

# INTERNAL

  

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# POLITICAL REPORT

by Jack Barnes

Political Report and Summary Adopted  
by SWP National Committee Plenum  
January 2, 1976

The political resolution and the Black struggle resolution adopted at the SWP convention last August are our point of departure and our framework. We do not need to recapitulate those documents. Instead we can take a look at the objective developments in several of the key areas treated in the political resolution so as to further our discussion of the strategic line of march of American labor, of the burning need for American workers to think socially and act politically. What has transpired in the four months since our August 1975 convention?

## Angola: a new imperialist adventure

Our political resolution placed special emphasis on the fact that "the threat of military adventures, and along with them the possibility of nuclear annihilation, will continue. Rivalries among the imperialist powers will sharpen as they compete for markets and raw materials. There will be increased efforts to impose American imperialist needs and perspectives on the masses of the colonial and semicolonial world with the inevitable resistance this will generate."

We did not know at the time we wrote the resolution that the next adventure was already being prepared—in Angola. The immediate reaction in the country was: "Not another Vietnam!" A public debate began at once. This time not five years or so after we had been dragged into a war, but at a very early stage. This debate is, of course, distorted because the loudest voices are presenting the ideas and perspectives of the ruling class. It is fed by information "leaked" out because of the tactical divisions among the powers that be. But the debate is qualitatively different from the one in the early stages of the Vietnam War.

In this case, at the very beginning of a new imperialist venture—even before advisers are sent—there is widespread public knowledge and awareness of, debate over, and opposition to a "new Vietnam," outcries against a new foreign military involvement.

"Leaks" began gushing from ruling circles themselves. Fear of the growth of a new antiwar movement and fear of an explosive reaction by Black Americans to any direct military involvement in southern Africa weighed heavily on Washington. Differences in the State Department were exacerbated as each side rushed to expose the other's lies. For example, they had the debate over the dollar value of

covert "aid" being sent. It was revealed that machine guns were being marked down to 50 cents and bazookas to \$1.29, or something similar. And then the factions started arguing about *when* the covert "aid" began. Soon after the leaks began, Walter Cronkite's CBS news announced a week of special presentations on Angola and the danger of another Vietnam.

This course of events confirms three conclusions we had reached at the convention and what their lessons were for the American working class and its allies:

1. More adventures are inevitably going to occur. They are part and parcel of the decline of imperialism and they go along with and are not contradicted by détente.

2. Mass public reaction is going to be at a qualitatively different level than at the beginning of previous adventures initiated by American imperialism after the World War II. The last fifteen years have seen a signal change in mass consciousness in this country. This has deepened the tactical differences over foreign policy within the ruling class itself, a factor that accelerates and legitimizes dissension and leaks. The officials in charge are pulled into the debate right from the beginning.

3. The third lesson is the most important. Working people can't count on Congress of either of its two parties to prevent new military adventures from happening again or to solve the contradictions that generate them. To the contrary, these flow fundamentally from the decline of American imperialism, not the particular qualities or "program" of the capitalist politician occupying the White House at the time.

## The real face of the American rulers

The second area in which important developments have occurred is what we have called "the crisis of perspective" of the American ruling class bound up with the continuing exposure of the real face of declining bourgeois democracy. What used to be called the credibility gap and later "Watergate" continues to develop apace. For the time being, the ruling class cannot stop wave after wave of exposés of the undemocratic and illegal methods, or elements of these methods, practiced by the American rulers. Such scandals have become an everyday feature of American life.

Just in the four months since the convention, there have been damaging new exposés concerning the CIA's use of

American missionaries and journalists, CIA funding of foreign political parties, and the international assassination plots against Castro, Lumumba, and others. Today a great percentage of the Black population and a growing number of whites firmly believe that Martin Luther King—let alone militants like Fred Hampton—was assassinated by agents originally hired and trained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

As this process of exposure unfolds it has repercussions that are unwanted by any sector of the ruling class. One result is a spreading comprehension that assassinations and similar activities are not just exceptional international policies used only in Chile or the Congo. These same policies are utilized in one form or another at home. They assassinate Lumumba, they assassinate King.

Another idea gains credence: the notion that maybe these policies are not of recent origin, unfortunate excesses of the “turbulent” Vietnam years and the “terrible” Nixon years. Growing numbers become convinced that it may go back farther—to the Johnson years, the Kennedy years. More Americans are discovering that Camelot was really a bunch of mobsters in tuxedos, deciding our fate. If you read Farrell Dobbs’s books on the Teamsters carefully, you will see that the trail goes back to the Roosevelt years. In fact, that’s where its present form originated.

A further idea that gains currency is the realization that these policies are not simply aberrations. They are not the individual acts of a J. Edgar Hoover, a Colby, a Nixon—someone you can fire, or impeach; the acts of an officeholder who flipped out. On the contrary, they are the necessary policies of the American ruling class today. These are the policies of the most liberal and respected (i.e., those not caught red-handed) of the leaders of the capitalist elite. The tendency toward spying, provocation, assassination, the use of police-state methods—this is not the work of a few demented individuals. It is the direction of a declining, thus objectively demented, class.

The policies are not just decided by a few heinous Republicans. They are carried out by the whole two-party lot, as they have been for a long time. *They* are the terrorists, *they* are the assassins, *they* are the advocates and practitioners of minority violence. *They* are the ones who organize conspiracies of a small minority to impose their ends on the great majority of the American people.

The rulers can’t openly defend and justify these methods. The great majority, who benefit less and less from this system and who reject these methods, would not accept it. Yet there is no way the rulers can completely hide what they are doing behind the scenes. As on the war question—like Angola—the tactical divisions in the ruling class, stemming from all the pressures they are subjected to, lead to exposures, “leaks,” debates, new divisions, and mutual distrust. This is the source of much raw material for us and for other sections of the working class movement and its allies to put to use for education and propaganda purposes.

I was struck by some of the coverage given the assassination of the CIA station chief in Athens, Greece, recently. Several days ago on CBS TV morning news they showed the body being brought back and the burial with full-scale military honors at Arlington. Then they interviewed a spokesman for the Retired Intelligence Officers

Association. The retired spook points to what he considers a “new problem.” The danger, he said, doesn’t come from the intelligence apparatus of the “other side.” In fact, the rival services now are forced to collaborate more and more. The danger, he explained, comes from “people at home who don’t understand our mission.”

Immediately following this, another person was interviewed by Daniel Schorr. Cameras wouldn’t show his face, but Schorr identified him as a former high-ranking CIA agent who had resigned a year and a half ago. Far from drawing the conclusion from the death of the Greek station chief that further exposés should be hushed up, he announced that he was publishing in the next months a list of 750 names of various chiefs, secondary officers, and affiliated CIA figures around the world.

These three incidents were presented all within five or six minutes on a television news show watched by millions of Americans.

### Rights and rising expectations

What about the state of democracy, democratic rights, and rising expectations? The party’s political resolution examines the way in which the defense of traditional political liberties can today be extended to include social and economic rights for working people, rights that the bosses and their government had previously looked on as their sole prerogative to give or take away. The most important of these have been listed in the “Bill of Rights for Working People” issued by Peter Camejo and Willie Mae Reid, the party’s 1976 presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Our resolution examines the expectations of the masses that encroach on private property and the relations of production of capitalism itself.

From an opposite point of view, the ruling class shares our assessment of the situation. But where we are optimistic, they despair. *Business Week* recently published an end-of-the-year series of commentaries on the growth of “egalitarian” sentiments among American workers (December 1, 8, and 15, 1975). The theme was their deep concern that the demand for economic rights is the latest threat to a free market. The series begins by quoting Voltaire, who said, “Equality is at once the most natural and most chimerical thing in the world: natural when it is limited to rights, unnatural when it attempts to level goods and powers.” That is the text for their sermon.

They point out that more and more rights are being demanded by the people, and the character of these rights tends to “override the classic principle that what a man consumes must be determined by what he produces or what he owns.” In fact, they emphasize, “the American economy, based on private property, uses the market to determine rewards and allocate resources. Differences in pay and profit are essential to it.” At some point, they conclude, a move toward equality requires a shift from capitalism to socialism.

*Business Week* notes that “the most obvious examples of egalitarian actions today are busing to integrate school districts and affirmative action programs designed to force employers to hire more women and more members of minorities.” These affirmative action programs create all kinds of new problems that weren’t foreseen ten years ago. The very fact that the United States has made a start

toward equality has created a demand for faster progress, for more equality and added rights.

Then they draw the horrible, pessimistic conclusion: "Since the Middle Ages, the general will—or at least, the will of the majority—has been asserting itself against the rights of property." They pose this dilemma: A choice must be made between the rights of property and the unlimited extension of democracy. *Business Week* takes a firm and open stand: for the rights of property. And on that note they wish us all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*Business Week's* observations reflect not only capitalism's crisis and the resulting radicalization we have analyzed, but the growing polarization in this society. There is no contradiction in all these things happening at once. With various ups and downs and shifts in form, the crisis of the system will deepen. The radicalization will also evolve, change its forms, and deepen. And simultaneously a class polarization will take place.

The question will be more and more clearly posed: are rights, even the traditional bourgeois constitutional ones, let alone those that are anticipated, compatible with the needs of the capitalist economic system? A growing number in the ruling class will draw the same conclusion we do. The answer is no. But the ruling class will have a different solution than ours. They will come down on the side of the rights of property; we will be on the side of extending democracy and equality into the social and economic spheres through the struggle for workers' power and socialism.

### **Economic prospects**

But shouldn't all these problems be growing less acute for the powers that be? After all, the economy, by all their accounts, is well into a recovery from the depression of 1974-75. In this light it's worth taking a glance at the recovery and its character to date.

The value of the dollar has gone up. The balance of trade has improved significantly. The stock market looks as if it will soon be several hundred points above its low. The estimate for profits, especially in 1976 and 1977, has gone way up. Industrial production has risen in the last few months. All these indices look like standard signs of recovery, similar to all the recessions we've lived through since the end of World War II.

But another side of this development is more important, though it is not peculiar to this recovery either. That is the extent of unemployment. Official unemployment figures vary between 8 and 11 percent, depending on whether Gerald Ford or Hubert Humphrey is doing the measuring. And no bourgeois source estimates that it will go below 7 percent! A number of experts now predict that 1976-77 auto production will top the 1973 record—yet all agree it will be accomplished with fewer auto workers. Inflation remains in the 7 to 8 percent range, well ahead of most of labor's wage increases. And the threat of another dose of double-digit inflation, more shortages, and breakdowns continues to hang over our heads.

The government statisticians tell us that real spendable earnings finally rose by 0.2 percent in December, so we can all feel richer. But then they forget to tell us that beginning January 1 we are scheduled to pay more in social security taxes and for every single social service.

This means that our real income—let alone the quality of living conditions—has continued to slide. For the working class this kind of "recovery" is going to be hard to recover from.

This has been acutely exemplified by the crisis in New York City where 37,000 workers were "recovered" right out of the economy in 1975. Union contracts have been torn up, simply ripped apart. Social services that have been fought for over decades and decades have been dumped. And the budget chops have been regressive. The increase in taxes, in subway fares, slashes in child care, school budgets, hospitals, etc., are the kind of chops that hurt working people the most. The modest affirmative action gains of the last few years by Blacks, by Puerto Ricans, by women, have been brutally shoved back—with the blessing of the New York courts in the name of opposing "reverse discrimination."

This is an omen of what the rulers plan, not only in other cities, but in the basic industries. Not only the weak unions, but the strongest industrial unions will eventually become the targets.

Recoveries in a period of accelerated expansion were one thing, even though the "American Century" didn't live up to expectations. The standard of living for many, many workers rose. But spasmodic recoveries in a long period of stagnation, in a period of a growing social tension such as we have now entered, are something different. We are now getting a picture of the best that can be expected.

Socialism is not creeping in under the auspices of monopoly capitalism. But there has been a big increase in the socialization of the accumulation of capital. The capitalist state has stepped in with workers' taxes to bail out bankrupt railroads and airplane trusts. Chrysler in Britain was bailed out to the tune of \$300 million. The big New York financial families and banks have been bailed out. But this is "socialism" for the superrich. Every time one of these government bailouts takes place, they do so at the cost of jobs, wages, social gains, living and working conditions. They are put over in a way that exacerbates to the utmost the divisions within the working class.

The total absence of any leadership capacity among the officials of the New York unions—where the workers were ready to resist and looked to their unions for some answer as the crisis deepened—was a gift the rulers had hardly dared anticipate. There is no question that a whole section of the ruling class has the taste of blood. They are going to probe further.

Their offensive will take diverse forms. They will probe other cities like New York. They will try to bust relatively weak unions or those in an exposed position, as they are trying to do to the pressmen at the Washington Post. They will try to see how much of labor's gains the Democratic "friends of labor" can take back, as they did in San Francisco when they backed the antilabor referenda in the last elections. They will try to curb the teachers, whose unprecedented wave of strikes is not a "good lesson" any way the boss class figures it. They will try to convince a growing number of crafts to take "voluntary" wage cuts. Two weeks ago the bricklayers in New York agreed to take a 25 percent wage cut and a 40 percent cut in fringe benefits. The purpose, they were told, was to spread out the work. But, of course, that won't be the result.

## The doubly and triply oppressed

This has happened during only the first half-year of the "recovery"! From the point of view of the ruling class, the slashes of the last several years have resulted in great strides toward a goal that Marx explained to the workers a long time ago. Whenever there has been a long period of high employment the ruling class must reconstitute an industrial reserve army. It is an absolute necessity if the capitalist system is to survive and thrive, i.e., to continue to produce profits for those who own the means of production. The ruling class must create a pariah section of the working class, a special pool, accepted as such by the relatively more privileged sections of the wage workers, which can be pushed in and out of the labor market and used to exert downward pressure on the wages and working conditions of the working class as a whole.

These are the doubly oppressed sections of the working class: the Blacks, the Chicanos, the Puerto Ricans, the women, the youngest, the least trained workers. Like other workers, they feel the effects of the bosses' blows—on the job, in education, in real wages, in social welfare. But for them the blows almost always have a double whammy. They always end up more, not less, segregated than before. Not only are there fewer teachers, but a smaller percentage of Black teachers, Puerto Rican teachers, Chicano teachers. Not only are real wages in general being cut, but the unprivileged have less chance at equal pay. Discriminatory layoffs increase. Social gains that made it possible to become a full-fledged part of the work force, such as child care or bilingual education, are special targets. Discriminatory layoffs, and anything like them, always give the employing class a bonus. Not only do they chop the labor force down, but they divide it a little bit more, and thus place the industrial reserve army in a still worse position.

What have the oppressed nationalities and women seen as this process accelerates? They have seen the liberal vote catchers retreat—on busing, on the Equal Rights Amendment, on the extension of services such as child care. They have seen, not less but more racist practices, more segregation, more sex discrimination. They have seen the misleaders of labor turn their backs on them.

The ruling class needs this industrial reserve army. It is a fundamental precondition for the success of its offensive against the wages, working conditions, and social welfare of the working class as a whole. But the ruling class's strategy can work only if this reserve army section of the working class is seen to one degree or another by the rest of the working class, by the labor movement, as "the others," as pariahs, as the "outsiders" whose fate is not as important as what happens to "us." They must be the at-home version of the "foreigners" or the "illegals." At the same time this ruling-class operation is a delicate one, which has to be carefully handled because it can be self-defeating if it spurs the doubly and triply oppressed to further struggles.

### Class polarization

As the social crisis remains unresolved and this offensive of the rulers continues, a growing class polarization occurs. The rulers try to do everything they can to camouflage this reality and portray it as a race war, or a

battle of the sexes, or the righteous anger of the honest taxpayers. ROAR, anti-ERA groups, the antiabortion cabal, the reactionary posers in California against the farm workers, are presented as people who simply oppose busing, or who have their own views on the rights of women, or different opinions on the character of Mexicans. To be sure, they do have their own reactionary opinions on all these things. But they represent something more. They are the advance guard of the antilabor forces in this country who have their own definitive labor-hating opinions on the rights, future, and character of the working class.

This kind of polarization, fanned by the ruling-class offensive against labor and its allies that comes on top of the social and economic crises and radicalization of the last decade, throws all sorts of organizations into a crisis of perspectives. Organizations like the Nation of Islam, the NAACP, NOW, who want to represent or are based on some sizable sections of the oppressed, more and more fall into a crisis of perspective, a crisis of strategy, a crisis over what to do. Problems of policy and direction come up for review and discussion within their leaderships and memberships.

The degree to which this is a class offensive, camouflaged and reinforced by racist and sexist attitudes, is shown even by the reflexes of a George Meany. His statements in favor of busing and the ERA are very much out of character for the AFL-CIO head. But even to some of those like Meany, the organized oppositions that defeated the ERA in New Jersey and New York, and are trying to drive back busing to desegregate the schools, smelled too much like the most vicious, reactionary, potentially union-busting forces in American society.

It would be useful to take a look at four developments in the American labor movement that reflect the specific characteristics of this social crisis, the radicalization, and the coming polarization. We picked out for special examination the Farm Workers, the Coalition of Labor Union Women, Ed Sadlowski's campaign, called Steelworkers Fight Back, and the union response to the New York crisis. In the labor movement too, as among the Black, Chicano, and women's organizations, there is a crisis of strategy, of orientation. Do the old methods work? What is the correct road to take? What is a winning strategy? A certain number of workers are beginning to see that the very existence of the labor movement is and will be threatened by the bosses' offensive and that no section of the labor movement is safe if that goes far enough. Transforming the labor movement to think socially and act politically has become a life-and-death matter for the American working class.

### The United Farm Workers

The strength of the Farm Workers struggle comes from something radically different from the methods and strategies of the current misleaders of American labor. The very deep nationalist appeal, an appeal to the farm workers as *la raza*, as a doubly oppressed people, has been its central feature from the beginning. At every critical turning point this has been a key element in orienting or reorienting the farm workers' struggle. The actions that paved the way for steps forward have been those that went

beyond the forces of the farm workers themselves, toward whatever help was available from the labor movement and its supporters.

