

# SPARTACIST SOUTH

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New Orleans, La.  
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Published by the Southern Regional Spartacist Leagues

Vol. 1, No. 1  
Feb.-March, 1968

## WILDCAT IN LAUREL

On April 21, 1967, Local 5-443 of the International Woodworkers of America struck the Masonite Corporation at Laurel, Miss. This strike is no exception to the long history of violent, militant struggle which this local has been through. The last wildcat was in 1964 and lasted six months before it was won. Before that was the widely publicized "war on the Klan" in which union members shot it out with Klansmen in the streets of Laurel. What makes this strike different from the previous militant activities of the union is the amount and racial composition of the scabbing—about 700 members are scabbing with 600 of these Black out of a total of 2100 in the union. To the movement in this country, of still greater significance is the fact that these 600 Black scabs are those who formed the vanguard of the Civil Rights movement in Laurel.

To get a clearer picture of why this is happening we should examine some of the history of the union prior to the strike as well as the different forces involved in it.

### Racism in 5-443

Prior to the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the union consisted of an all white local and an all Black sub-local. Typical of the South, Black workers got only the lowest jobs in the plant

—namely in shipping and in the janitorial departments. Also, the union and company had set up a system of departmental seniority. This meant that a worker gained his seniority in one department and if transferred to another department in the plant, he would have to start all over with no seniority. This situation guaranteed that no Black worker would transfer into a "white" department because of the exposed position which this would leave him in.

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## DEFEND THE T.S.U. 5

On March 4, five Black students from Texas Southern University will face trial and the death penalty on a frame-up charge of murdering a white policeman. The arrests followed a police riot May 16 at the TSU campus which included shelling the dormitories with mortar shells and machine gun fire, forcing the matron of the girls' dorm to lie down on the floor while cops shot locks off the coors of the girls' rooms, ransacked them, dragged the students out of their beds, beating them and forcing them into the street in their bedclothes.

Earlier the same day, police had arrested 43 demonstrators at Norwood Junior High School and 172 at a city garbage dump. The protest at the site of the dump was to demand that the

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# WHAT IS THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE?

The Spartacist League is a revolutionary Marxist organization which seeks, in the U.S. context, to contribute to the fundamental task of our epoch, the building of viable and effective sections of that international party which can lead the working-class to its own emancipation and hence that of all the oppressed. Our goal is workers' power, the socialist revolution in the United States.

The history of socialist organizations in the U.S. as elsewhere is one of growth and degeneration. Many groups have, for a time, carried the banner of Marxist revolution in our society. From the Socialist Labor Party of the late 19th century, through the Debsian Socialist Party

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of before the first World War, the Communist Party of the twenties, and the Socialist Workers Party of the thirties and forties, American Marxists have maintained the integrity and continuity of the revolutionary movement.

### Working-Class Politics

That which has distinguished all these in their revolutionary periods is a principled and consistent dedication to the working-class as the necessary and decisive instrument of social emancipation. Our dedication to this proposition is not based on romantic illusions concerning the present political, social, or moral attitudes of dominant sections of the

working-class, but rather by a Marxist and scientific insight into the objective social forces which make it possible for the working-class and only the working-class to play this revolutionary role. This attitude on our part is not reserved for Sunday platform speeches, but informs all our analyses of current political questions and our tactical approach to their resolution.

The original impetus which gave rise to the formation of the nucleus of the Spartacist League within its parent organization, the SWP, between 1961 and 1963, was the actual abandonment of this position by the SWP under the pressures of long isolation from popular mass movements, disappointment at the meagre fruits of the crisis of the CP's in 1958-57, and an increasingly desperate desire to find, in the face of working-class quiescence, a non-proletarian shortcut to the revolution. The achievements of the Castro regime in Cuba and its struggle with U.S. imperialism led the SWP to a world view which sees the peasantry of the colonial and semi-colonial worlds, led by a petty-bourgeois democratic revolutionary grouping like Castro's, able to carry out the proletarian revolution without or even against the proletariat. We, on the contrary, rejected the concept that a regime and social order in which the working-class has no power, no party, no independent organs of expression and combat could represent workers' (continued next page)

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power, or be a step on the road to socialism. By calling for the organization of working-class struggle against the regimes of the Castro's and the Ben Bella's, the heroes of the hour for the pseudo-revolutionaries, we placed ourselves in irrevocable opposition to all tendencies leaning on these regimes for political and ideological support, and laid the basis for our own independent existence.

