.

This is what happened to the UAW and the Reform Democrats and that is what will happen to all future radicals who go into the Democratic Party with dreams of transforming it into a party for working people.

Real social change in this country hasn't come when movements entered the Democratic Party. Changes for labor, Blacks, and women came when they took to the streets and mobilized hundreds of thousands of people.

It was when the marching and striking and demonstrating stopped and these movements got "sophisticated" and started working in the Democratic Party that the progress stopped.

That doesn't mean socialists are against political action. We're for a different kind of political action. We believe the unions should create a new party that would include Blacks, women and all oppressed people.

This would be a labor party and that is what the next article in this series will discuss. □

JOIN US!

If you agree with the views expressed in this paper and would like more information, or would like to join the International Socialists, then send this form to: INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS, 14131 Woodward Ave., Highland Park, MI 48203.

Name

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Union

runaways



by Elissa Clarke

A child sits center-stage, with an old rag doll on her lap. "This is very serious," she sings. "This child needs an operation."

The rag doll is a victim of child abuse.

The child takes a scalpel out of a cardboard box and makes an incision. She peers into the doll's body. "It looks as if this child has got a broken heart." The child is singing about herself.

Runaways is a musical now playing on Broadway. There's plenty of songs and dancing, but Runaways is about one of the tragedies in our society. Runaways is about the children with the broken hearts. Children who wander through the cities with no place to go, rejected by their parents. It is about their feelings, their dreams, and how they survive.

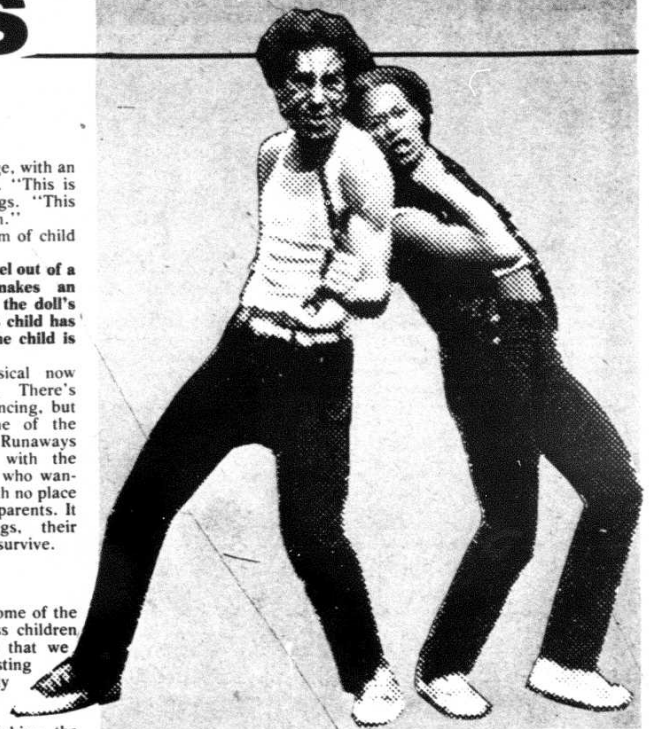
TERROR

The play deals with some of the real terror that homeless children face. "It's bad enough that we have to join disgusting gangs, that we're lonely for who we never met. But we have to die, too," mourns one, watching the destruction around her.

Others speak about terrible situations at home that drove them away. A young boy comments, "Now I have to kiss you good night. Sometimes you're so drunk that you forget I have a bed time at all."

Another says: "I went back home and they ignored me because they know it makes me crazy." He smashes the TV set and notes that his father calls him a bastard, "but at least he's talking to me."

It's the ugly side, the loveless families. But the real tragedy is not simply that some parents don't love their children, but that society cannot admit the failure of the family and make provisions for the children that are destroyed. And so millions of children are forced to run away and live a terrifying life in limbo, starving, stealing, selling sex, and dying.



Runaways is the creation of Elizabeth Swados, who wrote, composed and directed the play. Runaways is a collage of songs, speeches and scenes.

Swados began by interviewing 2,000 actors. She did not draw from the usual professionals, but rather from New York area schools and storefront cultural centers like the Theater of the Forgotten and The Door.

Nineteen actors were selected, aged 11 to 23. Some of them are runaways, many come from broken homes.