Take the grape boycott. It was a broad, popular action that depended for its success on becoming a significant social protest movement. Its weaknesses aside, this was the only way that contingents from outside could be brought to bear and help improve the poor relationship of forces vis-a-vis the growers. The AFL-CIO leadership basically ignored the farm workers' struggle from the beginning; their methods, exemplified by the business unionism of the Teamster bureaucracy, could only lead to its total defeat. The Farm Workers have always sought to think socially, in their own terms. This helped them recover from the low point in 1973. It reoriented them and helped them correct a disastrously wrong policy in refusing to defend the so-called illegal workers. It led them to reconsider their inclination to give up on the boycott. And it has brought them to where they are today.

Besides the special difficulties entailed in organizing the farm industry, the Farm Workers have complicated matters by their politics, the correlative side of thinking socially. They remain tied to the Democratic Party both in their leadership and their political thinking. They have no perspective of independent labor politics. That weakness stands as a big obstacle to further progress and is a continual danger to the gains and growth of the last couple of years.

### Coalition of Labor Union Women

CLUW offers striking proof of the character of the radicalization, as well as the nature of the social crisis, and its effect on the labor movement. None of our various sectarian opponents understand this and all drew basically similar conclusions from last month's CLUW convention. *Workers Power*, organ of the International Socialists, was the clearest wrong expression. They announced (1) the convention exhausted both its delegates and any remaining hopes for an effective organization; (2) the new CLUW constitution rules out any activity by any members of CLUW to fight for working women's rights; and (3) CLUW is now totally useless as a potential organization for working women. One, Two, Three—out! That was their analysis of CLUW at the end of the convention.

In none of the articles by the sectarians is there the foggiest notion of the real origins and character of CLUW, or what strategic course to chart to realize its potential. CLUW is rooted in two interrelated phenomena: first, the changes brought about by American capital in the post-World War II years that drew millions of women into wage-labor, and second, the rise of the women's movement. Thus the origins of CLUW are not to be found within the labor movement or the policies of its misleaders but rather in the changing consciousness and role of women in the work force and the resurgence of the nationwide struggle for women's rights.

CLUW would have been inconceivable even ten years ago. It is based on something very real—a revolt against their permanent second-class status by 35 million women in American society. The main goal of CLUW must be very simple. This goal is to change the American labor movement by mobilizing its power to help fight for the needs and demands of women. CLUW's objective is to use

union power to fight for women's rights, on the job, in the union, and in society. This implies changing the labor movement as a whole, and in the process changing the consciousness and conduct of men in the labor movement to see the correctness and necessity of this fight.

In this sense, CLUW has a crucial role to play in the broad fight that must be carried on to transform the unions into a powerful leading component of a popular social movement. The union movement will have to begin showing women in practice that it champions women's struggles, understands and fights for their needs. This is indispensable, not only to put the labor movement on the road to becoming a popular social movement, but to enable the unions to organize the unorganized women, a task the current labor leadership cannot and will not undertake in any qualitatively new way.

The logic of this course, if carried out, is to establish CLUW as the leading organization of women in this country, an organization that would attract millions. That does not mean there would then be no need for other organizations of women, or that other organizations of women would disappear. To the contrary. But a fighting union women's organization, forcing labor to use its power to fight for women, could take the lead in the struggle for women's rights in this country. It would be in the vanguard of the working class.

Whether this goal can be achieved is another question. But that is our strategic aim. That's what we fight for.

There are many obstacles in the way. CLUW, as it is now constituted, is still in its infancy. And it has demonstrated some major defaults in its obligation to fight unconditionally for the rights of women. For instance, CLUW has refused to campaign unsparingly against discriminatory layoffs. This must be overcome. There are hesitations about turning to the ranks, the only place where a mass CLUW can be built, around an action program to meet women's needs and demands. Of course, a major obstacle involves the question of political action. Like the Farm Workers, the ties to the Democratic Party exert a constant enfeebling pressure.

Only by overcoming these obstacles can CLUW move toward playing its potentially historic role. By going to the ranks, fighting unconditionally for the needs of women on the job, in the union, in society, CLUW can begin to realize that potential.

Our opponents are unable to grasp what CLUW is *not*. CLUW is not an organization that can solve the problems of labor in general. It cannot solve the problem of jobs. It cannot solve the problem of inflation. It cannot solve the problem of organizing the unorganized. In fact, to the degree that these are put forward as the central tasks of CLUW, they become fake. They become a cover for not orienting CLUW toward fighting in the unions to support action campaigns for women. They become empty platitudes that poorly disguise a reluctance to fight to make CLUW what it can be: an organization whose goal is to transform the union movement into a powerful social force that fights for women. The big pitch of the Stalinists and to some degree the *Guardian* on the CLUW convention reflected this error. The great betrayal of the CLUW convention, they said, was the failure to recognize that the fight for jobs is the number one job of this several-thousand-strong women's organization.

The second mistake to avoid is declaring something to



be dead when it is not yet born and standing on its own feet. To declare CLUW dead is simply to be unwilling to struggle to give it life. This winged judgement was the sectarians' big contribution to an analysis of the CLUW convention.

Whether CLUW can grow, whether it can put forward a class-struggle leadership, whether it can organize into its ranks the tens or hundreds of thousands of union women needed to accomplish CLUW's task, of course, remains to be seen. But CLUW is not dead; it has yet to be really born.

The third mistake to avoid is the idea that CLUW will be built right now around some sort of power caucus to replace its incumbent officers. That's another item all our sectarian opponents had at the top of their worry list at the constitutional convention of CLUW. They weren't thinking about implementing CLUW's constitution and statement of purpose by organizing action campaigns around the ERA, affirmative action, abortion, etc., which is the only road to building CLUW and attracting women to it. No, they were worrying about who is going to replace Olga Madar, who is going to replace Addie Wyatt, etc., etc., ad exhaustum. Along that road they would only capture themselves. The idea of taking the statement of purpose of the constitution, drawing women into struggles for CLUW's stated goals, finding action programs to do this through committees in every union in the country, and thus driving forward to build CLUW—that simple idea seems beyond them.

This is 1976, not 1950. We speak for the ranks of laboring women. Those ranks are growing and they will change still more under the blows of this unfolding social crisis. And we are confident that the program that speaks for them and charts a path in their interests can succeed. We are convinced that social struggles will continue to have a deep effect on all sections of the working people, including the union movement. These social struggles, the struggles of the doubly oppressed, both within and without the labor movement, will be decisive forces in initiating the required changes in the labor movement and preparing it to meet the more direct frontal assault that is coming.

The refusal of women to accept second-class status in society and in the work force is here to stay. That social consciousness can only improve. More women will come forward to fight. And the ruling-class attempts to reconstitute this section, the female section, of the industrial reserve army will backfire on them in a most unanticipated way. That perspective guides our course of action.

## **Steelworkers Fight Back**

Ed Sadlowski's campaign for president of the Steelworkers goes under the name Steelworkers Fight Back. It is an important phenomenon.

As with CLUW, we make no promises about the results of the Sadlowski campaign or how big a role it can play in beginning to alter the United Steelworkers of America. That remains to be seen. But the Sadlowski drive is qualitatively different from Abel's fight to replace McDonald. We supported Abel against McDonald, though we recognize that Abel was not interested in much more than getting enough of the USW staff behind him to oust McDonald.

The Sadlowski campaign is often compared to the Miller insurgency in the Mineworkers. The Miners for Democracy took on the bureaucracy and won, even though they had to rely on federal government intervention to get the challenge off the ground. This is a legitimate comparison.

But we think the differences between Miners for Democracy and Steelworkers Fight Back are as important as the similarities. These times are different from the period that led up to revolt in the Mineworkers. This is a different generation. Sadlowski belongs and appeals to a different generation from that of Miller; he reflects the new layers that came into the plants in the 1960s. Steelworkers Fight Back is more typical of what is coming in a regenerated union movement.

If he is going to win, Sadlowski must take the fight for democracy in the Steelworkers back where he himself came from. His campaign has to go to the rank-and-file steelworkers. That's the only chance to beat Abel's stand-in. The age clause in the constitution precludes Abel from running, but we can be sure that the bureaucracy will find a worthy replacement.

The most important thing about the Sadlowski campaign is not what happens in the USW itself, important as that is. This can be the beginning of a reform movement to democratize the American labor movement. That is the way it is posed by Sadlowski in much that he writes and much that is written about him. In the letters Sadlowski sent out asking for funds, in the article he wrote for the *Nation*, in interviews he gave to Studs Terkel, to the *Rolling Stone*, to Sidney Lens, he hammers away on the theme that his efforts are the beginning of a movement to democratize the American trade unions. And that's how those who support him, seem to view his campaign.

And that's the framework we also should take as a starter—a movement fighting to take control of the labor movement out of the hands of those who don't work—maybe have never worked—and get it into the hands of those who do labor and are facing the bosses' offensive. We support any step in this direction. For this reason we side with Sadlowski's fight to throw Abel out on the way to democratize the Steelworkers.

We don't consider Steelworkers Fight Back an embryonic left-wing caucus at this stage. Nor is it some special kind of organization like the Coalition of Labor Union Women, or Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, whose job is to press for the special needs, demands, and rights of women and of Blacks.

We say we too want a democratic labor movement. On that issue we're with you. Yes, we want a tough labor movement. On that issue we're with you too. We want to use labor's power. But democratization for what purpose? Use labor's power to what end? Those are questions the *Militant* wants to talk to workers about. That's what we want to address ourselves to. That's what everyone who supports Sadlowski is obliged to discuss. We fight for democratization in order to transform the unions into revolutionary organizations of class struggle. It is part of the struggle to transform labor into a movement that will think and act socially, that will champion the oppressed and draw them to it. It is part of the struggle to transform labor into a movement that will act politically, independent of the employers and their political parties and combat the crisis of their system.

In Sadlowski's articles and interviews he points out that the most fundamental rights of labor—the right to

bargain, to strike, to some elementary job security—are being threatened. No section of the labor movement can escape the threat. And if these rights are not effectively defended, a stupendous defeat will be recorded in this country.

The second important thing to note about Sadlowski's interviews is what he says about Black workers, the Black movement. He states unambiguously that racism and unionism are incompatible. You can't be a union fighter and be a racist of any kind. He points out that the entire history of this country from the time of slavery to today has been marked by the bosses' successful attempts to divide and conquer. That's how they have always won. And that's how they can continue to win. He points out the racist bias, as well as the class bias, in cutbacks, in the abuse of seniority. He talks about things like the murder of the Black Panther leader Fred Hampton and draws some of the correct conclusions. In one place he indicates the importance of women's struggles, although on this he says much less than on racist oppression.

Third, Sadlowski accurately describes what the unions have become, what the leadership of the unions has become. Here we have a big contribution to make and we should begin writing about this. What policies have led the unions to their current state? When and how did this develop? Only if workers know how their unions became so conservatized and bureaucratized can they figure out a strategy to change the labor movement.

Sadlowski doesn't say much about the decline of the CIO. He describes early heroic struggles, and then he jumps to the problems facing workers today caught in the vise of "tuxedo unionism." There is quite a gap there. And that gap in labor history has to be discussed by steelworkers, by all workers. It covers the rise of Roosevelt's War Deal and the support from most of the labor movement to the bosses' war. The inescapable result was a decline of union democracy, the bureaucratization, and integration of the unions into the state machinery during World War II. The ties to the Democratic Party were consolidated and every thrust toward a labor party, toward independent labor political action, was killed. As it was misled down this path, the CIO moved away from being a social movement, a popular movement, a movement that draws the oppressed of society into struggle, fights alongside them, champions the struggles of all of capitalism's victims, and solicits their aid in labor's struggles. The social-patriotic capitulation of the SP, CP, and labor leaderships to the imperialists in World War II made the second capitulation in the cold war that much easier.

The percentage of the working class in the organized labor movement declined and the CIO leadership itself turned into a conservative element in the labor aristocracy. The new leaders relied less and less on the class struggles of labor; they protected fewer and fewer jobs, and excluded more and more oppressed workers. If the deterioration of the American labor movement has been due to these wretched policies, the new rise of labor as a fighting social and political movement of class struggle will be based on the reversal of these policies.

Sadlowski has little to say whenever he gets to politics. He makes comments like "I have no isms." When asked what he thinks about the Democrats and Republicans, he replies, "They're all pricks." What should we do about

them? "I don't have any strategy." What is your answer? One word: "Organize." When people are hungry you feed them. When people don't have any democracy you fight for their rights. As a sympathetic reporter might say, he is still thinking out the key questions. And so will many who support him.

The fight to democratize the Steelworkers union, to throw Abel and his ilk out, to mobilize everyone who wants this, to proclaim this as a struggle for the entire working class that deserves everyone's support—that is our approach. For union democracy; for control by the members of their unions. And along the way more and more workers will begin to read, think about, and discuss these broader questions posed by the fight to democratize the labor movement.

### New York crisis

New York has become the code word in the ruling class for every single city and every single public workers' union. It is also part of a broader ruling-class offensive—things like the bosses' drive at the *Washington Post*, against the New York bricklayers, are a glimpse at what's planned for the rest of American labor.

In the four months since we last discussed what is happening in New York, the head-on attack has accelerated. The Democratic administration admits it has eliminated 35,000 jobs. Shanker claims they plan to get rid of another 55,000 in the next two-and-a-half years. Ninety thousand working people in one city! That is what is happening. It's not just that wages have been frozen and every collective bargaining session is conducted under heavy pressure. Contracts have simply been torn up. Working conditions have deteriorated. Social services have deteriorated. And every single squeeze hits the working class where it hurts, starting with the Black, Puerto Rican, and women workers, whose hard fought gains of recent years are being wiped out. This highlights the deadend of the strategy based on the assumption of permanent prosperity and clubhouse politics with the Democratic Party in a period of expansion.

It is important to remember the origins of many New York employees unions. They did not arise out of great organizing campaigns in a period of working-class radicalization. They grew under cover of a special relationship with the Democratic Party. The municipal work force swelled tremendously in the postwar period. The unions and their members were key supporters, doorbell ringers, and campaign subsidizers for the big-city Democratic politicians. In return (given what they assumed to be an ever-growing GNP, ever-ascending tax revenues) at one minute to midnight on the last day of contract negotiations, the Democratic city administration could always make concessions. In return, the union leaders would promise favors at the polls. In return for which more unionization was agreed to. Etc.

This mutual backscratching reached the point that the teachers in New York, the largest union local in the country, were organized by giving tacit support to the union-busting Taylor Law, which also contained provisions for dues checkoff and recognition—which was all



Shanker wanted. And, as the Teachers union was consolidated, Shanker pandered to the most reactionary stance against the oppressed.

The leaders of the municipal workers' unions thrived on this special relationship with the Democratic Party and clubhouse politics.

There is a set of clippings from the *New York Times* that reads like a novel, especially if you think about what has happened to teachers over the last six months in New York. In the spring of 1973 (May 19, 1973, to be exact), the *New York Times* ran an article under the headline, "Two Labor Groups Endorse Beame's Nomination." One was the Central Labor Council. The other was the United Federation of Teachers. This was the first time the UFT ever endorsed a candidate in a New York City election. Who did they endorse? Abe Beame.

Why did the UFT take such a step? According to Albert Shanker, "Our endorsement of Abe Beame reflects teachers' growing political awareness." He praised Beame as "a progressive and enlightened public official," able "to get people working together," to improve wages and working conditions in New York City schools. Shanker also attacked Beame's opponents for having "closely allied themselves with the forces of community control." So reads the first clipping.

The second clipping is a year or so later, September 19, 1974. The headline reads, "Teachers Groups Increase Election Campaign Outlay." The article simply details the millions that Shanker and his allies were pouring into the coffers of the capitalist politicians like Beame.

The third clipping is about the same time, September 16, 1974. It has the headline: "Teachers Union Supporting Carey." The article explains how the "surprising" decision was reached. No one expected the teachers' state convention to endorse a candidate for governor of New York, but, as Shanker said, discussion began "spontaneously." It lasted all of ninety minutes and ended in a *unanimous vote!* He said that was hard to explain. "It was a real ground swell, a tremendous feeling of excitement." This ninety-minute ground swell was built on Carey's "labor record in Congress and his excellent program from the educational point of view."

Then another article appeared: "Teachers Union Violates U.S. Code on Political Aid" (September 19, 1974). Shanker had gotten so carried away with the political "friends of labor" like Carey that the Teachers union poured more money into their coffers than the law allowed. In 1973-74, Beame and Carey. That was the prelude to 1975. And all this was organized against "the forces of community control." That's another code word, enunciated in the same manner that George Wallace says "federal guidelines."

On December 21, Shanker published a Christmas message to the workers of New York: "There is some hope. Help may come in time. Maybe the economy will turn around. . . . Or perhaps the federal government will relieve states and cities of the burdensome costs of welfare and medical care. We can also hope that tax reform will bring increased revenues. . ." (*New York Times*). But meanwhile we must simply hang on. "We must develop a 'wartime' frame of mind. We must be willing to sacrifice, to stick it out until the 'lights go on again.' That will not be easy. . . . Like wartime, this is a time for everyone to pitch in, to help bring the city through its darkest period."

Shanker goes on to plead with the ruling class. After all, labor is sacrificing, so it is wrong for the New York City Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education to take advantage of the situation, "to make war on their employees—to break their contracts." But all is not lost. "The courts are bound to rule that a contract is a contract and must be upheld." In the meantime, "everyone has been pitching in. Everyone has been working beyond what is legally required. That is the way it must be and should be, in a period like this."

That is the sum total of the labor bureaucracy's strategy! There is not a policy for today's reality, for growing social and economic crisis. Even on the crudest level, their policies have become a reactionary utopia. Capitalism can no longer make available the resources for the clubhouse politicians to pay off the union leaders that "go along." That's over and done with. The relative gains won through that policy were possible only in a different period. Neither the hopes that some new prosperity will come along, nor the hope for an electoral victory of a powerful and benevolent "friend of labor," can improve the desperate situation labor faces. The ruling class can no longer extend the kinds of concessions it did before.

