

PUBLISHED BY THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA

DEMOCRATIC Left

SEPT.-OCT. 1984

VOL. XII, No. 5

\$1.50

LABOR DAY — ELECTION ISSUE

LOCAL UNION
NO. 7113 UMW
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Tabb's
PINEAPPLE

Showdown in November

Harold Meyerson on Labor and the Elections

Michael Harrington on Economic Boom

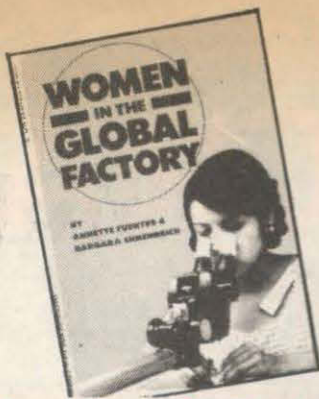
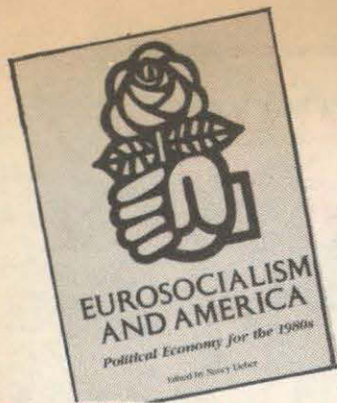
Issue of the Eighties

Jan Rosenberg and Jo Freeman on Comparable Worth

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CORRECTIONS

Gremlins were hard at work in our last issue. The last sentence on page 3 should have read *Mondale's acceptance speech (and to a lesser degree, Cuomo's keynote) was a masterpiece of concealed schizophrenia, on the one hand sounding themes that were communitarian, populist, anti-corporate; on the other hand affirming the limits of the welfare state more explicitly than its virtues.* ("There are no business taxes that weaken our economy," said Mondale of the platform, "no laundry lists that raid our Treasury.") Mondale ducked entirely the question of what manner of supply-side economics he would use to regenerate the economy; that debate was relegated to Hart (who championed private sector entrepreneurs) and Jackson (who championed the public sector).

On page 4, the sentence starting 13 lines up from the bottom of the last paragraph should read *The caucus enthusiastically passed a resolution of support for the Mondale-Ferraro ticket. Equally enthusiastically, it also passed a resolution from Massachusetts State Legislator Tom Gallagher and seconded by New Haven City Councilmember Martin Dunleavy calling on DSA to convene a conference of socialist elected officials from around the country in 1985.*

We apologize to Fred Siegel for leaving out the identifying information in his column on *The Forty-Year War*. Siegel is the author of *Troubled Journey: From Pearl Harbor to Ronald Reagan* (Hill and Wang, 1984) from which the column was adapted.

Unmask is 2327 Webster St., Berkeley, CA 94705. We gave the wrong zip.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Formerly Newsletter of the Democratic Left and Moving On.

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DEMOCRATIC LEFT (ISSN 0164-3207) is published six times a year at 853 Broadway, Suite 801, New York, N.Y. 10003. Second Class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Subscription \$8 regular; \$15 institutional.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to DEMOCRATIC LEFT, 853 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10003.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT is published by the Democratic Socialists of America at the above address, phone (212) 260-3270. Other offices: 1300 West Belmont Ave., Chicago IL 60657, (312) 871-7700; 3202 Adeline, Berkeley CA 94703, (415) 428-1354. Microfilm, Wisconsin State Historical Society, 816 State St., Madison WI 53703. Indexed in the Alternative Press Index, P.O. Box 7229, Baltimore MD 21218. Signed articles express the opinions of the authors and not of the organization.