They began by working part-time in a theater workshop for five months. Slowly, the songs and dialogue that are a part of Runaways took shape.

Sometimes, the interests of the actors became parts of the play. One is a skateboard champion, so

skateboarding was choreographed into the play. Another is a graffiti artist, so there is a song about graffiti.

DIALOGUE

The troupe began to understand the seriousness of their project when Swados took them to the Kennedy Home in Bronx, New York. The home was filled with dead-end runaways, filled with anger, resentment, desperation.

The troupe began a dialogue with the residents of the home about how they survive on the streets. They play-acted on games. The play began to take a final form.

But unfortunately, Runaways never make the leap between workshop and drama. In its final form, Runaways is episodic and static. Even so, every child's story is worth hearing. They are funny, sad, and terrifying. Regrettably they are all real.

Labor Notes

by Jim Woodward

United Mine Workers President Arnold Miller recently hinted at some of the constitutional changes he'll be pushing at next year's UMW convention. Speaking to reporters in Charleston, W. Va., Miller said, "I need enough authority so that I can run the union." Speaking of union dissidents, he added, "If they don't want to be a part of the union, I need the authority to throw them out."

But Miller's "lack of authority" has not prevented him from engineering the suspension of a critic, Bill Lamb, from the UMW International Executive Board. Lamb, representative of Ohio's District 6, was suspended for allegedly failing to keep proper financial records, though Miller also claimed that Lamb had made "irresponsible statements against me" and sent him "nasty correspondence." Miller also attempted to get the executive board to merge three districts (Arkansas, Kansas & Missouri, and Colorado) whose officers have been hostile to him, but this move failed by one vote to get the required two-thirds majority.

The increasingly strained relations between business and labor are causing changes in a number of regular social events. In Charleston, W. Va., the Kanawha Valley Labor Council cancelled its annual Labor Day celebration because, according to council president Harold Hoffman, "there's nothing to celebrate." "This year, from the oval office on down, you're hearing nothing on behalf of the worker," he said. In another break with tradition, the International Union of Electrical Workers has refused to attend an annual \$1,000-a-plate Democratic Party fund raising dinner because "we are not contributing to people who voted against us." And finally, a number of liberal businessmen, including Irving Shapiro of DuPont and Reginald Jones of General Electric, declined invitations to attend George Meany's 84th birthday party in Washington last month. The execs apparently decided to stay away because of all the hard feelings over the labor law reform bill.

A survey of executives' pay at the top 400 corporations shows that this select group averaged 11% raises in 1977. In the name of fighting inflation, a small number of corporations have now pledged to limit raises to 5%. But, according to the Wall Street Journal, "the commitments could be a little cosmetic; the promises don't cover stock options and other kinds of noncash compensation."

Steelworkers in Gary, Indiana are receiving letters suggesting they buy cancer insurance. The policy, called the Loyal American Cancer Plan, pays off if any family member gets cancer. Selling insurance is no doubt cheaper than cleaning up the cancer dangers in Gary—where the risk of getting cancer can run as much as five times the national average for many residents.

Our hats are off to the disc jockeys in Latrobe, Pa. When management refused to pay a decent wage, the deejays played Johnny Paycheck's "Take This Job and Shove It" on the air for four hours, uninterrupted. At the end of which time, management came through with fatter paychecks.

What's happening where you work? Send items for this column to: Workers' Power, Labor Notes, 14131 Woodward Avenue, Highland Park, Michigan 48203. Or phone 313-869-5964.



SUN PRESS

Battle Line The Coal Strike of '78

by Kim Moody and Jim Woodward

The story of the 110-day coal strike of 1978 reveals forces that are challenging the entire labor movement. Supported by the federal government, giant oil, energy and steel corporations lined up to crush the United Mine Workers. As the miners fought to save their union, thousands of workers from other unions rallied to their support. Veteran labor writers KIM MOODY and JIM WOODWARD have written a book that points the way for all who want to see labor become once again a force for progressive social change in America.

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RANKS ANGERED BY POSTAL MANEUVERS

by Paul Broz

As this is being written, nearly two months after the expiration of national postal agreements, the contracts have been placed in the hands of an arbitrator. This culminates a series of twists and turns in postal negotiations which have confused and angered rank and filers.