For public employees, every problem immediately manifests itself as a political problem. They have no single boss. They are not in a single industry. They deal directly with the city, the county, the state, or the federal government. And instead of helping them, the friends of labor they elected turn on them. Not because they were the "wrong" bourgeois politicians to support but because Mayor Beame and Governor Carey must enforce the antilabor policy the ruling class finds necessary. The public employee unions must become political animals, but independent of the employers parties.

The results are felt not only in New York but far beyond. We must emphasize that New York is a trial run for other cities. It is a trial run against the weak components of the labor movement. The plutocrats and their agents are probing, pushing, testing. And every single union in this country is the eventual target.

## The axes of our work

In the report later by Doug Jenness [see *Party Builder* vol. 10, no. 1] we will discuss our political campaigns and organizational tasks. But certain broad axes to our work flow from the analysis we have given.

1. *No more Vietnams.* On Angola, our obligation is to demand that the imperialists get out, stay out, and keep their hands off southern Africa. No more Vietnams! That is a popular slogan in this country. Use that monstrous hundred-billion dollar war budget for social needs. Those bombs and planes, spies and assassins, are of no use to any working person anywhere in the world.

2. *The right to know.* We must take advantage of the continuing exposés of the real face of the declining bourgeois democracy in this country. The scandals that continue to rock every capitalist institution from the CIA to industry to every two-bit politician. Our central demand is: open the books! The American people have the right to know what is being done in government, in industry, in finance. We must aid those who are striving to expose any hidden cranny of capitalist rule. We are for publishing

every government file that can be obtained, every secret corporation ledger that can be pried open. The right to know is connected to the class polarization that is coming in this country. Working people have to find out everything about the real character of the Legions of Justice, the reactionary lynch mobs that roam Boston's streets, the Ku Kluxers. What are their real connections? Who is really behind them? What are their goals?

3. *Capitalism's responsibility.* We have to keep pointing to the real architects of these obscene policies. They are the leaders of the two parties of American capitalism who are charged with the political administration of a more and more irrational and antihuman social system.

### **A campaign party**

We must use the national strength and mobility of the party, in cooperation with the YSA, to throw ourselves into key struggles that can pave the way for educating the consciousness of American labor and changing the class relationship of forces. We participate in struggles that develop around busing, bilingual education, government cutbacks, the ERA, the farm workers, affirmative action, defense cases. One of our greatest assets is to be mobile enough and cohesive enough to act with maximum force.

We should take the issues raised by these struggles to the labor movement, to the entire working class. The AFT must reverse its policies, must support busing. The fight for the ERA should be supported not only in words but in deeds by the labor movement. Affirmative action and adjustments in the seniority system to prevent discriminatory layoffs should be pushed forward. Opposition to the bosses' campaign against so-called illegals should be mounted. The struggles against discrimination led by the NAACP and other such groups should be supported. That is part and parcel of the effort to think socially and act politically.

### **For independent working-class political action**

We should take a step forward in our propaganda and education, through our press and our election campaigns, on the need for a labor party and a Black party. We are convinced that there can be no class-struggle left wing of the American labor movement that doesn't inscribe on its banner the need for independent political action. No popular social movement will grow, let alone become a revolutionary instrument of class struggle, without taking this step. Learning to think socially and act politically are intimately intertwined.

None of the major problems that the crisis of capitalism poses before the American workers can be solved simply at the trade union level. The most that can be accomplished is a few more temporary gains for a smaller and smaller percentage of the work force. The labor movement as it exists today cannot organize the unorganized or reorganize itself on an industrial basis. It finds it increasingly difficult even to bargain for the members it has, let alone the ones it is losing, or the millions of unorganized.

The ruling-class strategy is a step-by-step "zap labor" campaign. They eventually aim to coopt the union bureaucracy more and more and break the strength of the remaining bastions of the industrial unions. We do not foresee another division within the labor bureaucracy of

the kind that spurred the rise of the CIO and industrial unionism—and held the working class within those limits. The challenge today is much greater. The transformation of the labor movement must be social and political from the beginning. And the big social struggles outside the unions are very key to this process.

It is worthwhile to observe the alternatives the ruling class is debating. These are illustrated by Ford's veto of Labor Secretary Dunlop's picketing bill. There you saw two intertwined perspectives of the ruling class to deal with labor resistance in a period of employer offensive. Dunlop's bill, of course, was designed to further integrate the construction trades into the state, to further centralize and regularize the government's relations with the skilled trades bureaucracy.

Ford's veto of the bill reflected, even if unconsciously, a further perspective: that of hammering and smashing the unions. Frank Lovell emphasized in our Political Committee discussion that there are a lot of bosses in this country who never reconciled themselves to the rise of the CIO. They do not consider industrial unionism to be a historically necessary development that they are obliged to accept and live with forever.

These two alternative perspectives of the boss class are interrelated and combined: The attempt to integrate the unions, through their misleadership, into the state apparatus and concurrently the desire of growing numbers of the ruling class to probe, to move toward the ultimate fascist-like solution. That is to break the unions altogether and prevent them from being organizations that fight for the economic needs of the workers they serve.

We want to enhance our propaganda for independent political action in a way that avoids some errors. We don't want to present the idea in a maximalist way. We don't go around saying, "to build socialism we need a labor party," or "the labor party is the crowning demand of the transitional program," or anything like that. This doesn't mean the time for a labor party is far off in the future. The time for a labor party is now.

Look at the facts of this American capitalist society as we have just outlined them, the facts that dictated the party's turn. It is unassailable that the time for independent political action is now. There is no discernible motion in that direction; we don't pretend that there is. But objectively that is what is needed, and this way forward can be made clear to growing numbers of people.

This is not a tactic. This is not something we demand along with a whole series of other items. Independent labor political action represents a fundamental strategic break from being tied politically to the needs of the employers. This break must be made not only to move ahead but even to save the gains we have won.

We do not see propaganda for a labor party as a substitute for participating in progressive actions. That would be the most sectarian and abstentionist mistake imaginable. A campaign for a labor party can never be a substitute for throwing yourself into the major social struggles that erupt. In fact no other course gets across the idea of the kind of independent political action we are talking about.

This is not an agitational campaign. We are not forming, or announcing the intention to form, labor party clubs. We are not trying to beat out the Workers' League in calling a labor party conference.

We do not want to go about this in a routinist manner. The objective is not to end each article in the press with a paragraph that says: "We need a labor party. We need to break with the Democrats to move forward."

We think we can avoid such errors and at the same time step up this campaign. Willie Mae Reid's speech in New York that the *Militant* printed last week was a good example of the way we can integrate this question into our propaganda.

We should look at every major struggle or capitalist breakdown as an opportunity to present the need for a labor party: The New York crisis, the campaign against so-called illegal aliens, busing, the battle for the ERA. We should say what a labor government in New York would do when the bankers claim there is no money. Point after point after point, our propaganda and our action lend themselves to saying that the oppressed and exploited need to break from the twin parties of oppression and exploitation. We will do this primarily through the *Militant* and our candidates across the country.

Simultaneously we must educate on the need for a Black party and for a Chicano party. We cannot dissolve the need for independent Black political action into a nonexistent labor party or into our propaganda for one. Here there is an even greater growing objective need. Every liberal politician has been in open or disguised retreat on the busing question, desegregation, bilingual education, affirmative action, cutbacks. The election of thousands of Black Democratic and Republican politicians has raised more problems than solutions. What Baxter Smith in the *Militant* calls, sort of venomously, the BEOs, the Black elected officials, have produced nothing for their constituents. And they *can* produce nothing in a declining social order so long as they are handcuffed to the parties and class of that decaying order.

The problems that the Black population as a whole, as well as the Chicano population, face can't be solved on the job or on the union level alone. They are *doubly* political, in that racism and discrimination are clear political questions. What we are calling for is not a Black Democratic Party but a *new* kind of party, a party that lives up to the principle of not subordinating the struggles and needs of the Black population to anything or anyone. Like the labor party, we are not presenting this with any maximalist, routinist, or agitational excesses. Nor are we operating under any illusions. It is not our assessment that there is tangible motion toward an independent Black party, any more than there is any real motion toward a labor party at present. But that doesn't change the objective need for such political action. We must explain this or we can't give honest answers to any of the crises capitalism engenders. We would find ourselves saying what Sadlowski says—"Organize!"—and no more. But we are revolutionary socialists, not merely radical trade unionists. This report has concentrated on the labor movement for the reasons outlined at the beginning. But we should end by emphasizing that for us the key is not what is happening in the unions *per se* right now. The key is the social crisis as a whole and the struggles it engenders which will have a growing reflection inside the unions. These, combined with what workers face on the job, are essential for the transformation of the unions. And the struggles outside the labor movement will not go away

as the radicalization deepens and as the labor movement changes. They will deepen. Only the coming struggles will determine which unions will be integrated and housebroken and what section of the labor movement will be won to a perspective of using its power as an instrument of revolutionary social change.

## Summary

Several speakers emphasized in the discussion that we can't give the answers to the concrete effects of the ruling-class offensive without raising the labor party perspective, the Black and Chicano perspective, and their interconnection. I think this is correct. We're not talking about a future need or some far distant stage. Without explaining the labor party question we cannot even answer how we, the American working people, got into the bind we are in today and why it's getting worse.

Jeff Mackler discussed the AFT-NEA merger question. Let us think back to the 1955 merger of the AFL and the CIO. What happened after that merger, when almost all of organized labor came together under a single roof? Were the goals the leaders loudly proclaimed met? What were the goals? One, organize the South. Two, reverse the trend toward a decreasing percentage of American labor being unionized. Three, repeal the Taft Hartley antistrike law. And four, change the political and social climate in this country so that the union movement could be strengthened and working people could get a greater share of the wealth they produce.

Those were the goals presented at the time of merger, which took place at the midpoint of almost a quarter century of relative prosperity. What were the results under the AFL-CIO leadership? None of these goals were reached. In fact, the reverse occurred. The large-scale organization of the South never got off the ground. Today a smaller percentage of the work force is in the organized labor movement than at the time of the AFL-CIO merger. There are more and stronger antiunion laws on the books now than in 1955. And certainly, if the last year is any example, the situation that working people face when they try to defend their most minimal gains, try to prevent slashes in their standard of living, let alone achieve advances, is the worst since the Great Depression.

Union mergers, increases in the potential organizational power of the movement, can accomplish nothing substantial without a fundamental change in policy. The potential power of the unions has not declined. Labor's potential social and political power remains immense. But the current policy of the bureaucracy simply wastes, cripples, and (to the degree that it uses it) abuses this power.

Union militants can't win an argument with Shanker supporters by simply discussing whether Shanker was right or wrong when he opposed last fall's New York teachers' strike. If the Shanker framework is accepted, Shanker was dead right. The strike was bound to be a loser. And, to top it off, the contract was torn up a few months later by Big Mac. The correct course cannot be explained by someone who accepts Shanker's framework of (1) ride out the recession and wait for the return of prosperity; (2) push "the community control people" into the other camp by opposing their just demands; and (3) count on your relationship with the Democratic Party to bring a few contract gains, as it has for the last decade

or two. As long as teachers accept that framework, strikes are doomed and all the potential power of the labor movement is hamstrung. Only by concretely and emphatically rejecting all these premises can an alternative course be charted for the teachers from coast to coast.

The noose about their necks today consists of the very things that many organized teachers and public workers accepted for a quarter of a century as the road to gains—clinging to the illusion of permanent prosperity, ignoring the oppressed outside the union, keep lobbying within the two-party system. It was always a dead end but it's hard to convince people of that when the policy seems to be yielding results of some kind. But that is no longer the case. The economic and social necessities faced by the ruling class and its two parties preclude any other course at this time. That is why a different party is needed—a class party of a new type.

In the same issue of the *Nation* that printed the article by Sadlowski (September 6, 1975), there is an article on Meany by B.J. Widick. He quotes Meany's response to a question about the jobs march on Washington last April. Would the AFL-CIO try to organize the rank-and-file sentiment expressed by the massive turnout there?

Meany says, "No, the AFL-CIO is pretty conservative in certain ways. We believe in the American system. We believe in working within the American system. When we get laws passed over on Capitol Hill that we feel are detrimental to us, we just bat away and try to change them. We don't man the barricades, and we don't take to the streets. And we don't call general strikes, and we don't call political strikes."

That is an excellent description of Meany's policy. We cannot explain the predicament the labor movement is in and the reality of what lies ahead in places like New York unless we deal with these policies that have guided Meany and Shanker and placed the union movement in the straightjacket it wears today.

The social and political policies of the labor movement have crippled it. It is not only crippled in the fight for gains, it's hamstrung even when it comes to defending its existence. What's going on in the construction trades and at the *Washington Post* today are examples. Labor will not even be able to protect its own organizational existence without a reversal of these policies of retreat and defeat.

## The labor party we advocate

The kind of program we advocate for a prospective labor party is our program. When we talk about a labor party, about a break by labor from its enemy, the bosses, who are organized in the two-party system in this country, we are always addressing ourselves to some concrete problem: the layoffs and cutbacks in New York, the situation that the steelworkers face, the attempt to break the pressmen's union at the *Washington Post*, the task of getting the support of the oppressed minorities for the teachers, and vice versa.

Whatever the specific problem, we explain the labor party perspective as part of our answer, part of our proposal on what is to be done, and in that way we present the labor party idea intermeshed with our action program drawn from our transitional program. We don't pose this step as a precondition for everything else. But the need for

a new type of party is intertwined with the concrete demands we are fighting for.

The question was posed: Why is the demand for a labor party a transitional one? After all, there is no more visible motion toward a labor party than there is toward the SWP. The answer is simple. The SWP is small. The labor movement is very large. The union movement exists. It has organized almost a quarter of the work force of the most powerful capitalist country on earth. Much of it is organized on an industrial basis.

How much of this movement will be integrated into the capitalist state apparatus and destroyed, and how much of it will be transformed into a revolutionary instrument of struggle for the oppressed and exploited? This question will be answered in a fight with historic repercussions that will deeply affect the class relationship of forces in this country, and the odds of the success of the American socialist revolution. This is the point of departure for all of our thinking on the unions.

We present the labor party along the same line as we present the Black party. It is an instrument to fight for the objectives we are for, and for the goals we are after—to break from the employers, to fight for the workers and their allies, to get rid of the domination of capital. Our goal is to build a mass revolutionary workers' party that can lead the struggle for power.

We exist as a program and a cadre. But unions exist as mass class institutions. And these institutions don't belong to the bureaucrats who have usurped them, although they would like to claim possession. They belong to the workers who must learn to use them politically or they will continue to be used against the interests of the workers.

There is a second transitional side to our proposal for a labor party. This is a transition in consciousness. We try to raise class consciousness. Union consciousness, which is strong in this country, is one elementary form of class consciousness. We try to advance political class consciousness, a higher stage. We explain: You can't do battle with the bosses and their agents, fight against cutbacks, layoffs, race and sex discrimination, rampant inflation, and at the same time be tied to the political instruments that carry out these policies.

In the Sadlowski articles and interviews he underlines that there are bosses and there are workers, and you can't fudge the line between the two. In other words, you can't cross class lines. He'll even take an Abel ahead of a steel boss. Abel's a bastard but he's our bastard.

But this elementary class consciousness has to be applied on the *political* level where class relationships are generalized and the capitalist regime is run. We don't counterpose the SWP to a labor party. We counterpose the powerlessness and helplessness of the labor movement in this country to the mighty force it can be if it becomes truly independent—a popular social movement of the oppressed and exploited. Our program includes not only goals and ends but also *how* to get there. A class struggle includes economic and social demands, but it culminates in an overall political perspective for our class.

It is a waste of time to speculate: Will there be a Black party first? Will there be a labor party first? Will a mass Chicano party precede both? Will a labor party get off the ground and will a big SWP then develop? How many of the unions will be transformed into revolutionary instruments of class struggle? How many will be busted up by the

bosses and their state in this process? What different forms of popular organization will come forward and lead mass struggles? What will be the American form of soviets?

All these things will be decided in the course of struggle. The labor party may be bypassed in this country by the rapid growth of a revolutionary party. That remains a historical possibility. But the struggle for a labor party can't be bypassed because that's part of the process of building the revolutionary working-class vanguard.

Does our ability to get a hearing for our explanation of the need for independent political organization vary from industry to industry and from city to city? In certain secondary ways, yes. But in the most fundamental sense, no. Right now in New York we can get a hearing from a whole layer of working people that is different from a year ago. Perhaps the crisis-ridden New York workers are more receptive than in some other city. But there are many signs coming from dissimilar sources—the Farm Workers, a basic industry like steel, the birth of a fighting coalition of labor union women, the shakeup of perspective in the Nation of Islam, and new stirrings in the NAACP. Hence we draw the conclusion that it's not going to vary fundamentally from city to city or from industry to industry.

Ironically it is in some of the most "aristocratic" sections of the labor movement, the craft unions, that the current crisis is most acute. The workers in these trades haven't even solved the question of industrial organization, let alone affirmative action and political organization. And now they will have to take on all these questions at the same time. In fact the former will be impossible without the latter.

We don't counterpose the labor party to class-struggle action. The labor party perspective is a necessary component of taking action in a new way, in a new situation. If we are to be successful we must link it to action.

When we talk about a labor party or a Black party it is too bad we have to use the word party, because, as Andrew Pulley said, no one has ever seen the kind of parties we are talking about. They haven't seen them because they have never existed in the experience of the American workers. We are talking about a party of a new type that leads struggles, fights on all levels, unconditionally, for the oppressed and the exploited.

There is a world of difference between us and the Benjamin Spocks and Eugene McCarthys who start from the premises and practices of what's gone wrong with the Democrats. We begin with the idea of what's right about using the power of the working people to realize their economic and social goals. To do this, you can't be chained to the two parties of the employers on the political level. That's what we are talking about. We are talking about political action to use the power of a class, even though it

is manacled and misled today. We begin with the realities of the two major classes in American society, not the moral failings—although they are many—of the two capitalist parties.