Elections Give Unions Chance to Rebuild Base

by Harold Meyerson

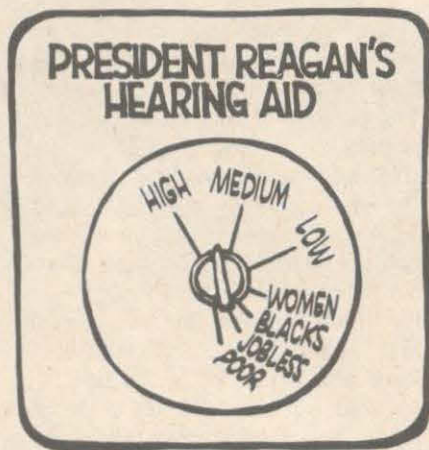
If it was accomplishing nothing else, by mid-September the Mondale campaign was answering a question that in a better world would go unasked: how much do you have when you have the institutional support of every progressive constituency in the United States at a time when everything else is going against you?

For, the one positive aspect of the Mondale campaign two weeks after Labor Day is that the national movements on which the Democratic party has come increasingly to rely are attempting to do more for the Democratic nominee than they have ever done (in the case of the newer movements) or than they have done in decades (in the case of labor). For the Sierra Club and the National Women's Political Caucus, this means a first time endorsement. For labor, this means the most extensive effort since the 1940s.

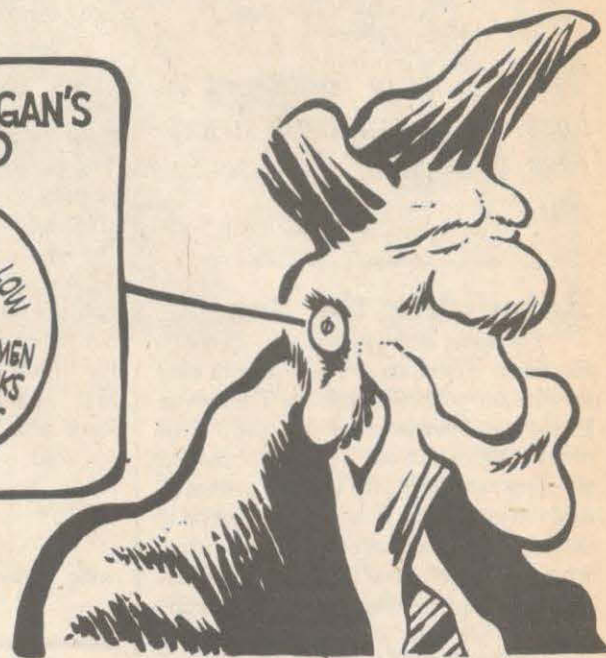
With a few weeks to go before the close of voter registration, it is too early to assess labor's efforts, and too early to know whether Mondale can close the gap to the point where labor's efforts make a difference. The numbers are fragmentary and inconclusive. Though the Food and Commercial Workers [UFCW] can cite 60,000 new registrations among their members, most internationals cannot yet quote any figures at all. If a union-led registration effort in New York City has signed up 110,000 new Democrats, another in Los Angeles has pulled in only 10,000.

But what distinguishes labor's presidential campaign this fall is not the numbers—not yet, one hopes—but two qualitative departures. The first is an unprecedented degree of cooperation among the various movements along the campaign trail. Insofar as Fritz Mondale has a field campaign at this late moment, it consists largely of the "party within the party"—labor, feminists, minorities, peace activists, environmentalists, frequently working together. The second departure is the recognition on the part of virtually the entire labor movement of the need for a bottom-up campaign that employs local stewards to carry the message to the members. "We're finally catching up," says one international's Western states political director, "with the Canadian Labor Congress."

Indeed, it was a presentation by CLC leaders to their American counterparts at the



POLITICO
MARGULIES



1980 Eurosocialism and America conference that directly inspired the Machinists' On-The-Job-Canvass, in which stewards conducted worksite surveys of their co-workers on a range of issues. It wasn't the Machinists, though, but the Communications Workers and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers [AFSCME] that first used the program to stump for Fritz Mondale last winter. By April, the AFL-CIO was convinced that the one-on-one program, as it had come to be called, was a demonstrable success in a season not otherwise noted for Mondale or labor triumphs. Late this summer, the AFL-CIO sent One-on-One kits to all internationals and through them to the locals. The intent was to put stewards to work, first registering unregistered members at the worksite, then interviewing workers and identifying them by candidate preference, then doing a worksite Get-Out-the-Vote drive on election day.