When union members rejected a tentative contract in late August, they mandated union leaders to call a strike within five days if the

Postal Service refused to re-open negotiations. They also mandated a strike if the alternative was binding arbitration.

In the face of this, leaders of the Postal Service and the unions cooked up a scheme which combined re-opening of negotiations and binding arbitration.

An arbitrator was appointed by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. Should union and management fail to reach an agreement by September 10, the arbitra-

tor would dictate terms of the contract.

SIT BACK AND REFUSE

All postal management had to do was sit back and refuse to reach an agreement, and they would have the arbitration which they preferred. This is what has happened.

The arbitrator's decision will be legally binding and not subject to approval by union members. American Postal Workers Union (APWU)

leaders have said that they would poll their members anyway, although it is not clear what would happen should APWU members reject the pact.

The arbitrator is expected to raise wages slightly. He could also possibly get away with tampering with the present no-layoff clause, by inserting in it a "grandfather clause" which would make people hired after a specified date subject to future layoffs.

AMNESTY

Officially, amnesty for workers fired during earlier wildcats has not been discussed, although informal meetings have taken place. To ignore the amnesty issue would be politically bad for union leaders soon up for re-election.

Sean Gordon, a fired worker, and Administrative Vice-President of the Mailhandlers Union in the Bay Area, a site of one of the wildcats, speculates that if any sort of amnesty is granted it will exclude those convicted of contempt of court for defying injunctions during



Opposition leader, Vince Sombrotto, President, New York Letter Carriers

the strike.

Long-time New York opposition leaders Vince Sombrotto, of the National Association of Letter Carriers, and Moe Biller, of the Postal Workers Union, have talked tough each step of the negotiations, but have yet to put their money where their mouths are.

A New York strike at turning points during the past two months could have precipitated a national strike.

Recently, local APWU Presidents met and voted to strike if the contract was put in the hands of the arbitrator. When this occurred they backed off, stating that they would wait to see what the arbitrator decided.

WORKERS' POWER



Women confront Republican Senator Robert Griffin, demanding that he support the ERA.

DETROIT: WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY

DETROIT—August 26, the anniversary of women's suffrage, is celebrated annually in Detroit with a women's fair. This year, 300 women gathered at the Veterans' Memorial Building and listened to a panel discussion of the issues women face today.

Enid Eckstein, a member of UAW Local 51 Women's Committee, moderated the panel. "Today women are under attack," she said, "but we are also seeing the beginning of resistance. Last month, 100,000 women marched in Washington to demand the ERA. We will have to continue marching if we are to win on the ERA and roll back the attacks against abortion and affirmative action."

Panelists spoke about the ERA, the Bakke decision, abortion, domestic violence, and alimony. A luncheon followed the panel.

But the day did not end with speeches. Edith

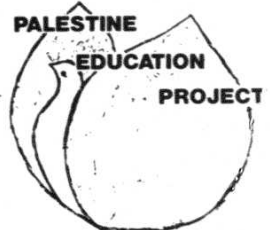
Van Horn, UAW International Representative, made a motion that the audience send a telegram to Michigan Senator Robert Griffin demanding that he vote to close debate on the extension of the ERA, thus committing himself to end the likely filibuster in the Senate.

The motion passed, and later it was proposed that participants in the audience take the motion directly to Senator Griffin who was at the Michigan Republican Convention which happened to be meeting across the street.

About fifteen women took a petition and picket signs and went to the Republican Convention. Senator Griffin accepted the petitions, and then gave the women the royal brush-off, ducking up into the bleachers for a photography session.

The angry women staged a protest on the convention floor, confronting security guards with chants and picket signs, demanding ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

A series of nine classes and workshops will be held this fall in Detroit, on the history and politics of the Palestinian struggle and the Middle East conflict. Participants will have a unique chance to become educated and active in the movement to support Palestinian human and national rights.



Time: Thursday nights, beginning September 21, 7:00 pm
Place: St. George Orthodox Church, 2760 E. Grand Blvd. (at the Chrysler freeway), Detroit, Michigan

SPONSORS: The Detroit Palestine Human Rights Committee and many other organizations in the Arab and American communities. For further information, phone 313 285-7935 or 843-8879

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