The CIO was built in a period when the forces leading it were not linked to the Democratic Party in anything like the way they are today. Think of the great battles of 1934. They were led by three forces: The Stalinists in San Francisco, still in their Third Period ultraleftism, the Trotskyists in Minneapolis, and the Musteites in Toledo. None of these was linked to the Democratic Party, in their perspectives, in their politics, or in their methods of action. It took the preparation of the War Deal and the war to thoroughly integrate an entire layer of the labor bureaucracy, with the help of the Social Democracy and the Stalinists. Even so, it took the gutting of the labor movement by the witch-hunt and prosperity after World War II to stifle the last tendencies toward labor political action. These were still evident in the UAW in 1950.

Malik Miah's point on the Black party was important. There is an additional problem in presenting the perspective of the Black party compared to the labor party. When we talk about the Black party we are not talking about transforming potentially powerful existing institutions. There is no equivalent of unions in the Black or Chicano communities, no comparable organized power.

The problem with the Black elected officials is that they front for a party that's led by the capitalists and by people who have no interest in the struggles of Black people as an oppressed nationality or as workers. Some Black people draw the conclusion from the experience of the BEOs that there's no point in getting involved in politics at all. There's a progressive side to that, because the Black party we are talking about is a party with politics of a *new* type that fights for the needs of people 365 days a year. Not a political machine that comes around on election day to get into office.

The Black Hatcher and Coleman Young and the white Beame and Carey are interchangeable as long as they are tied to the perspectives of the Democratic Party and responsible for administering capitalism in its decline. The offensive against workers, Blacks, and women, in New York, Gary, or Detroit, can't be turned back through the class collaborationism they practice.

The polls show that more young people are independents, not Republicans or Democrats, than at any time since polling began. Many have the attitude, to hell with politics, it stinks. And they are right; capitalist politics stinks. We don't start with voting. We start with the ongoing struggles and how to carry them forward, breaking with your enemies and organizing the kind of instrument that can fight effectively and win. That's how we can explain the reasons for a Black party, a Raza Unida party, or any other kind of working-class party independent of the ruling class.

## Appendix I

### An Insurgent's View

by Edward Sadlowski

reprinted from THE NATION, September 6, 1975

There isn't a great deal for the labor movement to cheer about this Labor Day. Where in this Bicentennial year is the American dream for the nation's working people and for those who wish to work but cannot find a decent job? Important changes are occurring in the society, but their most immediate effects give little reason to rejoice.

The proportion of blue-collar jobs in the economy has been declining since 1960, and the slack hasn't been picked up in other occupations. Much of the loss is due to automation. Technological change has increased the productivity of American workers in almost every year since 1900, but the laboring class has never had nearly its full share of the benefits. Worse yet are the conditions of poverty and hunger in America. I don't have to quote statistics. In my own community of South Chicago, in the heart of the most intensely capitalized region of the country, you'll find kids who don't have enough to eat. Go to any of the big steel mills, like Youngstown Sheet & Tube in nearby Indiana Harbor or U.S. Steel's Gary Works: you'll find the jobless men, many of them Vietnam veterans, hanging out on the corners, their families disintegrating and the kids hungry and scared. The situation is no better inside the big cities, or on the Indian reservations, or in the agri-business farm towns of the Southwest. The truth is that 30 million or even 40 million Americans are living in poverty or something damn close to it.

Among the 126,000 workers I represent in the Calumet district of the United Steelworkers union, unemployment is above 15 per cent. In basic steel it has passed 17 per cent, and in the can factories on Chicago's West Side it's been above 20 per cent for more than a year. In industries like auto and construction the picture is even worse and most economists, except the ones hired by the present administration, are forecasting an almost no-growth economy for an indefinite period.

I hear a lot of talk that workers in the major industries have supplementary unemployment benefits to protect them from the drastic income losses of the 1930s and 1940s. But for every worker drawing such assistance many many more have exhausted their benefits, or were never covered by this advanced form of insurance that is enjoyed in only a handful of unions. Every issue of the daily paper tells some version of the old story: the country's working people are being forced to bear most of the burden of these hard times.

I see racism and class prejudice between the lines of all the proposals offered by the Ford-Rockefeller administration, by the bankers and financiers and by the suburban corporate executives. They are saying to us, "We're sorry for all you blacks and Mexicans and Puerto Ricans and Italians and Poles, all you working stiffs in your dingy neighborhoods, but you'll have to shift for yourselves. Find your own ways to keep off the welfare rolls. Pay your full share and some of our share too for municipal services. If your cities are rotting come out to the suburbs but don't ask us to help finance your homes and don't move into our neighborhoods unless you can afford a 3-acre plot. Sooner or later our post-industrial economy will create jobs for you; in the meantime find ways to educate yourselves to fill them. Yank on your bootstraps like your fathers and mothers did. Let's all return to the old virtues of frugality and hard work."

Despite the lessons of recent years we are still expected to believe that by being well-behaved, by saving and by learning to turn a shrewd buck we can rescue ourselves and the rest of the world. Meanwhile, the moral bankruptcy of the people who propagate this myth is exposed every night on the six o'clock news. This is as much a cause of the present depression as any failure in the economy.

But I can't honestly claim that the labor movement has done enough to prevent recent disasters of leadership and policy. Organized labor does do more than any other institution of the society to advance the well-being of working people, but there's stagnation and failure of leadership there too. For example, George Meany has said a number of times on national TV that we need more socialism, but he has never been specific about what he means by that, and two minutes later he'll defend his role in the destruction of a democratically elected government in Chile. In a real sense this sums up where the entrenched leadership of organized labor stands today: a lot of high-minded talk about social welfare and the protection of jobs, but when it comes to action the results are more likely to be conservative or even reactionary.

So one change to be thankful for this Labor Day is that there are signs which point to the end of the era of docile labor. One by one the old oligarchies are beginning to crumble; their power to squelch opposition at union con-



ventions or on the shop floor is weakening. The coming years of American labor politics will see the continued election of previously unknown men and women to leadership of the industrial, trade and public service unions. This new generation of labor leaders will be much less satisfied with the *status quo* of labor management relations than was the generation it is replacing.

The actual policy directions of rank-and-file movements and of new leadership are, however, uncertain. The initial battles are usually internal ones. Change at the top in most unions today first requires years of struggle to guarantee the basic rights of electoral democracy and due process. In the Mine Workers' union the Yablonski family paid for these rights with their lives. Yet their tragic deaths have made it much more difficult to deny the right of any union members freely to choose their leaders.

But enforcement of fair labor elections will depend on the vigilance of many Americans not themselves involved as union members in their own labor campaigns. There might not have been a Miller-Boyle election in the UMW had it not been for the efforts of grass-roots community organizers in Appalachia. Nor would the U.S. Department of Labor have acted as forcefully in the Mine Workers' case or in my District 31 case were it not for the efforts of attorneys like Joe Rauh and of writers like Herman Benson. Benson's *Union Democracy Review* has been a voice in the wilderness for many years and deserves the support of all who seek a more democratic labor movement.

The basic right of union members to debate issues and to choose their leaders is essential. Without it I don't think organized labor can remain a viable institution of the working class. But democratic process alone is not enough. Organized labor's future depends on a movement toward the fundamental goal of the labor movement: winning an equitable share of the nation's wealth for the people who produce that wealth by their labor. To advance this goal we must use means adapted to the requirements of the domestic and world economies, and the best means come from the labor movement's basic principles: the right of workers to bargain collectively; the right of all Americans to a decent job. Both these principles have been under heavy attack.

Today the question most often put to workers and their leaders is how their demands at the bargaining table can be channeled in ways that will reduce the wage-price spiral. This question assumes that wage demands cause most of the nation's inflation. I reject that assumption and especially for the labor force engaged in primary and secondary manufacturing. Too much of the wealth produced by this sector of the economy has for too long been shunted into nonconsumable goods, particularly in the weapons economy. Added to this inflationary pressure is the problem of severely rising energy costs. Beyond even that is the fact that we've been exporting our blue-collar work overseas while we've been increasing the number of less productive white-collar jobs here.

As long as the United States had an economy which

seemed capable of infinite expansion it was possible to claim that workers could become affluent through collective bargaining or by moving into business or the professions. No one would have to lose since everyone could gain. In a low-growth economy, however, we begin to question the possibility of unlimited affluence, especially when it is bought at the expense of the earth's diminishing resources and by the exploitation of people elsewhere in the world. But where does this leave the blue-collar worker and the poor who never made it into the affluent society before the doors closed?

No labor leader and no worker wants to strike. We don't get paid when the work is stopped and it's never certain that we'll get back what was lost when the strike is over. But the right to strike is the origin of the workers' power and any industrial democracy that will mean a better share of the wealth for us cannot be had by abandoning that right. If I am wrong about this, I have misread the history of labor in the Western world.

Now for the problem of jobs in general. There won't be many new steel mills built in this country in the future, but in many ways perhaps that's not something to mourn. Other parts of the world need to build their productive capacity and in any case our present installations are rarely used beyond 85 per cent of capacity. But where are the jobs to come from to provide for the millions of unemployed or underemployed in this country?

The bigger issue here is how the economy can create jobs which will put people to work in ways that lead to a better share of the wealth for those who need it most. Clearly we must begin building more middle- and low-cost housing again, and more or improved mass transit systems. More money will have to be spent for health care, educational programs, parks and recreation, and community development programs. These are social investments, and if they are distributed wisely and equitably they contribute to higher levels of living and ultimately substitute for direct wage benefits. I realize that the returns on these investments are slow in coming, but they are investments in people, in the generations of Americans to come.

Mention of spending in the social sector always calls forth protests about big government and unmanageable bureaucracies. I don't deny that it is a serious problem. People don't live in the federal government; they live in cities, towns and local communities. More planning at all levels of government will be necessary, but federal control and federal spending should be reduced by distribution of benefits to localities. Federal regulation to insure equality and justice will always be necessary, but an increase in the power of people in their localities is a necessity.

Nothing is going to be handed to us and there may be too many Labor Days in the near future with too little to celebrate. One thing is certain however; a growing and ever more powerful proportion of America's working people feel it's time to get things going again, to bring about changes that will benefit them rather than some elite. None of the goals and few of the means are new. And, as usual, the summary can be made in one word: ORGANIZE. □

## Appendix II

### Old Fashioned Hero of the New Working Class

by Joe Klein

reprinted from ROLLING STONE, December 18, 1975

The only logical place for this story to begin is in a bar:

Lombardi's, on the South Side of Chicago, a neighborhood joint where steelworkers hang out, drinking glasses of beer with shots of whiskey on the side. By day, it's a shadowy hole populated by older men who sit quietly pondering their hands—which often have several fingers missing, fingers they left behind in the mills. By night, the desperation turns boisterous. The room is suffused with a musty yellow light from behind the bar. A ballgame is on the tube. There are loud belches and guffaws and arguments over baseball, women, work . . . you name it.

Twenty-five years ago, when Ed Sadlowski would stop by Lombardi's with his shoeshine kit, they used to kick him out. He was a pain in the ass, a street kid bothering the patrons. Now, he's as close to a celebrity as they get in Lombardi's. At the relatively tender age of 37, he is the director of District 31, United Steelworkers of America. There are 130,000 men and women who work in the steel mills of Chicago and northern Indiana who are hoping that Ed Sadlowski will make their lives a little better. There are others who are watching him, too: The big shots in business and labor and government who suspect (and fear) that he may be this country's next great labor leader.

He sits down at the end of the bar at Lombardi's, surrounded by steelworkers, shooting the shit. He's well over six feet tall, 220 pounds (about 40 of which are a classic beer belly), with dark hair that often falls down in his eyes, dark eyes under dark eyebrows and a booming voice with a gravelly edge to it. They are talking union politics.

"Don't worry about these guys," he advises his colleagues. "I'm serious, we'll kick their ass."

"We'll get ax handles," jokes a steelworker with silvery hair. "Like

that governor down South . . . Madigan."

"Yeah, like Maddox," Ed laughs. "Ax handles."

For the past several years, Ed Sadlowski and his pals have been waging a successful guerrilla war against the bilious autocrats who run big labor in this country. It is a rebellion that is pretty close to unique in the dreary world of labor politics since World War II—and probably as significant as the ouster of Tony Boyle and his thugs from the United Mine Workers Union after dissident leader Joseph Yablonski was murdered.

It began as a rebellion against Joe Germano, who had run District 31 (the largest of 22 steelworkers' districts in the country) with an iron fist since 1942. Germano was a tough guy, a pal of Mayor Daley's. He is best described by an old steelworker named Ray: "Joe started out okay. He was a real 'dese and dose' guy. But he changed over the years. He forgot about the guys in the mills. I guess he ate too many dinners at tables with tablecloths on them."

By the time Germano decided to retire in 1973, there were not many steelworkers who could say they'd even *seen* him. For his successor, Germano chose a bland functionary named Sam Evett, who had spent most of his life in the district office. Like many second-generation labor leaders, Evett seemed to have more in common with management than with the guys in the mills.

But Evett was the heavy favorite to succeed Germano. For one thing, he had the support of the "official family" of the United Steelworkers—the union staff from International President I.W. Abel down to the officers of the 288 locals that comprised District 31. In the past, such support had been enough not only to assure victory but also to discourage any competition. For another

thing, when it came election time, Evett's people cheated.

Sadlowski, on the other hand, started working in the mills when he was 18 and was first elected to local union office when he was 22. His father had been a steelworker and so had his grandfather. "I didn't get involved because of any romantic reason like the boss punched me in the nose and I wanted to fight back. I just wanted to be part of the labor movement," Sadlowski says. He was a natural leader and rose quickly through the ranks.

"When we announced we were going to challenge Evett, people laughed," says Clem Balanoff, a friend who helped run the Sadlowski campaign. "I mean, no one ever did that. It was practically impossible to even get on the ballot: You had to get 18 of the 288 locals to nominate you and that was a lot tougher than it sounded. Evett's people would block us from meetings . . . hell, we didn't even know where half the locals in the district *were* and we couldn't find out because the district headquarters wouldn't give us the list."

Eventually Sadlowski got 40 locals to support his candidacy and the race was on. His slogan was: "It's time to fight back," and he campaigned at the plant gates, the union halls, the bars. His message was simple: "Times are tough and they're getting worse. High prices. Poor shop conditions. Not enough job security. Our union should be fighting back but we're falling farther and farther behind. . . ." It was like big government, didn't care about your basic populist appeal: Big labor, like big government, didn't care about the little guy—it was time to put District 31 back in the hands of the rank and file.

Clem Balanoff remembers election night in February 1973: "We were winning by maybe three, four thousand

votes. But then, about midnight, the results stopped coming in. . . . Now, in Chicago politics this can mean only one thing: It means they're stealing the election." Sure enough, when the returns started to come in again, Evett slipped ahead.

Sadlowski cried foul, hired the noted labor lawyer Joe Rauh (who'd also defended the dissident Mine Workers) and sued the union. The U.S. Department of Labor investigated and found massive fraud. Another election was held in November 1974, this time with federal supervision, and this time Sadlowski clobbered Evett, almost two to one. "When we won, everyone was going crazy," Balanoff remembers. "They were shouting, 'It's over. It's finally over.' But I told them it wasn't over, it was just beginning. We had just taken on the most monumental task of our lives."

Bob is a steelworker in Joliet. He's in his mid-30s and wears a goatee and slicked back brown hair:

*Why did I support Ed? I don't know. I read this story in the 'Sun-Times' about the election and how this young guy with a "ski" on the end of his name who used to work midnight shift in the machine shop was running against some hand picked flunky who never worked a day in a mill in his life. I work midnights and I know what it's like: You watch a little 'Johnny Carson' and then you go to work. And then you get out in the morning when most normal people are starting their days. I figured a guy who worked midnights in the machine shop would know what that's all about, so I voted for him.*

*The biggest problem we have now is that most guys take everything for granted. They see vacations and holidays and time and a half and they figure that management just gives you that shit. They don't know that people had to fight for it . . . Hell, there ain't three or four guys in the shop who know ten people were killed by the cops at Republic Steel in 1937 . . . and the only reason I know is that Ed told me a couple of months ago. And that's what I think Ed is about. I think he wants to get us back to having the same kind of attitude guys had in those days.*

"I want you to hear the greatest recording of the human voice ever made," Ed Sadlowski says. He puts on a 1906 version of the Irish tenor John McCormack singing the aria, "Il Mio Tesoro" from *Don Giovanni* by Mozart. Ed closes his eyes, his head sways slowly with the music. He opens his eyes,

"Huh? What do you think of that? Great shit, huh?"

We are in Sadlowski's basement, which is a mess like the rest of his house. He's been trying to refinish the house for the last few years, with the help of his wife, Marlene, and their four children. But Ed has been busy with the union and Marlene has been busy with school (she recently got an associate degree in psychology), so the place has remained unfinished and in constant turmoil. It is a modest brick home in a neighborhood of modest brick homes sandwiched in among the steel mills on Chicago's Southeast Side. It is about a mile from the Republic Steel plant where the massacre occurred in 1937, the year before Ed was born.

His father told him about it when he was a kid—the strikers' peaceful Memorial Day picnic, the fiery speeches, the march on the factory, the shots, ten dead and many more wounded—and it remains a central fact of Ed Sadlowski's life. In a time when many labor leaders see themselves as "partners" of big business, he sees himself as an adversary. There is labor and there is management and woe to those who seek to smudge the line . . . like Steelworkers president I.W. Abel, who makes \$75,000 per year and, Sadlowski says, "has begun to think like he makes \$75,000 per year." But even so, even though Abel has become Sadlowski's prime target, "I would still take Abel over the most liberal banker."

The Republic massacre lives on in Ed's basement, along with Homestead, Pullman and the other great labor struggles. There are stacks of books about labor history, copies of old union songs (Ed knows all the words), pictures and posters. His prize possession, though, is an old loose-leaf binder with copies of union documents from the Thirties. "Take a look at this," he says, "this is great stuff . . . I got a copy of the check John L. Lewis sent to help pay for the funerals of the guys who were killed at Republic. . . ."

And it is great stuff. Frantic telegrams from Chicago to Steelworkers headquarters in Pittsburgh, and back again. Rabble-rousing speeches. Reports of "gunmen hired by the company" threatening the workers. "Here, you see that signature?" Ed says, flipping a page. "George Patterson. He was the first president of local 65, my home local. He's still alive and one of my big supporters. We held this dinner for him and he got up to speak—it was about the time the police killed Fred Hampton here—and he says, 'I see the police killed two young black guys be-

cause they called themselves Panthers. I can remember when we were the Panthers.' After all those years, he still had the instincts. I mean, this was just a week after the shooting and the liberals were still trying to figure out what kind of position to take . . . and he *knew*."