The lessons learned and the conclusions drawn from this period have also saved us from what is today the growing suction of the Maoist whirlpool, where the petty-bourgeois enthusiasm of the Chinese Red Guards, based on a potentially privileged student youth acting not only against the more conservative elements within the bureaucracy, but much more fundamentally against the Chinese worker-class itself, has drawn many militant elements into a political dead-end.

#### Black Power

It is our attitude to the working class which determines our stand on all the crucial issues of the day, including the complex question of the ghetto revolts and the "Black Power" slogan. Because we see the uprisings as an elementary striking out by the most oppressed section of the working class against oppression which is objectively class in basis, we support these outbursts, while at the same time recognizing that their lack of organization and defined goals dooms them to failure, and creates a potential for the destruction of the most militant elements in the Black community. The popularization of the Black Power slogan represents the repudiation of tokenism, liberal tutelage, reliance on the federal government, and on the non-violent philosophy of moral suasion. It therefore should be supported by all revolutionaries. However, this slogan arises at a time when the white working-class as a whole is quiescent and in a mood to go along with the status quo. This gives rise to a tendency by

the most militant Black elements to slice the social cake not along the fundamental class lines, but along the apparent line of action, the line of color. Those Black spokesmen who encourage this tendency and give expression to it, while accurately reflecting the mood of the most militant elements in the ghetto, actually present the ruling class in this country with an invaluable gift, facilitating their task of utilizing the latent or overt racism endemic in all sections of the U.S. population to turn the white working class into the active enemy of the Black movement, thus subverting the interests of both groups for the benefit of their common oppressors. The "all blacks against all whites" approach is not leadership but Spokesmanship, for... "A real leader doesn't adjust his tactic in accordance with the attitude of the masses, but in accordance with the development of history."

#### Mid-East Conflict

It is this same orientation toward the working-class and its historical role which determines our attitude toward such events as the Near-East conflict, where rejecting both the sentimental ethno-centrism of the Zionist elements and their sympathizers, and also the Maoist-Nasserite approach which sees the bourgeois nationalists of the Arab states leading an anti-imperialist revolution, we have called for no confidence in either side, and for the transformation of the national war into a civil war. Only the joint efforts of the working classes of the Arab states and Israel to overthrow their bourgeois leaderships and to create a workers' republic in the Near East can end the conflict in the Near East.

In the peace movement, we are opposed to the demonstration tactics favored by both the CP and SWP. Not bigger and better demonstrations, but only the mobilization of the working-class can end the war. We therefore have propagandized with the peace  
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# WILDCAT...

Against this backdrop lies racism in the internal life of the union. The white leadership (unconscious of its own racism) freely speaks of having been "forced to merge" with the all Black sub-local because of pressure from the national AFL-CIO and the federal government. But, even

movement for an approach which would have as its aim a one-day work stoppage in a significant number of shops and factories throughout the country. We feel that the setting of such a goal would force the present petty-bourgeois movement to orient itself in reality toward the working-class, not just as another pressure group like ministers and doctors, but as the one decisive social sector.

## We Won't Go?

on the draft, we call not for individualist grandstand plays along the "We Won't Go" style, resulting only in the imprisonment or isolation of anti-war militants, but for the cool but militant exercise of their constitutional rights within the armed forces by drafted anti-war youths. We commend the example of Pvt. Petrick to all who are serious about anti-military activity.