It has not been an easy program to implement. The AFL-CIO'S list of registered unionists is notoriously dated and fragmentary. More seriously, however, the steward system has atrophied throughout the movement. Ironically, the establishment of the union shop, which relieved stewards of the duty of collecting dues from members every couple of weeks, has lessened the contact and, frequently, the credibility of stewards

with members. Nor is there any guarantee that a vibrant steward system will ensure a politicized steward system. Endorsement and donation powers throughout labor belong to unions' state and national bodies; at best, locals execute but don't decide.

The decline of politics at the base, then, is hardly susceptible to reversal by executive fiat, nor did anyone expect that would be the case. Indeed, it is no surprise that the two internationals credited with doing the most to date on this fall's campaign are AFSCME and the Machinists [IAM]. It is not only that these are two of the most politicized internationals in the AFL-CIO, but also the two with the greatest experience at bringing political action (AFSCME) and membership canvassing (the IAM) down to the stewards.

Indeed, the fall campaign is a tougher test of the steward system than anyone envisioned, for no one anticipated such widespread antipathy to Mondale when the program was put in place this summer. In the National Education Association—an exception among unions in that membership is uniformly voluntary—the first-time appearance of stewards talking politics has led to some Republican resignations. Even in the IAM and AFSCME, stewards encounter considerable resistance. "In some of our small town locals," says AFSCME's New York Legislative Director Ed Draves, "our members have

been conditioned to think it's un-American to support Mondale." "A lot of our guys don't want to vote for Reagan," says IAM Political Director Bill Holayter, "but they can't see Mondale as a credible alternative." Despite these problems, most unions report more volunteers turning out than in the primaries or in 1980.

The decline of politics at the base, then, is hardly susceptible to reversal by executive fiat."

Rebuilding the Base

For some internationals, the campaign affords an opportunity to rebuild both their steward and political structures. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) has committed to test out a system of political stewards, paralleling the steward system already in place. The American Federation of Government Employees [AFGE], which represents federal workers, is combining in-depth steward training with political action training. "The only way we can rebuild the union," says Political Field Director Gene Vanderport, "is to do both."

Whether Mondale can close the gap enough for one-on-one to have a significant effect on the '84 election, then, it unquestionably has had a salutary effect on labor. Its implementation by the AFL-CIO signals a realization at the very heart of the labor movement that all is not well. "We reach so few people except during contract time," says one AFL-CIO leader who is close to Lane Kirkland. "And we're not doing much on contracts now either. No one talks to our people. To come around and talk to them: that's something. That's different." Indeed, the irony here is that having immersed themselves in the 1984 elections because politics seemed the only avenue open to reverse a precipitous decline, unions have found that politics demanded of them the kind of bottom-up work that may help them prevail in other arenas.

The '84 campaign has also helped build the "party within the party"—a working coalition of labor, feminist, and other activists who have taken to the field either to supplement the Mondale campaign or simply to become it in those areas where the campaign is still nonexistent. In the Midwest, AFGE stewards, many of them until recently Republicans, are working with Citizen Action; in California, the UFCW phone banks are run in conjunction with those of the National Organization for Women [NOW]; in New York,

AFSCME and other unions have put together a broad coalition of pro-Mondale forces. "In many places, the party is reluctant to organize cause groups," says one union political director, "because they fear we could challenge them down the line. So labor is going out and doing it; we have to do it. We've got to assemble a third force. These are the core anti-Reagan groups."

There remains no consensus among unions on the degree of emphasis their material should have on broad social issues as against issues peculiar to labor or their own industry. In general, unions that assume a low level of political consciousness tend to stress industry issues: such is the pitch, for instance, of the Seafarers. Florida AFL-CIO head Don Resha doubts that stressing either union or industry issues has much effect. "We talk to our members about what Reagan's done to the NLRB," he says, "but most people down here, including a lot of union members, don't know what the NLRB is. We have to go to our folks just like we would to the general public. You address community needs as a whole."