"Ed," I say, "you're a romantic."

"Fuck you," he replies. "A romantic! A romantic could of never won that election."

In the old days, of course, labor leaders were a bunch of romantics (with the exception of an occasional stick-in-the-mud like Samuel Gompers) who rode the rails from town to town, speaking, organizing and not worrying about the details. Big Bill Haywood and Eugene Debs didn't spend much time bothering with pension funds, seniority squabbles or grievances. Ed Sadlowski has to do it every day.

Early one morning last summer, he drove across the state line to the District 31 office in East Chicago, Indiana. He drove past refineries and factories, through clouds of yellow smoke and godawful smells—the great corporations jammed up against each other on the shores of Lake Michigan. He was wearing a mint green short-sleeve shirt, dark green pants and large awkward black tie shoes. He had a Samsonite attaché case and was listening to some actors reciting Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* on the radio.

The union headquarters was located in a drab bank building and it resembled nothing so much as the principal's office in a high school. It was cold, metallic; lots of file cabinets and adding machines. Ed's office had a big desk and a conference table, several chairs for visitors, plywood paneling on the walls and the office equivalent of Astroturf on the floor. Also on the floor was a framed photo of John L. Lewis which Ed had yet to hang.

There was a pile of telephone messages on his desk, a stack of mail and a pile of expense accounts to okay. He looked at the telephone messages one by one—complaints, grievances, health compensation, seniority. He began making calls. "Hello, Ed Sadlowski here . . . what can I do for you? . . . oh yeah? . . . what about your staff guy? . . . that figures . . . all right, I'll see what I can do." The conversation repeated itself about a half-dozen times during the next few hours. The key question was, "What about your staff guy?" The answer, invariably: "He doesn't do shit."

The union staff, which is supposed to handle the day-to-day problems, was

never any great shakes to begin with. They were Germano's boys and they remain so; and there isn't all that much Sadlowski can do about it. I.W. Abel controls the budget, pays the salaries, and the staffers know that Abel would not be overly upset if Sadlowski's administration was made to look bad.

Later in the morning, five rather elderly black workers came into the office. They seemed even more uncomfortable than Sadlowski, sitting with their hats in their hands, not sure whether they should call him "Ed" or "Mr. Sadlowski." They described a very complex seniority problem; it was costing them a lot of money. Ed asked them if race had anything to do with it. They weren't sure but suspected so. "What about your staff guy?"

"He doesn't do shit."

"I'll see what I can do," Ed said. "If you don't hear from me by Thursday, give me a call. I mean it. Call me at home."

The men left and I said, "They seemed to be begging."

"Yeah," Ed said. "If we could ever get those guys to come in here and start demanding. . ."

After another frustrating hour of phone calls, we left the office and drove to Gary where Ed was to do a radio show and then talk to some steelworkers. On the way, we talked about the staff problem. "You take a guy who's been working for the union 20 years in his shop. A good guy," Ed said. "And you give him a staff job because he's earned it. Now that pays \$17,000 per year with a car and expenses. So one day this guy is going to work with a brown bag for lunch and the next day he's sitting across the table from management. . . and they're calling each other by their first names. They're pals. . . and that's the way it happens."

"The first time I ever rode on a jet plane, the union paid for it. They flew me to New York, and there I was at the Roosevelt eating New York strip steak, and the union was paying for it. . ."

"So how come it didn't happen to you?" I asked. "How come you didn't turn out like the others?"

"I don't know. Maybe because I was younger, a different generation."

"You still could be bought, you know."

"Yeah, yeah. . . but I think I know their game," he said. "The biggest thing management has had going over the years is this game of divide and conquer—especially between blacks and whites. Like my pa used to tell me about the sharecroppers down South. The black sharecropper would get a

house that was just a little better than the white guy. . . but the white guy would get a dime more on a bale of cotton than the black. And so they'd always be jealous of each other about something and always fighting each other instead of the boss. Management's still doing that kind of thing.

"You can't be a union man and a racist. No way. You can't be a union man and be a redneck. I just can't handle that kind of shit. A guy will come up to me and say nigger this and nigger that and I'll just unload on him—you don't know me, I can be a mean sonofabitch. There's no way you can be a union man and a racist."

Jerry, age 28, is a steelworker in Gary. He has long blond hair and a moustache:

*I'm laid off now but I expect to go back soon. I'm next on the list to go back and I'm lookin' forward to it. The work ain't hard, the pay is pretty good—I make about \$18,000 a year [the average steelworker makes about \$14,500 per year]—I love the union and the guys I work with. I'm an electrician; there are about 50 guys on my crew and we stick together, you know? Something comes down and 42 of us'll back the guy who gets in trouble. And it pays off. For example, we wanted to have the company fix up the shanties where we take our breaks—put in air conditioning and picnic tables. Well, the company says no. . . and then things start happening in the plant. [Laughs] Things start breaking down. Wires get crossed. You know what I mean? Pretty soon the company fixes up the shanties.*

*You ask me about politics. I don't know. None of those guys turn me on. I guess I'd vote for Kennedy if he ran but I don't think he's gonna. Wallace? I kinda like Wallace. He's against government gettin' out of hand the way it is, with 20 guys doin' a job one man can handle. He's against big business too, I think. He says things the average guy can understand. . .*

The radio show in Gary was rather bland. Ed Sadlowski doesn't get too specific when talking about politics these days. First, although he'd probably be loathe to admit it, he has to be careful. There's been a lot of red-baiting directed against him. Second, there isn't all that much you can say about politics these days—without making a fool of yourself one way or another. National politics he dismisses brusquely: "Those guys are just sitting on their dicks. They should start calling each other bastards."

Local politicians fare not much better. Ed was one of the few Chicago labor leaders who refused to support Mayor Daley this year. And when Governor Dan Walker asked if he could speak at a steelworkers' dinner in March, Sadlowski refused. Walker was allowed, though, to buy a ticket and sit with rank and file union members.

As for discussions of larger, theoretical issues, Sadlowski will drop hints but steers clear of being pinned down. Driving to Gary, I asked him how he'd restructure big business if he could. "That's the ultimate question," he said. "That's the big one. Hell, if I had the answer to that. . ."

He was silent for a moment. Then, pointing to a row of suburban tract houses, "You see, *that's* what you got to contend with. The American Dream. You've got generations who've been brought up with that, had it drummed into their heads in the so-called institutions that are public schools. People believe in that bullshit."

And later, on the radio show: "I don't have any strategy. I don't go for any of those 'isms'—I think they're a trap. If I had to pick an 'ism,' I guess, it would be humanism. It's really simply: People are hungry, you feed 'em."

There were several steelworkers waiting in the radio station's lobby and we immediately repaired to the nearest tavern to discuss union politics. The steelworkers were looking for advice: They were staging a miniature Sadlowski-style rebellion of their own, trying to overthrow the entrenched union leadership in their factory's local. "You've got to hit and hit and hit and hit," Ed told them, Knute Rockne style. "You have to keep going to their meetings. Keep plugging."

"But they have more strength than us now," one worker complained.

"Well, here's what you do," Sadlowski said. "You learn their rules—the parliamentary procedure and all that—and then you strangle them with their own rules. You keep going to the meetings, keep demanding your rights under *their* rules, and pretty soon you find that your local president will need a couple of belts of Walker before he comes to meetings. And pretty soon you'll see him yelling at his friends, getting rattled. And then you'll find that the guys start coming over to your side."

This was clearly a lot more fun than hanging around the office, getting angry phone calls. The other was important, (maybe even more important) but this was. . . *organizing*. The great labor leaders—Debs, Lewis, Haywood, even Gompers—were organizers. They didn't

sit in offices, like Abel and George Meany. "There's a fire in the steelworkers' union." Sadlowski is fond of saying, "and I'm not gonna piss on it."

That night, Sadlowski held a meeting for the rank and file in South Chicago. About 80 steelworkers showed up — blacks, whites, Chicanos, men and women, young and old—and sat drinking beer in a bare room with stark fluorescent light as Ed told them about the problems he was encountering in running the union. Then a question and answer period, and after several questions about bread and butter—seniority, grievances, pensions—the pain and frustration began to pour out.

"It's getting real bad, Eddie, since they began the layoffs," said a young mill hand from U.S. Steel who looked a lot like Jack Nicholson in *Five Easy Pieces*. "The level of harassment by management is just incredible now. They treat us like machines you can just turn on and off. They treat us like animals. I wouldn't treat a dog like they treat us."

"Yeah, I know," Sadlowski replied. "It's always like that when times get hard. They know they got you over a barrel; the working guy always gets it in the neck."

"But what can you do about it?"

Sadlowski murmured something about "beginning to apply some pressure in areas where it'll hurt management." But that was no answer. You can't hurt U.S. Steel unless the pressure is applied nationwide, by the union as a whole. And he knows that instead of becoming more militant during the recession, people like Meany and Abel have snuggled up closer to their partners on the management side—in fact, Abel has signed an agreement with the big steel companies giving up the union's right to strike. As the *New York Times* reported last year, "Paradoxically, the recession has engendered new expressions of labor-management collaboration."

The long-term answer, of course, is that Ed Sadlowski is going to have to challenge the leadership of the national union. He is going to have to run for president of the steelworkers in 1977 against Abel or Abel's surrogate. Although Sadlowski hasn't officially announced his intentions yet, his campaign

headquarters remained open after the district election and he's looking to dissidents in other districts for support.

Between now and then, though, are the day-to-day frustrations, the bread-and-butter problems and the question "But what can you do about it?"—which hung in the air long after it was asked. The meeting in South Chicago ended with the steelworkers boisterous, optimistic. It was the first time most of them had ever been able to sit down and bitch to their district director. As an old Chicano said near the end, "I been 30 years in this steel industry. I never met Joe Germano and I think Sam Evett was the same guy. Ed Sadlowski is the only district director I ever saw."

The new atmosphere of democracy and responsiveness had been enough to sustain Sadlowski's popularity that night in South Chicago. He had built hopes and raised expectations but his future would be determined by how he answered the steelworker's question—"But what can you do about it?"

"I think Sadlowski can be very important," said Jerry Wurf, president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Union and one of the most progressive national labor leaders. "But I want to see what he does with the boss. The question is, what will he do in the crunch? Can he successfully fight the employers who are every bit as miserable, indecent and immoral as they ever were?"

"Yeah," said Sadlowski, when I told him about Wurf's comment. "He's right."

After the meeting, we dropped by a saloon for what Ed described as a "taste" but which turned out to be considerably more. We bumped into an old friend of Ed's, a steelworker turned teacher. "Hey Joey," Ed belted. "What you puttin' in those kids' heads?"

"I'm teaching them that the cops shot first at Haymarket," the friend replied.

"Joey and I worked together in South Works," Ed explained. "I was an oiler—I had this monocle on my name: Oilcan Eddie, they called me. I had the job down to a science. I spent most of my time up in the locker room, reading. That's when I began to fuck

my head up with books."

Ed was shouting over a noisy jukebox. The bar was filled with young steelworkers who had their motorcycles parked out front, and a few old ones too. An old guy, about four sheets to the wind, ambled up and put his arms around Ed and Joey. "You guys know what a woman looks like?" he asked.

"They all look alike in the dark," Joey said.

"But can you name the parts to a pussy?" The old man began to tick them off on his fingers: "There's the ovary, the fallopian tube, the clitoris . . ." The old man staggered away.

"You remember some of the old guys that used to work in the mills?" Joey asked. "The guys just over from Europe. First generation guys, they'd come to work in a white shirt and tie!"

"Yeah," said Ed, "and the bull sessions we'd have during breaks. We'd go into the shanties—you know, the rest shacks—and we'd talk about anything . . . best damn conversations I ever had. Those guys had *minds*, you know? They had subtlety. Talk about anything . . . philosophy, politics. It was tough keeping up with them—you had to keep your mind honed, you had to be sharp to hang in with these guys. Some of the best public speakers I ever saw were in the mills."

He looked over to the pool table where some young guys were playing eight ball. "I don't know about some of these young guys comin' up, though," he said. "I can't talk to some of them. You know, I'll be having a conversation with someone about baseball, say, and they'll come up and say 'What kind of shit is that, baseball?' And I say okay—you pick a topic. I'll talk about anything you want. But they can't talk about nothin', some of them."

Ed and Joey began to talk about the long strike they had in 1959 against U.S. Steel. Ed downed his shot and leaned back sipping his beer, thinking about the guys he'd known and the others he'd read about in the locker room.

And then, "You know, sometimes I miss the old days back in the mill."

And then, "Yeah, but not enough to want to go back there. Once you get out of the mill, you never go back. I ain't ever seen a guy who went back to the mill who didn't have to."

## The City Will Have a Labor Party Mayor

by Sidney Lens

reprinted from CHICAGO, January 1976

**B**y the time the twenty-first century rolls around, the Chicago labor movement will have been transformed into a political party and the city will have a Labor Party mayor. So says Ed Sadlowski, director of District 31 of the United Steelworkers of America, who last year won the most dramatic upset of a labor bureaucracy in decades, and who in November will challenge the I. W. Abel machine for the national presidency of that union.

Sادلowski does not believe that the present union structure can survive the "assault of the multinational corporations and the conglomerates unless it makes political action its primary concern." The "big guys," he says, "are getting bigger and bigger, and we need political muscle to beat them."

As Sadlowski sees it, collective bargaining will be a minor activity by the year 2001; most of the conditions of work, including wage patterns and all social benefits such as health insurance, will be spelled out in national legislation. The local unions will acquire a new character—concentrating on enforcement of the laws within their jurisdictions, settling grievances, and, above all, beefing up a grassroots political arm. The steelworkers' leader expects the coalition of labor-union women, the various black caucuses, and white mavericks like himself to give the movement what the French philosopher Henri Bergson called the "vital impetus" for change.

Jim Wright, assistant director of the 160,000-member Region 4 of the United Auto Workers, and one of the leading black unionists in the city, says, "Discrimination will decrease to an extent, and we will certainly have a black as head of the Chicago Federation of Labor." On the negative side, however, he fears that collective bargaining will be emasculated by hosts of no-strike agreements such as already exist in the steel industry and have been endorsed by George Meany.

Wright does not see the development toward the twenty-first century as an orderly one. Chicago will have had a black mayor by then, but the pendulum will be swinging back toward the choice of whites for that office. The citizens of the city will grow more and more sympathetic to socialism — "because Chicago has always been a strong union and radical town" — but there won't be a Labor Party in power until at least five or ten years later.

The ranks of Chicago labor will expand,

but not evenly. Blue-collar unionization will be at a standstill; white collar and public employee organization will grow at least five-fold. The unions will challenge "bigness" in management by becoming bigger themselves. Wright expects that the 150-odd national unions will merge and then break apart, and that local unions in Chicago will follow apace — so that many will have tens of thousands of members, instead of a few hundred or a few thousand as today.

Not unexpectedly, the top figure in Chicago labor, William Lee, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor and a close friend of Mayor Daley, believes the changes by 2001 will be more restrained. Lee, a tall Irishman who has been president of the CFL for twenty-nine years and before that was president of Bakery Drivers Local 734, a teamster affiliate, for twenty years, expects that labor will win many victories in the next quarter-century—but by pursuing traditional, not new, methods.

"By 2001," he says, "we will have a shorter work week, say thirty-two to thirty-six hours. Union organization will speed up in the service, retail, and government employee fields where we are now weak. Collective bargaining will be what it is today, but will be extended to public and other employees who don't have it now."

Will we have a Labor Party? Lee doesn't think so. "I don't know if this country is ready for it. But labor will play a far more important role in politics than today. It will be the balance of power."

Lee's administrative assistant, Al Towers, who was once president of the Chicago Industrial Union Council, agrees with most of his associate's estimates, but not all.

"The prospects for growth," argues Towers, "are enormous. By 2001 we will be proportionately as big and as powerful as the British labor movement. The AFL-CIO will then have 50 million members, and Chicago's half-million will multiply apace." Towers expects the teamsters and auto workers to be back in the central labor federation and collective bargaining to be relatively unchanged. He foresees the emergence of a Labor Party in Chicago, but as a reform, not a radical, movement. "There is no trend toward socialism in this country," he says. "We can expect that capitalism will still be powerful in 2001."

The strongest dissenter from this view is Jack Spiegel, Lake States district director of the shoe workers' union, a lifelong radical who makes no bones about his views.

"By 2001," he asserts, "we will have a new labor leadership in Chicago that will be radical in philosophy and totally disassociated from any old-line political machine." America itself, he claims, will be in the "first stages of a socialist society, most of its major industries having been nationalized. But it will be a socialism unlike any known today."

Under these circumstances, Chicago labor will play a different role from the present one. "There will still be collective bargaining, but unions and workers will have a deciding voice on how factories are run. The unions themselves will be far more democratic, subject to the wishes of their rank and file, and the standard of living will be much higher and far better balanced." Labor, says Spiegel, will consolidate a great coalition of minorities, including blacks, women, Chicanos, and the like. He anticipates that the unions will not only be part of the government in this city, as elsewhere and nationally, but very likely the most important segment.

Obviously there is an element of either wish fulfillment or self justification in all these judgments. Clearly, however, the character of the labor movement in Chicago will depend on what happens to the nation as a whole.

Chicago did not capitalize on the 1930s, as did Detroit and San Francisco. No big successful strikes took place here, and the unsuccessful Little Steel walkout that ended in the Memorial Day Massacre of 1937 did nothing to strengthen Chicago's role.

Chicago's union structure, therefore, is generally conservative, as typified by its largest union, the teamsters. Wages are comparatively high, and the union leaders have a strong say in the Daley Machine. But idealism and the sense of solidarity are weaker today than in the days of Fitzpatrick fifty years ago.

How much of that will change is anyone's guess. Chances are, however, that labor, nationally and in Chicago, will undergo the same overhaul as it did in the 1930s when it moved from craft to industrial unionism, and from simple to "social" unionism; or in the 1880s when it shifted from "uplift" to "bread and butter" unionism.