Our position on the unique role of the working-class in no way implies a denigration or neglect of the function of the revolutionary sections of the intelligentsia, students, and the like. Indeed, it is only to the extent that such elements bring clearly developed socialist ideology into the working-class that that class can play its historical role. Thus, the fight for ideology, for political clarity among socialist intelligentsia, far from being a side-show, is an essential link in the process of the proletarian revolution. However, we say that it is only within the working-class that the ideology developed by the revolutionary intelligentsia can take on flesh and muscle, and be objectified as actual power. ■

more significant in local 5-443's internal life were the first elections, which followed the merger of the Black and white workers into one union. Union president J.D. Jolly admits that the leadership of the white local made a "mistake" in not forming a coalition slate of candidates with the leadership of the Black sub-local. In this way he believes the present situation may have been avoided. Instead the former white union leadership ran as one slate and the former Black leadership as another. The white members of the union (75% of the total) voted racially for every position and defeated all the Black candidates. From this point on, an undercurrent of resentment was formed against the white majority. No Black unionist has run for any union office since the defeats in the first election!

## The Boss Plays It Cool

About a year ago, Robert E. Paul was sent down to Laurel from the North to act as plant manager. Paul, being a fine Northern liberal with only the best interests of all people in mind, immediately set about the task of integrating the showers, bathrooms and lunch areas. Thus he gained for management the respect and good will of the Black workers at Masonite with many of the white unionist refusing to use these facilities any more.

Then with the bosses in the driver's seat, Paul ordered a "reorganization" of the plant so as to end departmental seniority and allow Black employees a chance at the better, "traditionally white" jobs. Exactly what happened with the start of the reorganization is disputed by Black and white union members. White workers claim that a Black steward from shipping refused to be transferred from that department because he liked the job that he was holding in the shipping department (lower paying and traditionally Black). He was fired and as a result the union

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struck. To those of us in the South, this can only sound like the old argument against any kind of integration: "Them Niggers don't want to integrate; they is happy where they is."

The scabbing Black workers claim that this wasn't the case. They claim that when the white unionists saw that Paul was carrying out the reorganization, they struck to preserve the racist set-up. It appears that here the scabs realize only half of the implications of the strike. Departmental seniority system is a racist set-up, but it also meant economic security for the workers involved. Second, the proposed reorganization would have substantially disrupted the grievance procedure of the union, thus jeopardizing the welfare of every worker at the plant.

#### Types of Scabs

Black unionists (who still pay their union dues via check deductions) all appear to have a sincere regret about their present scabbing. Practically all mention that they walked picket lines for six months during the 1964 wildcat. And all say that if the strike was not over a racial issue then they would be out too, and will go out again if "the union has a legitimate grievance."

#### Outside Influences-- Black Power and the KKK

Outside interests have had a great bearing on the mood of the Black and white workers in this strike. The Klan element in the union represents 15% of the total membership and has people at every level in local 5-443. But the Klan is not in control of the union and is not running the strike. The most damaging thing which they have done (and this may be fatal) is to propose and get passed a resolution calling for reprisals against scabbing union members. In normal strike situations in which there is scabbing, this would be perfectly in order but given the circumstances,

the refusal to pass such a resolution would have been a bargaining tool with the scabbing Black workers.

The Black community in Laurel has stood fast behind the scabs. They view the union as a white's man organization which must be destroyed and something new built in its place. The Black community views as heroes the white scabs (some of whom were involved in the rioting around James Meredith's admission to Old Miss). The Wackenhut Investigating Agency has been supplying guards which the union has been eliminating. On August 14, Robert Billiot, a Wackenhut guard was shot and killed by a group of "night riders". The Black community was so infuriated by the murder of this ex-Green Beret that rumors of a protest march to "demand that justice be done" were circulating in the Black community!

#### The Radical Movement in Dismay

The above attitudes could be expected from the KKK, but what about the Black militants involved? The confusion among revolutionaries is exemplified by PL's Ed Clark when he simply tells Black workers to quit scabbing. And a similar confusion has appeared in the ranks of the SWP when it was unable to formulate a position during the New York teachers strike when such notables as Rap Brown and Floyd McKissick acted as scabs. Over a year ago the Spartacist League predicted events such as these when we stated, "As a tactic this idea [the Black vs. white outlook] is probably wise for neighborhood organization, but it has been raised to the level of principle by many Black Power advocates, thereby becoming an obstruction to class-oriented organization for struggle." ("SNCC and Revolution", Spartacist #8.)