As long as Reagan's lead remains so wide, however, union message, structure,

and spirit can only do so much. Consider, for instance, the example of UAW Local 645, the last remaining auto local in California and one of the 14 that the international sent out against General Motors during contract negotiations this fall. When the local differences were ironed out, the members still refused to go back to work, despite a rather loud request from Solidarity House: they had gone out and would stay out till all their brothers and sisters had a good contract. But when Local 645's political director tried to recruit some strikers for Mondale work, he came up empty: the strikers ranged from unenthusiastic-for-Mondale to zealots for Reagan. In such a climate, the 1984 election cannot fairly be said to be a test of labor's strength. Indeed, labor stands to emerge from the 1984 elections—regardless of the outcome—with its internal structure and intraparty political ties strengthened. This is small consolation should Reagan win the chance to bust unions for four more years. Between now and November, their work—and Mondale's—is cut out for them. So is ours. ●

Harold Meyerson is a California-based political consultant and writer.

Dem Ticket Priority For Leftists This Fall

by Timothy Sears

The 1984 presidential campaign presents unique opportunities for democratic socialists. A Democratic victory is possible only if mass constituencies of workers, women, blacks, Hispanics, the elderly, and the poor are mobilized in a dynamic movement, transforming the election from an ordinary campaign into a bold progressive crusade. In this context, DSA has a particularly important role to play in winning the highest priority of the democratic left: the election of Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro.

The alternative of four more years of Reaganism is unacceptable. In his first term, Ronald Reagan has inflicted intolerable suffering on the most defenseless members of our society, while his tax cuts have raised the taxes of ordinary working families and delivered billions of dollars to corporate coffers and the coupon-clipping rich.

From the clumsy and tragic intervention in Lebanon to the criminal covert war against the Sandinistas, from the rapprochement

with racist South Africa to the reckless acceleration of the arms race, his foreign policy has been characterized by an insensitivity to human rights, an utter disregard for the right of self-determination, and muscle-flexing displays of military might over the slower and more difficult process of negotiations.

Most ominously, Reagan's rightwing apparatchiks have subverted the purposes of one federal agency after another—packing the Civil Rights Commission with opponents of affirmative action, the Environmental Protection Agency with defenders of corporate polluters, and the National Labor Relations Board [NLRB] with union-busting management lawyers. At the same time, he has placed scores of young rightwing activists in lifetime federal court appointments, such as Sandra Day O'Connor, the most reactionary member of the Supreme Court. With four or five high court justices likely to be chosen in the next four years, a Reagan second term would set progressive legal reforms back for generations.

One deliberate goal of these policies has been to weaken those groups that oppose the Reagan program. Thus, the labor movement—the largest organized constituency of

the democratic left—has been a special target of the administration's offensive, beginning with the brutal suppression of the PATCO strike. Since unions must utilize NLRB procedures in organizing workers, the Reagan appointments to the Labor Board have been particularly devastating, bringing organizing efforts to a standstill in many areas. This, combined with the "de-fund the left" strategy of cutting off funds for tenant groups, women's centers and other community organizing efforts, has allowed Reagan to destabilize his organized opposition.

By working to elect the Democratic ticket, we would not only help to put an end to this reactionary regime, but also lay the groundwork for progressive new departures in American politics. It is unlikely that a Mondale administration would, on its own, carry out the kind of structural economic reforms that are now essential, but it would be far more responsive to pressures from the democratic left than any recent president has been. Indeed, the candidates nominated by the San Francisco convention come with exceptional left-liberal credentials.

Presidential challenger Walter Mondale is a product of the nation's most liberal state party, the Democratic Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota, that unique merger of Depression-era radicals and mainstream Democrats. For twelve years, Mondale was one of the U.S. Senate's foremost liberals, leading the fights for Medicare, the Fair Housing Act, extension of the Voting Rights Act, the Supplemental Security Income program, child care legislation, tax reform, and arms control. His consistent liberal voting record earned him a 92 percent rating from the Americans for Democratic Action, 93 percent from the AFL-CIO, and 100 percent from the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. Similarly, Representative Geraldine Ferraro earned a 79 percent ADA rating and a 93 percent AFL-CIO rating.