Since America itself cannot stand still, but must decide between glaringly different alternatives, so labor probably faces a total remolding of its structure, philosophy, methods, and orientation.

Chicago, after all, is part of America.



## Appendix IV

### Three Items from a Mailing

Sent out by Steelworkers Fight Back in late 1975

**STEELWORKERS FIGHT BACK**  
9271 South Chicago Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60617

Dear Friend,

I'm writing you because you are a fellow member or supporter of the labor movement, and because I think you agree we have to do something pretty fundamental to get the trade union movement moving again.

Much of what I'm about to say you may already know, but I want to ask you to read through this letter because I want to ask you to give us a hand with a movement in the Steelworker's Union that is aimed at getting our section of the labor movement back on the right track. We are determined to eliminate the kind of tuxedo unionism some of our leaders have practiced in the past. We want to give our union back to the membership; and we're determined to make our union the kind of progressive political force its founders intended it to be.

I don't have to tell you that the little guy is getting screwed sixteen different ways. We've got people being laid off right and left in almost every industry and Ford is telling us the recession is over. You take a trip to the corner store and a loaf of bread we paid 36 cents for last year costs 55 cents. You go out and buy a pair of shoes—my youngest kid's 10 years old and her foot's no bigger than my hand, and the things are costing \$15.

Of course that isn't all. People all over the country have begun to feel they've lost control over their government, their standard of living, and their lives in general. People who have worked for years to provide a little economic security for their families can't make ends meet. We've got a government full of corruption and national leaders that are often so beholden to the special interests and big monopolies that they might as well be on their payrolls. The government can find millions to bail out big businesses, but can't find enough to finance a decent health insurance system.

I was talking the other day to a guy who works in Gary in the big U.S. Steel mill and he has to drive about 10 miles to work. He said, "Look, I've sacrificed all I can. I walk or take public transportation as much as I can, but even if Ford does increase gas prices 15 cents a gallon I've still got to drive to work." Increasing gas prices isn't going to hurt Nelson Rockefeller—just the average working man or woman.

The only way we can fight back is through our unions, but in the last few years, the leadership of many unions simply hasn't done the job. In fact, many labor leaders today have become absolutely conservative. They've bought into the national status quo. They ignore the feelings of alienation and powerlessness among their own membership. They refuse to address membership demands

for democracy in their own unions and for more power over the political and economic decisions that affect their lives in general. And they have no intention of making the labor movement into a vehicle through which everyday Americans can substitute democracy for the monopoly control that dominates so much of our political and economic lives.

Take Viet Nam for instance. The position the AFL-CIO leadership took on Southeast Asia was a tragedy. Who's the guy that was going? It was my son that works in the steel mill. It's not the banker's boy. The kid in the damn trenches in Viet Nam, that was the working-class kid. If 50,000 American kids laid dead in Southeast Asia, it was 50,000 sons of George Meany, that's the tragedy of it.

Of course in many ways the problem is that—just as with Rockefeller—increased gas prices aren't going to hurt I.W. Abel or George Meany either.

Abel makes \$75,000 a year as President of the United Steelworkers where the average member makes about \$5 an hour. At a time when our paychecks barely stretch to the next pay period, the Union leadership railroaded through a dues increase and at the same time voted many of the top officers and District Directors salary increases of up to 40 percent. In many cases the amount of their *increases* were as much as the average steelworker makes *all year*.

That's symptomatic of the kind of country club unionism our union leaders and many others have fallen into. You know there are different kinds of corruption. The corruptness of attitude is the worst of all. A lot of people will readily state, "Oh Abel's sold out to the steel industry." Well he may not have taken a kickback or something, but he's done something maybe even as bad or worse. He's developed an attitude that he can do whatever he likes without listening to anybody. And that in the end screws the worker even more than a guy that takes a kickback. He's stealing something very important to me, he's stealing my vote and my voice.

Let me give you an example of Abel's attitude. During the recent effort to clear out corruption in the United Mine Workers and even after Jock Yablonski and his wife and daughter were murdered, Abel called up Tony Boyle's Secretary-Treasurer and complained that organized labor was not doing enough to help Boyle.

Many labor leaders today seem to think that the union is simply their little empire, their business. Leadership like that just won't go to bat for the members. To them the union is no longer a movement to improve the conditions and promote the interests of the workers. Instead it has become a staid business where their positions are more secure if nobody raises any hell.

When democracy is snuffed out in our unions, when leaders begin to view the union as their personal gravy

train for their fat \$75,000 salaries, it's no wonder that when times get tough real wages for the average steelworker drops 5 percent in a year. It's no wonder, with that kind of staid inbred leadership, that the labor movement has a lower percentage of the total work force under contract today than it did 30 years ago. And it's no wonder that much labor leadership has failed to provide serious progressive leadership in American politics.

Now more than ever we need a tough, democratic labor movement. Some labor leaders believe in that goal, but far too few of the crew that sit around the AFL-CIO act like it. I know that personally for a fact. When I first ran for District Director of District 31 (Chicago-Gary) of the USWA in 1972 the election was stolen by flagrant vote fraud. It was stolen because our movement in District 31 refused to kow-tow to that kind of tuxedo union leadership.

A court ordered honest re-run last year resulted in our victory because the election was conducted under the eye of 300 federal investigators. We shouldn't need 300 federal investigators to have democracy in our unions.

So in the last few months we've begun to organize STEELWORKERS FIGHT BACK—a rank-and-file organization aimed at making our part of the labor movement that kind of democratic, tough, voice for the interests of the average American man and woman.

Right now we're engaged in a campaign to call a special convention that would reorganize the union dues structure and roll back the salaries of International Officers and District Directors. We need 1500 locals to pass resolutions calling for this kind of special convention and we have almost half of that number to date.

In the future STEELWORKERS FIGHT BACK will undertake other campaigns around different issues—all intended to make our union live up to its potential as a vehicle to serve the interests of working people instead of high paid union bureaucrats. This may very well include running a slate of candidates for International Offices in the Steelworkers in 1977.

We've begun to build considerable momentum, but we have one major problem: we need money—lots of money—if we are to make a serious attempt to change our union. We're already getting some from hundreds of rank-and-file union members—through dinners, through raffles, carnivals—you name it. But particularly in the next two months, that simply won't be enough.

We're now to the point where to keep the momentum going and to consolidate the gains we've made so far, we've got to open an expanded office, we've got to have money just to follow-up on the hundreds of inquiries that are coming in from all over. We've got to send people to other areas to meet with people and help them get organized in local areas. We've got to begin all of this in the next two months, because if we don't, the terrific momentum that is developing will be lost.

That's why I'm writing for your help. I know times are tough for all of us, but if you can send \$15, \$25, or \$100 or whatever you can, I think it will be an investment that will benefit all of us who want a real trade union movement again.

Sincerely,  
Ed Sadlowski  
District Director, District 31  
United Steelworkers of America

## VICTOR REUTHER

Dear Friend,

Because of the type of causes you have supported in the past, I feel sure that you are interested in the labor movement as a progressive force in American life. I am passing on to you a copy of a remarkable letter that recently came to my attention.

It was written by Ed Sadlowski, the young rebel steelworker who made news last year when he took on and beat the union hierarchy in a contest for director of the Chicago-Gary district of the United Steelworkers.

You may have seen an amazing Studs Terkel interview with Ed on Television some time ago. If you did, you must have felt, as I did, a surge of pride and faith in the labor movement as it once was and can be again.

Unlike some of the entrenched, self-perpetuating labor leadership of today, Ed doesn't play golf with politicians. He doesn't ride around in a limousine. He doesn't treat his district as his own private business or petty empire.

He has never lost touch with the membership, and never lost his respect for each member's right to be heard and counted in making policy and ratifying contracts.

Joe Rauh, who worked with my brother Walter for so long as attorney for the UAW, says Ed Sadlowski reminds him of Walter Reuther thirty years ago. I agree.

But Ed knows that it's not enough just to bring union democracy to his own district. He wants to make the labor movement into a tough, democratic vehicle for progressive change. He knows that to begin that task steelworkers have to challenge the power of the clique at the top that run the United Steelworkers.

So he and his friends have started a rank-and-file organization called STEELWORKERS FIGHT BACK. That's what the enclosed material is all about. It tells what they are trying to accomplish and why they need our help.

Now those in the Steelworkers leadership who themselves called for labor support for Tony Boyle against Miners for Democracy will surely cry out against my "interference" in Steelworkers affairs. But the destruction of democratic unionism in any part of the labor movement is a direct threat to all democratic unions and to the institution of Democracy itself. It is never "interference" to support workers in their right to establish control over their own affairs through democratic elections. That's why, as a lifelong unionist, I am proud to support Ed Sadlowski's efforts to strengthen democratic unionism in the steel industry.

The labor movement is the largest, most potentially powerful base of support in this country for progressive political and economic decisions. If Sadlowski and his friends succeed, and join forces with progressive leaders in other unions who are dedicated to humane working conditions and rank-and-file democracy as he is, it could mean more than just a better deal for the members of their own unions. It could help get the whole country moving forward again.

So I urge you to listen to and heed what Ed has to say.

Sincerely yours,  
Victor G. Reuther

# A New Power in Labor

John Herling

reprinted from WASHINGTON POST, November 23, 1974

A new labor star has been born. He is Edward Sadlowski 36, a rangy steel worker with the gift of hard-hitting eloquence, who has just been elected director of the Chicago-Gary district of the United Steel Workers. As the new leader of District 31, the largest in the country, Sadlowski is considered by many in the union as a strong possibility to become president of the Steelworkers in 1977.

Sadlowski, a third generation steelworker, overwhelmed Sam Evett, the incumbent director, by a 2-1 margin. Evett had been heavily supported by I. W. Abel, president of the international union, and by the union establishment. District 31, with 140,000 members, has one-tenth of the total steelworkers membership.

The last time an electoral upheaval of comparable magnitude in the union caught public attention was 10 years ago when Mr. Abel, then secretary-treasurer of the union, challenged and narrowly defeated David J. McDonald, the incumbent president, in a referendum vote of the entire membership.

This time the electoral struggle was concentrated in the district which occupies a strategic place in the union's political life. For more than 30 years, it was headed by Joe Germano, without whose support Abel would not have been elected. Upon retirement, Germano tapped Evett, 62, his long time assistant, as heir to the district directorship. It was expected that Evett would make it without troublesome opposition.

Instead of a smooth transfer of power in the election of Feb. 10, 1973, Evett's way was blocked by Sadlowski, a former president of one of the district's largest locals and a staff man. Sadlowski raised the banner of reform and the demand for a more responsive leadership.

In full control of the election machinery, Evett was able only to squeak through by a vote of 23,354 to 21,606. The international union leadership registered surprise and consternation at the closeness of the margin. Sadlowski and his followers challenged the result. Protests were filed with the Labor Department. Sadlowski charged that Evett's election was the product of considerable fraud in various parts of the huge district.

In his challenge, Sadlowski secured the aid of, among others, Joseph L. Rauh Jr., the Washington attorney who was a key figure in the United Mine Workers election of 1972, when Arnold Miller decisively defeated Tony Boyle.



By Margaret Thomas—The Washington Post

Under powers available to it under the Landrum-Griffin Law, the Labor Department conducted an intensive investigation. It determined that fraud had indeed been committed. The department then moved to obtain a court order for a re-run of the disputed election. But that remedy was slow in coming.

For a year and a half, the top officers of the international union and their counsel sought to abort Sadlowski's demand for a new election. When it became clear that a trial would probably end in Sadlowski's favor and at the same time reveal fraud spread over a wider area, Evett reluctantly consented to the new election under the auspices of the Labor Department.

After more legal sparring, the court set the election for the period of Nov. 12-15. More than 300 Labor Department representatives supervised the voting in the huge district. On successive days, they maintained a constant vigil at hundreds of polling places and finally counted the thousands of ballots. This time, Sadlowski got 39,637 votes to Evett's 20,058.

In the tension of election, the fight between Evett and Sadlowski had settled down to a struggle between the incumbent union leadership and rank-and-file presumably dissatisfied with it. Heavy contributions of money and manpower were poured in to beef up

the Evett campaign and fight off the Sadlowski threat. While Sadlowski could not match his opponent's high-level support, he successfully raised the standard of rank-and-file dissent. His victory is regarded as a stunning defeat for the union hierarchy.

Lacking heavy organizational apparatus, Sadlowski had to rely on ad hoc rank-and-file committees and intensive appearances at plant gates. Sadlowski relied heavily on a large turnout to reflect the deep-rooted dissatisfaction which had long prevailed in the Germano-controlled district.

Inside the union, observers saw this election re-run as much more than the choice of another district director. They believe the victory gained by Sadlowski is a possible stimulus for future challenges to incumbent union leadership in other districts. Moreover, at the next international union election in 1977, neither President Abel nor Secretary-Treasurer Walter Burke will be eligible to run for office again. The union constitution calls for compulsory retirement after 65.

Should Sadlowski try for the presidency and win, it could mean a restructuring of the union's internal policies as well as a more aggressive attitude in labor-management relations. This is why management and the American labor movement are keeping a close eye on Mr. Sadlowski.

# THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS AND THE PARTY'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST GOVERNMENT HARASSMENT

by Syd Stapleton

February 1976

Two and a half years ago, in the middle of the Watergate crisis, the Socialist Workers Party launched a lawsuit against the federal government. The lawsuit and our efforts to expose and campaign against attacks on democratic rights are a fundamentally different approach to Watergate and the ensuing revelations from any other political current in the country.

By mid-1973, layer after layer of secrecy was being stripped away from the real workings of the imperialist government in Washington. Over and above Nixon's dirty tricks, it became apparent to millions that the government had been conspiring against them, from phony telegrams to the White House lauding the bombing of North Vietnam to the Huston Plan plot to accelerate attacks on Black activists and opponents of the Vietnam war.

But, unlike the liberals who try to pin exclusive blame on Nixon, J. Edgar Hoover, the CIA directors and a few others, we saw the deceit and the secret political police operations as a fundamental feature of the capitalist system and a necessary part of the basic bipartisan policy of the ruling class. Far from being a momentary aberration, we pointed out, these violations of democratic rights are an increasingly central feature of capitalist rule. This, we said, was at the root of the repressive attacks on the Black community, the burglaries and buggings, the computer files and credit records, the informers and provocateurs, the grand juries, the Gordon Liddys and the illegal violence of the CIA-Gusano gangs.

Our view has been borne out by, among other things, the performance of capitalist politicians of all stripes. While the most liberal figures differentiate themselves from some of the grossly illegal activities of the FBI and CIA, Democratic and Republican politicians alike are unanimous in recognizing the "need" for an increasingly powerful repressive apparatus to protect their "national security"—that is, their continued rule. "Both sides of the aisle," as the saying goes, are ready and willing to use *any means necessary* to keep capitalism in power.

This is the starting point for our strategy. As Marxists, we know that the ruling class of this country, one of the most bloodthirsty in history, will not peacefully hand over power to a majority who want socialism and oppose capitalist rule. To the contrary, the capitalists will use all methods, including, at a certain stage backing bands of fascist thugs to try to smash the worker's organizations by force. In this final showdown, the only power capable of defeating the armed violence of the rulers will be the independent, organized, power of the overwhelming majority, the workers and the oppressed.

## Independent working class political action

This means that a perspective for seriously defending democratic rights must be one that revolves around strengthening the class consciousness, self reliance and independent mobilization of the workers.

From this point of view, the debate now going on about restructuring the capitalist state apparatus in some way, by reforming or abolishing the FBI or CIA, by shifting their functions into another department, by getting rid of this or that politician or official, or by providing for more congressional oversight of the FBI and CIA, is simply irrelevant to the real defense of democratic rights. The key goals should be a mass break with capitalist politics and the capitalist parties, and the building of a movement of the oppressed that can replace minority capitalist rule with socialism.

It is in *this* context that we conduct our fight for the rights of the oppressed, and specifically, for the rights of our party.

We think that the facts show—and the workers are quite capable of understanding—that our view of capitalist society is correct. Our confidence in the *truth* is why we are the foremost advocates of opening the files and peeling away all secrecy from government operations.

Revelation after revelation implicates broader and broader circles of capitalist politicians in the crimes. In spite of efforts to stem the tide of disclosures, more and more facts escape, spreading the stain from Nixon to Johnson and from Johnson to Kennedy and Roosevelt. Conservative columnist and former Nixon staffer William Safire, after citing Pathfinder's book *COINTELPRO*, defended his ex-boss as follows:

"History will show the Nixon administration not as the one that invented the abuse of power, but the one that gloriously if unwittingly served the cause of individual liberty by the clumsy way it tries to continue the abuses of Kennedy and Johnson."

Safire goes on to add:

"The real question we should be asking today is this: Why didn't the public know about the dirty tricks of the FBI and CIA long before this? Why was this vital information not given to the public? Why was it not leaked to, or dug out by investigative reporters . . . ?"

Safire is not the only one asking. In addition, every fact that surfaces raises questions about what more is being hidden and deepens the distrust of the politicians who had claimed that things have gone far enough. The reaction to the facts about the FBI's vendetta against Martin Luther

King Jr. is a case in point. Spurred by distrust of the government, the disclosure deepened it—and no end to the cycle is in sight. Aside from the official disclosures, our suit, the Rosenberg and Hiss suits, the Fred Hampton suit and other challenges are deepening this process and extending its historical scope. The FBI now tells people who request information under the Freedom of Information act that their request will be delayed by the 5,832 such requests that the FBI is trying to process.

The ruling class would like to bring this all to a screeching halt, but it has proven impossible. A clear example is the evolution of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. It was founded to release carefully controlled information and to put a stop to the disclosures. Instead it has accelerated the demands for information.

When it was set up, elaborate precautions were taken to stop leaks, all testimony was reviewed in secret, and public hearings were carefully planned to focus attention on practices that the government claimed had already stopped.

But despite these precautions, look what happened. Everyone now knows that the US government considers assassination as an instrument of policy. Everyone now knows that Kennedy and Johnson did as much or more than Nixon to use the FBI and CIA to commit deadly crimes both for the broad purposes of their class and for their own narrow political ends.