The problem of Black scabbing lies in the political outlook of the Civil Rights movement since its birth. Both because of the middle-class outlook of many civil rights workers, and because labor unions gave many hard

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kicks in the teeth to the Civil Rights movement, the movement assumed not a class but a racial orientation. In practice we are seeing the result of this in a struggle by Black workers with the boss against the union with the possible outcome that the union may be smashed and there may be race war in Laurel between white and Black workers.

Toward a Solution

To mourn over past mistakes is not to offer a solution. History can only teach us lessons. The bosses have used the racism of the white unionists to split the union and will continue to try to use it until either the union is crushed or until the white workers recognize what they have to change. What is needed is a recognition on the part of the white workers that Black workers have special interests because they are oppressed in a special way--racially. This means that the white unionists must begin to bargain with the most militant of the scabs and be prepared to concede to them everything as far as the past racial policies of the union.

Secondly, Black union members must recognize that the company is surreptitiously plotting to destroy the union and that if the union is smashed that nothing new will arise to take its place. They should form a Civil Rights caucus inside of the union to fight and preserve their rights as well as to keep the union alive and free from future difficulties of this nature (this should have been done after the first elections).

Third, a specific alternative must be developed to departmental seniority. This alternative must put the burden of the reorganization on the company and not on the union as in the past. In short, reorganization should not endanger the economic security of any worker at the plant but rather should prove to be a means to generally uplift the positions of all members of 5-443. One such alternative would be to demand that the company bring about its so-called re-

organization but with the following hitch: no worker may be laid off. The company could easily afford to cut the length of a shift and raise hourly pay so that everyone at Masonite would be employed at no loss in pay. If the company and Robert Paul are so interested in the rights of men then let them show it by agreeing to such a demand. The company started this strike and the company must yield and be made to pay for what it has done to both Black and white workers.

Last, union stewards should not be transferred without the specific consent of the union and the steward. If the steward is Black then his transfer should be contingent upon the agreement of the Civil Rights Caucus in the union. ■

A POSTSCRIPT ON LAUREL

On Dec. 8, announcement was made of a settlement of the Laurel strike by John Johns, director of employee relations with Masonite Corp., and Arnold Roley, international president of the International Woodworkers of America, AFL-CIO. The statement read in part: "Disclosure of the details of this agreement are not being made public at this time pending a complete explanation our emphasis of those terms to Masonite employees and union members. Our consideration included the interests of all parties concerned, the most important of which is the Laurel community."

This settlement came after officers of the Laurel union had been stripped of their power and union was placed under the trusteeship of A.M. Collins, a union official from Memphis. An officer of the local has said that the members are "unhappy as hell about it." He also stated that no membership vote would be taken on the settlement!

Needless to say, it appears that what has happened is that at least the Black or white workers have been sold out and possibly both groups. This is a direct result of the inability and unwillingness of the union bureaucracy of the International to come to grips with the real trouble maker in Laurel, the Masonite management. ■

# PAUL BOUTELLE SPEAKS

Paul Boutelle's speech in Austin, Texas on October 13 further revealed the degeneration of the SWP from the Marxist vanguard it once was to its present petty-bourgeois state. Boutelle, Vice-Presidential candidate of the SWP, began his speech with a history of Black people in North America relating how, after the Civil War, Blacks were subjected to oppression, brutality, discrimination, racism, and violent death. He dwelt on the later aspects of the history and the attempt of Black people to be "assimilated into society." He noted that many bourgeois standards were set up by the ruling class for Blacks to adhere to -- including bourgeois marriage.