## 200 year struggle for democratic rights

The whole sweep of the Watergate revelations exposes the utter fraudulence of the government's claim to stand for the democratic principles initiated by the American revolution of 1776.

Certain rights were established in the US by the uprising that ended British rule. These rights were incorporated into the US Constitution as the first ten amendments—but only at the insistence of the plebian democrats of the lower classes. The progressive dynamic of early American capitalism was demonstrated again in the second American revolution—when northern industrial capitalism consolidated its rule by breaking the slave power of the southern plantation aristocracy.

But after the Civil War, the crushing of the radical reconstruction in the South—not by the Southern plutocracy but by the rising Northern capitalist rulers—showed that the time had passed when the goals of the capitalist rulers could coincide with any fundamental needs of the masses of people.

Since that time many gains have been made in the struggle for the rights and welfare of workers and the oppressed—but they have only been made as the result of mass struggles in opposition to and against the resistance of the ruling class.

The last decades of the 19th century saw the mobilization of local cops and state militias against the labor movement—and the use of the Ku Klux Klan against the former slaves in the South.

But the 1914-1918 imperialist war and the 1917 Russian revolution marked the real beginnings of the use of the police power of the federal government against the radical labor movement. The attacks on socialist opponents of the war were followed by the infamous Palmer Raids in which thousands of foreign born were deported for nothing more

than membership in groups that supported the Russian revolution.

Before the Second World War the New Deal became the War Deal, and the FBI launched attacks against the most uncompromising segments of labor. The midwest teamster and unemployed frame-ups are described in Farrell Dobbs book, *Teamster Politics*. These persecutions were the first step toward the frame-up of socialist and union militants which resulted in the 1941 Minneapolis Smith Act trial.

The government's antidemocratic, witch-hunting apparatus got another big boost with the post World War II campaign by the rulers to housebreak the CIO and to prepare the country for war, maybe cold, maybe hot, with the Soviet Union.

With the beginning of the 1960's the ruling class faced a problem. By the mid-fifties McCarthyism and prosperity had done the work of taming the labor movement, so the Wisconsin Senator was tossed aside. The McCarthyism of the period had a fascist logic of its own, which became counterproductive for the ruling class. But the McCarthyite attempts at thought control had left a deep impression—a negative one—on millions.

The rise of the civil rights movement, the growth of the student movement, and the growth of opposition to the Vietnam war helped erode the anticommunist ideology propagated during the witch-hunt. At a time when the ruling class felt a strong need for the instruments of repression, public sentiment made impossible full scale, head-on attacks on these developing protest movements.

This contradictory phenomenon is at the real root of the Watergate crisis—on one hand a deep distrust of the government, and on the other, an explosive growth in the agencies and instruments of repression, beginning with the preparations for World War II.

When the FBI was established in 1908, it had to be done in secret. When the story leaked, there was a scandal. A Chicago daily of the time reported, "There is no desire in Congress for a general detective service or national police organization in connection with the federal government. On the contrary, there is an utter abhorrence of such a scheme. . . . It is considered absolutely contradictory to the democratic principles of government." The FBI of the time had about a dozen agents.

Congress may have felt that way in 1908, but since that time it has acquired the zeal of a repentant sinner. The last FBI budget it passed provided roughly half a billion dollars for 8,600 Special Agents (they don't have any ordinary agents), 15,000 file clerks and administrative employees, and a network of paid stoolpigeons and provocateurs that may well number over 25,000.

But the FBI is only one of the agencies, committees and groups that Congress pays to violate our rights. There's Military Intelligence, the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division of the Treasury, the National Security Agency, the Forty Committee, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Criminal Investigations Division of the Department of Defense, the Internal Revenue Service, the CIA, the Secret Service and many, many more. The so-called intelligence community has something over 200,000 employees, and it sends us an annual bill for something like 10 billion dollars or more—but they won't tell us exactly how much it

is. This, of course, doesn't count the hundreds of state and local police intelligence divisions.

But the revelations have given the American people more than just an idea of how the capitalist state acts now. They have also given us a glimpse of how capitalism reacts to stress—a glimpse at the capitalism of the future, with less and less room for democracy.

Some of the outstanding examples of this side of capitalist rule include the campaign of murder and terror directed against the Black Panther Party, the cooperation of federal and local cops with semifascist groups in Chicago, San Diego and elsewhere to launch violent attacks on socialists, opponents of the war and others, and most recently, the publication of plans the Pentagon prepared and distributed in 1970 for the institution of military rule in the event of "civil disorder."

Another pending example of the growing disparity between the democratic pretensions of the government and its ultimate intentions is the "Omnibus Crime Act," S.1. This proposed law was put before the Senate with broad bipartisan support. It would reinstitute the kind of thought control legislation written into the Smith Act but since ruled unconstitutional. It revises wiretap and riot laws so as almost to abolish the protections in the Bill of Rights. It would constitute a kind of official secrets act that would provide for the jailing of government employees who told the truth about official crimes.

A very important feature of the revelations and the lessons of the Vietnam war is the increasingly obvious relationship between the antidemocratic, counter-revolutionary foreign policy of US capitalism abroad and its assaults on democratic rights at home. The use of assassinations, both against individuals and on a large scale as in the CIA's Operation Phoenix, logically raise a lot of questions about assassinations in the US. If the government feels free to help a brutal military government in Chile, it's hard to believe that it would draw the line at tapping phones at home.

### Capitalism and democracy

Capitalism in its decline finds itself increasingly at odds with basic human rights, not only in the United States, the showcase of capitalist democracy, but around the world. The economic crisis faced by world capitalism eats away at the wherewithal it needs to buy off workers struggles and the demands of the colonially exploited. It increasingly relies on repression and military rule—not hesitating at the reinstatement of the barbaric practices of torture or execution of political opponents. Examples of these phenomena range from the coup in Chile to the suspension of democratic rights in India, to the attacks on democratic rights in Portugal, to the decline in the number of capitalist nations around the world that recognize elementary rights such as freedom of assembly and freedom of the press.

This is not a transient development. Strikes, demonstrations, and other struggles of the exploited and oppressed convert democratic rights into an instrument for the welfare of the masses, as against the capitalists. The defense of democratic rights comes increasingly into conflict with the capitalists' assertion of their right to rule—and it is democracy that is always sacrificed by the rulers when push comes to shove in the class struggle.

While the capitalists would *prefer* to rule by persuasion, by political manipulation and by providing promise of a higher and higher material standard of living, they are *prepared* to attempt to maintain their rule by whatever means they deem necessary.

When steps are taken to restrict democratic rights, they are not taken in the abstract. Whatever or whoever the first target may be, the basic aim of *any* repressive measures taken by the capitalist government is *always* the rights and institutions of the workers and other oppressed. That's why it is a mistake for any organization in the workers movement to call for the capitalist government to ban *any* kind of speech, or any kind of newspaper, or any kind of organization on the basis of its political views—even if they are fascist in ideology.

Any party that seeks to provide the leadership for a socialist transformation of capitalist society must include in its program a strategy to protect and extend workers rights. Such a strategy must revolve around the reliance of the working masses upon their own organizations and independent mobilizations to protect democratic rights and extend them. And it must include an uncompromising commitment to the concept that an injury to one is an injury to all.

### Reformists and democracy

The Stalinists of the Peking and Moscow variety are in a difficult position to champion democratic rights, since their first duty is to defend the authoritarian regimes in China and the USSR. In addition, the counterrevolutionary policy of detente with imperialism is followed by both leading brands of Stalinism—and the first rule of detente is to avoid fundamental confrontations with the rulers of capitalist nations in favor of diplomatic deals. We saw this policy translated into action in the utter paralysis of the American Communist party in the face of Watergate—including their inability to mobilize a significant response to the revelation of the government's attempts to get the Mafia to declare a war on the CP. Of course, another example of the impact of detente is the bureaucratic maneuvers the Portuguese Communist party substitutes for a revolutionary defense of workers rights or workers power.

The bureaucratic and totalitarian methods of Stalinism in power have done the workers movement another disservice by allowing the propagandists for capitalism to paint Marxists as enemies of basic human rights. This makes it all the more important that genuine, revolutionary Marxists take an unequivocal, fighting stand in defense of these rights. When we say socialism will mean an *expansion* of freedoms in the Bill of Rights, we mean it.

Like the Stalinists, the liberals and social democrats are incapable of offering a serious perspective to defend human rights. They place their faith in the liberal wing of the ruling class rather than in a perspective of mass mobilizations. They want to preserve both democracy and private property—but these are contradictory aims. Ignoring the contradiction, the liberals and social democrats work to diminish class feelings and to discourage class actions, rather than developing and organizing them. Class collaboration makes them comfortable, class struggle makes them nervous to say the least.

The ultralefts and sectarians fail to see the issue of



democratic rights as a significant question. For them, the only duty of a revolutionary is to call for revolution. The ultralefts fail to see Marxism as a class struggle mass action program aimed at mobilizing the masses around issues that concern them. The ultralefts are blind to the strategic contribution of Lenin and Trotsky—how to build a party that is capable of leading workers from their present state of consciousness to socialist revolution.

Even some organizations that call themselves Trotskyist—like the Healyite Workers League in the United States—look down their noses at struggles to defend and extend democratic rights.

### **SWP's struggle for democratic rights**

The Socialist Workers party, on the other hand, recognizes that many basic human rights will form the central axis of important mass struggles. Over and above the right to speak and organize, new rights are being asserted—such as the idea of the right to a job, the right to decent medical care, the right to a decent education, the right to a direct voice in foreign policy decisions, especially as they relate to war, the right to preferential treatment for oppressed national minorities and women, full civil and political rights for soldiers, language rights, the right to the *truth*, to know about the actions and secret policies of industry and government, the rights of non-citizens, and many others.

The power of the oppressed nationalities in the United States makes understanding of this point all the more important—since it is the capitalist ruling class that denies equality and upholds discrimination, segregation and white supremacy.

One right, which is central to the struggle for all others, is the right of a revolutionary party to organize, publish its ideas and win people to its program. Defense and extension of this right, which has been one of our central goals since 1928 and is the central goal of our present campaign, will be a major task of the revolutionary party as long as capitalism exists. Defense of this right—strengthening our status as a legal party—is an important feature of many aspects of party activity, including our election campaigns and our ballot fights. And anything that defends or extends our rights—as an openly avowed revolutionary Marxist party—is an aid to every potential victim of government repression.

Another aspect of the importance we assign to our ability to function legally is the view we take of government attacks on our members. As in past defense fights, our present case is a way of making it clear to the government that if it lays a hand on one of our members, it had better be ready for a fight.

The SWP has a unique tradition that prepares us for the fight we have undertaken with this suit. An important part of this tradition was embodied in the experience of James P. Cannon, one of the founding leaders of our movement. As part of the early labor movement in this country, Cannon participated in the great defense campaigns of that era.

Cannon also learned from the errors of that period. In some cases labor radicals would spend years in prison as the cost of the so-called silent defense—in which the defendants in frame-up “criminal syndicalism” trials would refuse to speak in a capitalist court.

As an early leader of the Communist party Cannon helped to lead a fight against undergroundism—an outlook that led the early CP leaders to abandon the fight to establish the CP as an open, legal party which appealed for public support.

When the Trotskyist movement in the US was formed its first leaders came from, among other experiences the International Labor Defense, a mass worker defense organization established with a non-partisan policy at the initiative of the pre-Stalinist Communist party. They had the experience of many important defense cases behind them, including the campaign on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti.

Even before the formal founding of the SWP in 1938, our movement had conducted an internationally important defense campaign of its own, the defense of Leon Trotsky from the slander charges of the Moscow trials.

Beginning with the Smith Act trial of leaders of the Socialist Workers party and the Minneapolis teamsters in 1941, the SWP has fought many battles against government attempts to challenge its right to function. Immediately following the Smith Act convictions of 18 leaders of the SWP, we fought to retain the second class mailing rights of the Militant during the second world war.

With the rise of the post World War Two witch-hunt and the cold war we carried on a propaganda campaign against the witch-hunt, and Trotskyists were the foremost advocates of labor solidarity to counter the antilabor, anti-Black offensive of the McCarthyites. A focus of our campaign was the defense of James Kutcher, a legless World War Two veteran fired from his job for his membership in the SWP. We built a successful nationwide defense effort to get back Kutcher's job—and to defend the right of Marxists to speak and organize in the United States.

There have been some important victories in this area since the 1941 Smith Act trial and the McCarthy era. The radicalization that opened in the late 1950's and early 1960's not only limited what the government could *do* to radicals, but it provided a political atmosphere favorable to some important reverses in thought control legislation.

Some of the first of these victories involved the overturn of contempt citations issued by the congressional committees. The first of the post-McCarthy cases with a direct bearing on the SWP was the Scythes case, decided in 1962. In this case a Wisconsin federal court ruled that the SWP 1938 Declaration of Principles, withdrawn in 1940, did *not* advocate the violent overthrow of the government. This decision basically wiped out the legal foundation for the 1941 Smith Act trial, since the Declaration of Principles had been one of the government's big pieces of “evidence.” As a result of the ruling in this case, the government was barred from deporting a former member of the SWP.

Other victories have included the overturn of important portions of the Smith Act (including those sections under which leaders of both the SWP and the CP were sent to jail), repeal of certain sections of the McCarran Act (including the section that let the Attorney General put radicals in concentration camps if he felt like it), the abolition of the attorney general's list, the decision in the Gordon case, which limited the federal government's ability to fire people from civil service jobs just because of membership in the SWP, and several cases which helped protect our members and others from harassment in the Armed Forces.

These victories set important precedents for the fight we are currently conducting. They combine with the Watergate revelations and the public hostility to government spying to put the government in a uniquely difficult and more defensive position.

### Growing hostility to CIA and FBI

A recent Gallup poll showed that in 1965 84 percent of those polled gave the FBI a "highly favorable" rating. By 1970 it had dropped to 71 percent. By November of 1975 it was 37 percent. The CIA got 14 percent.

The more perspicacious organs of the ruling class like the *New York Times* have been quick to recognize the danger of a loss of public confidence in the "intelligence community" and the government. They have demanded reform to place the secret police under the more direct control of the broader political institutions of capitalism. *Times* columnist Tom Wicker recently approached the question this way:

"... whatever real problems of Communist subversion from within and without may have threatened the United States since the 1930s, they could hardly have been greater threats to constitutional rights and individual liberty than those that can be posed by the great security agencies with their power to operate both in secrecy and in the name of national security, their unlimited budgets, their freedom from supervision—above all, their subservience to political masters who were enabled by the mere existence of such agencies to flout the constitution and the law for their own political purposes or obsessions.

"No one in Congress or the executive branch has even begun to face—let alone answer—the consequent philosophical and institutional questions: Can secret police agencies ever be made compatible with political and intellectual liberty? By what methods of control and accountability can they be made so? Control by whom? Accountability to whom?"

Wicker doesn't provide answers to the questions he poses. He can't or won't recognize that it is precisely the *purpose* of such agencies as the FBI and CIA that makes them antithetical to democratic rights. And it is precisely the crisis of declining capitalism that makes such agencies necessary.

A division of labor has been achieved in the government around the question of the secret police. While Congress "deplores" some of the crimes of the FBI and CIA, the Justice Department and the administration have been assigned the task of conducting the legal and propaganda battle to defend these agencies and their practices.

But the defenders of the secret police—all of them, from the White House to Capitol Hill—face a new and difficult problem.

In the past, scandals involving the FBI and similar outfits could be divided into two categories: cases in which the agencies got involved in two-party "politics" and situations involving "domestic security." As an example of the first category, in the course of the Teapot Dome scandal it came out that the FBI had been used to try to frame up some of Harding's most vocal opponents, including a Democrat in the Senate. This caused a massive outcry on the part of capitalist politicians and publications, and led to a big shake-up and reorganization of both the Justice Department and the FBI.

But here's another example: in 1947 the Attorney General announced a public list of political organizations that would be subjected to special harassment, excluded from federal employment, made the target of warrantless wiretaps, paid informers and so on—and in Congress and in the newspapers there was hardly a word of protest.

It was a time-honored tradition in the ruling class circles that dominate the government and the press—any attacks on the workings of the two-party "system" were to be repelled with vigor, but attacks on the rights of workers, Blacks, and "subversives" were not only approved but ignored and surrounded with silence.

But that pat formula is no longer acceptable to broad sections of the American people. Just for openers, millions marched with or identified with antiwar actions that were led by people accused of subversion. Millions of Blacks saw the civil rights and nationalist organizations as *their* organizations fighting for their human rights, in spite of the slanders and attacks of the politicians and the police.

So the rulers have found that what began as an old fashioned "political" scandal has gone much deeper, at a rate beyond their control, to generate a broad public challenge to the whole conception of capitalist national security.

Our campaign around this question, and the documents we have been able to force out of the government put us at the center of this debate. The issue of what the government does to the SWP and why it does this is present in virtually every debate over the role and activities of the FBI. The facts about our case make it ideal for this challenge. The FBI has admitted in court that it has been wiretapping the SWP at least since 1945. In the thirty years since that date, they were not able to cook up a single federal indictment of a member of the SWP for *anything*. This is in spite of a massive so-called investigation, using illegal wiretaps and bugs, burglaries, paid informers, mail tampering and all the rest. In the years before 1945, the same kind of spying was used to railroad 18 leaders of the SWP to prison under the Smith Act—but only under the portions of the Act that even the Supreme Court says are unconstitutional.

Hundreds of articles and scores of editorials in newspapers all over the country have publicized and called in question the FBI's attacks on the SWP.

The *New York Times* said: "The Socialist Workers Party is a legal American political organization. . . . The only conceivable purpose of the continuation of the COINTEL-PRO techniques is harassment and disruption of legitimate political activity."

But the *Times* isn't the only paper to publish such a view. The Lewiston, Idaho *Tribune*, a daily paper with a circulation of 22,000 ran an editorial on our case under the title, "The FBI—Who Needs It?"

The Niagara Falls *Gazette* said, "We can't think of a better way to turn sincere dissidents into raving fanatics than the Federal Bureau of Investigation's treatment of the Socialist Workers Party."