"Of course", Boutelle said, "this does not necessarily mean that I am against marriage." He later defended this basically petty-bourgeois statement by declaring that there were some things one could not say publicly, i.e., that he could not come out and say that he was an atheist or that he was against marriage. What does this imply? Basically that he is not willing to denounce bourgeois marriage -- one of the most blatant forms of suppression, waste, tyranny in the entire capitalist social system. Women are a doubly exploited layer of the working class and Black women are triply exploited, as workers, Black people, and women. This male chauvinist attitude on the part of Boutelle characterizes the SWP as a whole since he speaks for the party -- by being a public leader and one of its candidates in the 1968 election.

A second rotten aspect of this speech was the playing up by Boutelle of the fact that he is a "Black Nationalist". Black and white workers must be fundamentally opposed to Black Nationalism because it seeks to split the working class and in the long run only serves to strengthen the ruling class because it divides the workers. The SWP and Boutelle

know this but choose to follow and not to lead on this question as on others. Boutelle spoke of the recent urban riots as being the forerunner of the revolution. This is a complete misunderstanding of the riots and the causes behind them and is indicative of the romanticist and completely unreal character of Boutelle's politics. Riots in the ghettos are expressions of Black frustration and hopelessness but nothing more. There is no organization or strong, viable groupings capable of leading a revolution that will come out of the riots -- there will only be destruction, death, and more cops. The situation does not change after the riots -- it only stagnates the situation at best and more often results in increased suppression of ghetto dwellers. Of course, people in the "areas of disturbance" must be defended against brutal, racist cops but we must realize that this form of action will never lead to revolution. Only the organized working class, led by the strong, disciplined Marxist vanguard, is capable of that.

A third aspect of the Boutelle speech was the obvious middle-class overtones of the speech. He appealed to students, professors, and middle class people in general -- the anti-war line, the student orientation, were obvious evidence of this. In using the slogan "Bring the Troops Home Now", the SWP is appealing to middle class housewives who fear that their sons may be wounded or killed in Vietnam. This is of course a valid fear but it is not the program of revolutionary vanguard. The SWP seems to feel that all is needed is to bring the troops home and all will be well in the world. What about the revolution here? Boutelle and the SWP seem to have forgotten all about it.

Thus, once again we come to the core of the problem of the working class -- a crisis of leadership. The SWP is certainly offering nothing to

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# T.S.U. 5...

city close it down because it was located in the heart of the Black community and children often fell in and drowned. TSU militants supported this demonstration and the Junior High School protest against unjustified expulsions and beatings of Black students by teachers and older white youth.

As a result of these arrests, police sentiment was that there would be a riot. The police went to the Texas Southern campus later that evening and arrested Douglas Wayne Wallace because they knew him to be a militant. A crowd of about 200 stu-

workers. They have begun their campaign extremely early so as to corner the militant votes and force out any other alternative. What should be done in the coming election? We suggest a labor-socialist ticket. Ideally, this ticket would include a trade union militant (preferably Black) and a revolutionary socialist — possibly Halstead or Boutelle assuming they could drag themselves away from their petty-bourgeois orientation. The 1968 election offers the best opportunity in twenty years for independent working-class electoral activity and there is definitely a need for a ticket of this type. Such a slate of candidates could be the forerunner of a Freedom-Labor Party, which the SWP is theoretically for anyway. This party would be an active, militant truly anti-capitalist party based on the working-class on the trade union level and would work for the attainment of political power by the working-class. What the SWP is working for is nothing near this — they are petty-bourgeois and middle-class in orientation — a centrist party (revolutionary in words, opportunist in deeds) whose ideas must be overcome. We must strip the mantle of Trotskyism from the SWP and show it up for what it really is if the work of building the revolutionary vanguard is to proceed.

dents gathered to find out why he had been arrested and soon dispersed. The police left the campus and returned in about two hours and fired on the dormitories. Students tried to fight back with bricks and whatever they could get their hands on. At this time Police Chief Herman Short was given the go ahead by Mayor Welch to "clean up the mess". The entire Houston police force, numbering about 650, advanced on the campus and shelled the entire dormitory area with mortar and machine-gun fire. An announcement came over the police radio that they were shooting at their own men. Students were brutally beaten, including some white students who were called "nigger lovers". Some bullets ricocheted off of the building.