Discussing the FBI attacks on the SWP the Detroit *Free Press* concluded, ". . . the harassment of political groups by the FBI should not be allowed in an open society."

Because of the timing and character of our case the government's general response to attacks on its political police has been intertwined with its response to the SWP suit and vice versa. If the government can defend its "right" to spy on and harass the SWP, then anyone is fair game.

One important example of this is the new Justice Department "guidelines" for the FBI. The guidelines are simply a flat statement that, with the approval of the Justice Department, the FBI will continue to harass and persecute anyone it considers "subversive." This statement is slightly dressed up in legal lingo and avoids use of the term "subversive." Instead, the targets are described as anyone whose activities may in the future involve the use of force or violence. Of course, this could apply to anyone, but experience teaches that it *will* be surely applied to unionists, Blacks, students, women or anyone else involved in a struggle for the rights and well-being of the oppressed.

The guidelines also give the stamp of approval to COINTELPRO disruption of political activities. They also have a catch-22 escape clause which says that none of the procedures specified need apply to any activities undertaken "in active collaboration" with a "foreign based political group."

On December 11, 1975 Attorney General Levi made an important speech to the Senate Select Committee describing the guidelines and defending them as an appropriate response to criticism of the FBI.

Early in his talk he tipped his hat to some of the liberal critics of the FBI, by quoting some remarks made by Attorney General Harlan Stone in the aftermath of the flap about the FBI's role in Teapot Dome. Levi quoted Stone as saying, "The Bureau of Investigation is not [to be] concerned with political or other opinions of individuals. It is concerned only with their conduct, and only with such conduct as is forbidden by the laws of the United States. When a police system passes beyond these limits it is dangerous . . . to human liberty."

Levi's response was, "I should like to suggest that Stone's warning always must be considered relevant to the proper conduct of the bureau's duties, but it does not necessarily follow that domestic security investigations are, therefore, outside the bureau's proper function. The detection of crime in some areas requires preparation and at least some knowledge of what is likely to be going on."

FBI Director Kelley is a little less sly. He told the Annual Banquet of the Lubbock Texas Chamber of Commerce, "We are all too often cast by certain elements of our society as a potential Gestapo, a menace to constitutionally guaranteed liberties. But, unfortunately, relatively little public exposure has been given to the *real* threat to our liberties—the threat posed by lethal bands of revolutionaries, hate groups and extremists who openly espouse violence and hostility to our system of government."

Assistant FBI Director James Adams got even more specific in testimony before the House Select Committee on Intelligence. Said Adams, "Most Americans are genuinely concerned with threats to our domestic security. . . . You should also be aware, however, that there are others who have as their ultimate goal the overthrow of our political institutions and economic system. These individuals publicly state that they consider terrorist activity 'counterproductive' in today's political climate. Nevertheless, they by no means renounce its use at the right moment to attain their objective."

#### **Kelley's "subversive" list**

Really getting down to brass tacks, the FBI announced

recently that it had pinned the problem of domestic security down to a list of about 1,250 individuals who were, according to Director Kelley, "a direct, realistic and current danger to the national security." This list, revised every month, is turned over to the Secret Service as people who threaten "terrorism," "assassination" and the like.

This list is supposed to represent the FBI turning over a new leaf from the bad old days of the "Security Index," a list of 15,000 Americans that the FBI was authorized to put in concentration camps in the event of a "national emergency." But a document obtained by Associated Press shows that almost 10 percent of the new list is composed of members of the SWP! This fact alone strips away the gobbledegook in the guidelines and the speeches about the "likelihood" of violence and crime.

The FBI and the Justice Department, with the knowledge of Congress, are simply changing the names of the witch-hunting programs and lists that the American people have come to know as threats to fundamental political rights.

All this was made even clearer in the confrontation before the House Select Committee on Intelligence between Peter Camejo and officials of the FBI.

When pressed by members of Congress for some further justification of their attacks on the SWP, the top cops admitted that the SWP was "not violent." But W.R. Wannall, the head of the FBI's domestic security division, spilled the beans. According to reporters, Wannall is not a smart man, but at least he cut through the rhetoric and went to the point. He said, "I regard the SWP as a party that follows the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism as interpreted by Leon Trotsky."

This approach can count on the bipartisan support of Congress, if phrased properly, as Levi, the professor, has been working hard to do.

This makes our suit a big problem for the government. The facts in our case give the lie to the FBI cover story about crime and violence, and many people are willing to listen to what we say.

We can expect that, as the congressional hearings are brought to a close, our campaign around our suit will play an even more central role in keeping the question of government assaults on democratic rights before the American people. And we can expect the government to intensify its counter-attack.

We have already seen some opening indications of what their approach will be—and we know from history that their first line of defense against the ideas of revolutionary socialism is slander and frame-up charges. This accounts for the government's eager attention to bombings and acts of individual terror, many of which are undoubtedly the work of paid government provocateurs.

More specifically, the FBI tries to fabricate a case that the SWP is a group with ties to terrorists and that the SWP itself threatens violence. The Birchite Congressman Larry McDonald acts as an FBI mouthpiece in Congress to parrot the slanders against the SWP and other opponents of the government's secret police. The labor hating columnist Victor Reisel wrote an article along the same lines as McDonald's speeches—two days after the FBI took a beating in the House Committee confrontation with Peter Camejo. Pointing to the SWP's opposition to Zionism, he tried to argue that our *views* should target us for disruption.

Riesel goes on to say, "The SWP is in the fold of the 'Fourth Internationale'. . . the . . . revolutionary global network. . . . The SWP is brutally Trotskyite. Though it goes through all the rhetoric about democratic processes and elections, it is linked across the world through international headquarters in Brussels, Belgium with some mighty tough revolutionary 'people's army' guerrilla forces—especially in Latin America." Reisel then laments that these "facts" are so little known that the SWP's 1972 presidential candidate rolled up over 100,000 votes across the country.

We can expect that prior to and during the trial the government will try to make much of the SWP's "connections" with the so-called "terrorist" Fourth International.

Our answer to these charges of terrorism and violence will be the same answer that Marxists have always given to such slanders. History shows that the violence in social upheavals comes from the old privileged minority striving to retain or regain its power against the wishes of the majority. We do not advocate violence or engage in any acts of terrorism.

They accuse us of planning to unleash violence "when the time is ripe." In fact, it is the capitalist ruling class that is ready and willing to resort to minority violence, terrorism and wholesale violations of the Bill of Rights to protect its continued rule. And for them, the time has been ripe for decades.

It is totally false that our internationalism violates any laws, such as the Voorhis act. We *have* been deeply involved in struggles concerning issues centered outside the United States—like the fight against the Vietnam War. We defend political prisoners all over the world, and we oppose totalitarian regimes wherever they may exist. We extend our solidarity to those all over the world fighting against reaction and repression, and specifically, we are actively interested in the affairs of the Fourth International. But, since the unconstitutional Voorhis Act was passed in 1940, we have not been affiliated to the Fourth International, and we do not violate the provisions of the act.

### **SWP trial strategy**

Our approach to the government's slanders and to the trial is to take their charges head on. Fundamentally, our policy is the same as the one developed for the Minneapolis trial in 1941.

1. We intend to defend the legal existence of our party. By persecution, slander and legal and bureaucratic measures, the government makes efforts to chip away at our right to exist. Of course, we are prepared to continue our work regardless of circumstances, but we know that there are very important advantages to being able to function as an open and legal party. Like the Bolsheviks, and like the SWP in the past, we will never give up one inch on this question without a major fight. And any inch they take we will fight to get back.

2. We intend to use the suit as a forum to make our party and its principles better known. We want to conduct the case as a propaganda campaign, to clear the record on who we are and what we want. This kind of campaign can leave an important permanent record, as the Minneapolis case left the book *Socialism on Trial*.

Consistent with this policy, a representative of the SWP will testify in the trial to present the programs and policies

of the SWP and the reasons why it has been targeted for government harassment.

We don't know exactly how the trial will develop from a procedural point of view. It is a little complicated by the fact that there are two kinds of issues posed by the suit. One issue is the extent to which we are entitled to damages for past violations of our rights, like the COINTELPRO activities of the FBI. More important, there is the question of whether or not the courts will issue an injunction against the continued targeting of the SWP for spying and attempts at disruption. In some areas we will be breaking totally new legal ground, as in our contention that the use of paid government informers in a political group is an illegal restriction of the freedom of association—in our case, of the freedom to organize and express a political point of view free from government interference. We hope that some of the specific decisions in the case will help protect individual members of the SWP from harassment and will set precedents to protect other victims of government harassment as well.

In the last analysis, the decision in the case will reflect whether or not the government can trick a judge and jury into accepting their arguments that the SWP is a less than legal, quasi-criminal political group. Whatever the outcome, it will have an important impact for some time to come.

But in a defense case like the Minneapolis trial, everything in the strategy of the case tends to focus toward that moment when the jury gives its verdict. That isn't so true in this suit. The trial is not the exclusive focus of our strategy in the case, or even the key element in our broader strategy for the suit. We don't expect that at the end of the trial and appeals that we will get justice. We don't think the government, if it loses, will stop harassing the SWP until sometime when it gets a better judge. But the whole fight—the documents we receive, the way we conduct our case, the way we organize our campaign—can provide crucial educational tools on one of the most important questions facing the workers movement today—how to defend and extend democratic rights. In that sense we will gain, whether we win, lose, or draw in the prolonged judicial procedures.

In this context, there are many very important issues to be fought out before the trial. As a result of the "discovery process" we are entitled to see the documents in the government's possession that have a bearing on the case. We want to use the process to the hilt, and the government is fighting against it with every means at their disposal. They are still concealing 95 percent or more of the FBI, CIA and other records and files about the government's attacks on the party. They are not only hiding documents about the actual practices they engage in, but also the documents that will show when they started these practices and why, and when and why they periodically re-approved their use. We want documents on the FBI frame-ups in Minneapolis, documents on the FBI's relations with the assassins of Trotsky, documents on the FBI's use of provocateurs to malign and red-bait the SWP, and many more. We believe these are all questions relevant to the suit—that they will help paint a picture for the judge and jury and for the American people of the character and motivation of the government's attacks on the SWP. Further, these documents should provide every partisan of the oppressed a guidebook to the scope, history and

methods of the government's repressive actions.

There are some other pre-trial questions that may involve major legal fights. We may have to get injunctions to prevent the government from continuing to interfere with our conversations with former government officials who may be willing to talk about some of their activities. We will want to make full use of our right to compel hostile witnesses to answer questions under oath in pre-trial depositions. The government may claim some of these people are protected by the "needs of national security" or by "executive privilege." We will also be looking for opportunities to challenge the government's view of the Voorhis Act before the case comes to trial. There are some other questions we will want to raise, e.g., shouldn't the court order the FBI to stay out of our discussions that bear on strategy in the suit? They currently monitor these discussions through electronic surveillance, informers and so on.

We don't have any interest in shortchanging the pre-trial issues to get a rapid trial. In fact, the case may not come to trial until early 1977, and we are not pressing to have it sooner. Of course, the actual date of the trial will be influenced by some factors beyond our control.

This perspective for the trial date means that we will have some valuable additional time to build support for our case and to educate around the issues. We also have more time to demonstrate in practice the value of a party like the SWP—and to demonstrate the SWP's ability to play a vanguard role in defending the rights of the American people.

We have already made some big gains in the area of building support for the case. It is now widely known that the Socialist Workers Party is fighting one of the most important civil liberties cases of the past twenty years. As a result, the Political Rights Defense Fund has been able to obtain a wide range of endorsements, including members of Congress, lawyers and civil libertarians, Black leaders, some union officials, writers, journalists and others. PRDF has over 3,000 contributors and supporters who have made it financially possible to conduct the suit. PRDF has established relations with some of the foundations that provide support for some of the larger liberal and civil liberties organizations like the ACLU. And, as a fringe benefit of the case, we are deepening our relationship with a number of constitutional lawyers and civil liberties activists whose respect for our efforts in this case will prove a valuable asset in the future.

But, as much as we want to expand the sponsorship of the PRDF among liberals and civil libertarians, the crucial people for us to talk to about this case and what it means are the anti-racist fighters we work with in NSCAR, the young unionists (many of whom want more rights on the job and in their unions), the student activists, the proponents of the ERA and the others fighting for the oppressed. This is the area where our work around the suit could stand the most improvement.

We think the first step in strengthening this side of our activity around the case will be not to think of work we do around the suit as separate PRDF work to the exclusion of general SWP activity. It is the SWP that is suing the government, not PRDF. This should be a unique and attractive feature of our election campaigns, for starters.

Candidates can and should talk about how they and their party are suing the government for its violations of democratic rights. Every party member should be prepared to discuss why we're suing, what we are trying to accomplish, and why we think it is important. We should talk about why the SWP is for opening *all* the files, and ending the right of the government to function in secret.

Of course, it's true that we will run into many people who will disagree with us on some important question and who will want to endorse PRDF solely out of support for our constitutional rights. But we will probably meet *more* people who will support our suit and also want to know what we think about other questions.

One especially valuable aid in this SWP building work will be the book *COINTELPRO*, distributed by Pathfinder Press. As the only book available on the subject, it is easy to sell. Something in the area of 4,000 have been sold already. It has received comment in the press, including a major feature by (*MORE*), the journalism review, which reprinted an adaptation of Chomsky's introduction to the book.

But, there is another side to the book. If you've read the *Case of the Legless Veteran*, you will have noticed that it isn't an ordinary book about a defense case. It's also a book about the kind of party and the kind of person that were under attack. *COINTELPRO* is based on the *Militant* series by Nelson Blackstock, with other articles by Nancy Cole and Baxter Smith. This book not only explains the case, but explains what kind of a party we are, who our members are, and the kind of struggles we support. It can win members to the SWP, if properly utilized.

### **Take suit to radicalizing sectors of working class**

Our work on behalf of PRDF and use of PRDF literature could improve too. For example, one of the few groups that didn't have a table at the last NSCAR conference in Boston was the Political Rights Defense Fund. We should try to make a hard and fast rule for the future that there will be a PRDF table, PRDF literature, and an organized effort to win support for the suit at every conference of Blacks, unionists, Chicanos, students, feminists or anyone else whose struggles we are involved in and support.

We should think about ways to relate the case to everyone we work with and want to win to our ideas. For example, on campuses we can take resolutions on the case to student governments, faculty groups, BSU's, law school student bodies and everywhere else we may find support. We can make efforts to get honoraria for some of the victims of FBI harassment whose stories are told in the *COINTELPRO* book and build united front meetings to coincide with their visits.

When we run across people involved in the fight against S.1—which is becoming a more widely known issue—we should work with them, organize joint public meetings with them where possible, and we should point out the common roots of the enemies we are fighting.

Some special thought should be given to opportunities created by the wide interest in the Black community in the facts about government attacks on the Black movement. We should be among the foremost in continuing to call for an independent investigation of the role of the FBI and similar agencies in the murders of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Fred Hampton and others. We should explore the openings to talk about our case provided by news and

interview programs on radio stations with a largely Black audience. We should make the facts about our case available to Black newspapers, and local PRDFs will undoubtedly get a favorable response to requests for endorsement from Black groups, from church social action committees, and from local chapters of the NAACP.

Between now and the trial it will be important to step up our work aimed at building support for the case in the labor movement. PRDF has obtained some endorsements from union officials, but certainly not as many as it could. An important feature of these endorsements is that they can open the way for resolutions for the suit on the floor of union locals where feasible and for wider discussions of the case with the rank and file unionists we meet day to day. The work we do in this area will not only show workers why they should support the suit, but it can help win them to join and support the SWP.

The whole notion that unions come to the aid of victims of government attack—the idea of class solidarity—has taken a beating since the days of Mooney and Billings. But our suit can become an important vehicle for us in pointing to and championing that tradition.

I want to take a minute to deal with a parallel question. Several comrades have asked me whether or not they should apply under the Freedom of Information Act for their FBI or CIA file or the files of the SWP candidates in their area. We are discouraging this at the present time for a couple of reasons. First, we don't think documents obtained locally through the Freedom of Information Act will be of any special help in making the points we want to make in our campaign around the suit. Secondly, there are some legal hazards involved. The government has turned down several requests by SWPers for material, and the only recourse is to go to court. But in such a case, all the same issues that are being fought out in the PRDF case would be dealt with, but in a less favorable legal and political context. We are making some requests under the Act, but they are carefully selected and related to our work around the suit.

There may be a point in the future when we would want to change this policy, but even then we would want any applications under the Act coordinated through the national office.

We will be taking some steps in the center to aid in

broadening the work around the case. The Political Rights Defense Fund is planning to add people to its staff to improve the variety of literature that PRDF makes available on the case and to help step up the national interventions, fundraising and sponsor work done out of New York.

We would like to try to organize some tours of SWPers victimized by the government to talk about the case, but that depends on who could be made available and when. But even without organized tours, speaking engagements can be scheduled for many of the SWPers whose cases are described in the *COINTELPRO* book, and for members of the PRDF national staff.

Another step we want to take is to publish more analytical articles in the *Militant* and *ISR* outlining developments in the case, analyzing important stages in the government's response, and relating the case to our broader view of the attack on human rights.

A couple of months before the trial we'll substantially accelerate the campaign. We will want to build broad support rallies for the case, step up the production and distribution of literature related to the case, and we'll want to put national officers of the party on tour saying the same things all over the country that they'll be saying in the trial.

The suit is one of the important propaganda weapons of our party. As such, it is much broader than our work to support PRDF. Every branch of the party works hard to integrate sales and distribution of our press into every area of work. This is obviously the most effective way to use the propaganda tools at our disposal. For the same reason, we should see that our propaganda offensive around the case is broadly integrated into the work of the party.

We are currently involved in a fight that has been with Marxists since the *Communist Manifesto*, and which will be with us until the socialist revolution—the fight to defend our right to exist and advocate a revolutionary solution to the problems facing humanity.

The historical conjuncture gives us an important chance to strike some lasting blows to the democratic pretensions of capitalism, its illegal actions and its repressive machinery. The Socialist Workers party has the program and experience to make the most of it.