The death of the policeman, Kuba, for which the Texas Southern Five are being framed to set an example against militant struggle, took place at this time. There were no windows on the side of the building from which the police attacked; therefore, a student's bullet would have had to make two right angle turns to hit a policeman. The accused are: Douglas Wallace, who was already in jail; Floyd Nichols and Charles Freeman, who were on the other side of the city; Trazewell Franklin and John Parker, who were in bed when the police attacked the dorms.

The widest publicity and protest that can be devoted to this case are necessary to make possible the freedom of the TSU Five.

Funds are urgently needed. Donations and statement of support may be sent to:

T.S.U. Five Defense Fund  
Box 21085  
Houston, Texas 77026

Statements of protest should be sent to: Mayor Louis Welch, Office of the Mayor, Houston, Texas, or Carol Vance, District Attorney, Office of the District Attorney, Houston, Texas.

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# DRAFT RESISTANCE IN NEW ORLEANS

The draft resistance campaign, for some months now the principle focus of many anti-war activists in New Orleans, is now beginning to absorb the energies of other radical groups as a central focus of their work, e.g. MDS and the women's peace group. If draft resistance is being conceived of as an effective form of opposing the war and perhaps even as a revolutionary tactic then some scrutiny of its implications is called for.

The draft is the visible way in which the imperialist war enters into the lives of young people and therefore an obvious target to attack. Thus Carl Davidson says, "The war in Vietnam is unjust, oppressive, and wrong. Therefore, we won't go." But the early revolutionary workers selected the wrong target when they opposed the machinery that the capitalists were using to exploit them by destroying it with their hammers. The draft itself is the "machinery" by which the present imperialist creates a class-structured army to wage a class war, and must be opposed as such. The war is unjust, oppressive, and wrong. Therefore, we must seek an effective way to oppose it.

If a concerted program of draft refusal would touch off mass refusals to go into the army, numbering in the hundreds of thousands and drawing in Black and white working-class youth, then draft refusal would be worthy of consideration. But this is just not going to happen at this stage. Rather the result of draft refusal will put several hundred middle-class radicals into prison or otherwise alienate them from their working-class contemporaries. And this is just what the ruling class wants.

The government conveniently divides those who are likely to first become disaffected with the war (students, etc.) from the great bulk of young workers who have to fight the war: this is a major function of the student deferment privilege. The 2-S is therefore not only an unjust class discrimination, but it is also a big obstacle contributing to the isolation and frustration of anti-war students

who want to speak to working people. The draft resister unwillingly cooperates with this divisive tactic. The radical draft resister, as a student, radical, etc., can possibly get out but only by alienating himself from his working-class brother who has no chance.

The present task of the revolutionary movement is to reach with Marxist ideas that class which alone has the power to put them into effect: the working-class. Much of the present discontent indicated by the ghetto uprisings and the rash of militant strikes can be related to the effects of the war. But working-class youth accept the draft as a fact of life. Young workers view the "we won't go" movement as motivated by physical cowardice, moralism, or a desire by spoiled middle-class kids to avoid the harshness of army life.

The latest draft resister in New Orleans gave out a leaflet at his physical which seemed to be directed to working-class draftees. It said in part:

"We might have to go in. But that don't mean we have to keep our mouths shut inside. There was a riot of G.I.'s at Fort Hood Texas not long ago. That was good for us. A G.I. from New Orleans just went AWOL sic to Sweden; that was good for us. I'll go in, but I'll keep talking and leafletting and thinking of ways for us to take over our lives, from those who don't care much whether or how we live or die."

But this radical was attired in a costume of top hat and tails and a sign saying "This is my funeral", not exactly the approach meant to reach those draftees already prejudiced against radical cop-outs. In fact, this leaflet was not directed to anyone but the radical's draft board in the hope of convincing them that he might riot, desert, or organize. If radicals are serious about opposing the war in Vietnam they must overcome their debilitating isolation from the mass of the working-class, which alone has the power, not to persuade, but to stop production. ■