To date the Democrats have not proudly proclaimed their progressivism. In part this reflects the inadequacy of Keynesian liberalism in the current circumstances. When Reaganomics reduces unemployment by forcing jobless steel and auto workers to take minimum wage jobs at McDonalds while steel and auto companies invest their profits in speculative merger deals, the old liberal Democratic approach of simply boosting aggregate demand without disturbing the structures of corporate power is clearly obsolete. Mondale has at times tried to distance himself from his own progressive past, to project a moderate centrism characterized by a supposed "new realism." But this move towards the center will not win the Democrats any political advantage; certainly the Republicans are not fooled. They promptly



raised the ideological ante, opening the campaign with the bizarre accusation that the Democrats have "moved so far left, they've left America." The Democrats' response thus far has been encouraging, with Mondale forthrightly calling for increased taxes on corporations and the wealthy, and promising that he will be a "people's president."

Other encouraging signs can be seen in major Senate races around the country, where proven progressives like Tom Harkin in Iowa, Lloyd Doggett in Texas, and Joan Growe in Minnesota have realistic chances of replacing conservative Republicans. If the Democrats can carry enough of these contests to regain control of the Senate—so that, for instance, Edward Kennedy would replace Orrin Hatch as Chair of the Labor and Human Resources Committee—the Congress could potentially become an arena for social advances, rather than the desperate rear-guard actions we've seen in the last few years. A Democratic Senate would allow Congress to debate comparable worth legislation, rather than Food Stamp cuts, comprehensive labor law reform, rather than new weapons systems, full employment programs, rather than prayer in schools.

These progressive issues will not be placed on the national agenda unless there is an active, united coalition of constituencies sharing a material self-interest in jobs and social justice. This coalition is already beginning to take shape. The mobilization of the black community, helped enormously by the Jesse Jackson campaign in the primaries, has added enormously to the potential political power of the progressive coalition. The politicization of the labor movement has brought thousands of organized workers into the political arena for the first time. The women's movement and the senior citizens organizations and the Hispanic groups have been far

more active politically this year.

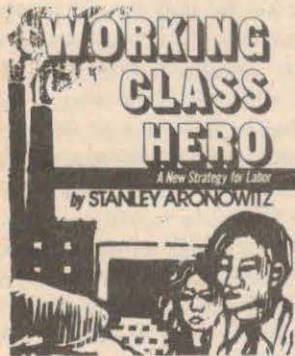
A particularly exciting development this year has been the growing political role of the labor movement, which has decisively broken with the nonpartisan policies of the Meany era. Beginning with the Solidarity Day rally in 1981, the AFL-CIO has moved towards greater political leadership. Condemning Reagan's regime of "government by and for a narrow class, driven by an appetite for privilege and tax avoidance," Kirkland has sought allies among "others whose just claims have been dismissed as special interests: with minorities in search of opportunity and dignity, with women, with the elderly and with striving youth." The labor movement's early endorsement of Mondale sought to strengthen that alliance, even as Mondale made clear his differences from the AFL-CIO leadership on such issues as the nuclear freeze, the MX missile, and the war in Central America. After the New Hampshire debacle, when Mondale's campaign seemed fated to go the way of Ed Muskie's in 1972, the labor movement was forced to mobilize the rank and file as never before, hammering away at critical worker issues. In the process, a more activist, more issue-conscious, more politically sophisticated labor movement emerged.

Mondale's coalition must be expanded from the base that supported him in the primaries, pulling in not just trade unionists and feminists, but also welfare mothers and Yuppies, peace activists and unemployed black teenagers. As democratic socialists, we must work not only to mobilize that broad alliance for the fall election, but to build the unity, the sense of shared purpose, the solidarity that will keep the coalition together after November. A Democratic victory this fall does not ensure full employment, peace, decency at home or justice for the Third World—it only opens up these possibilities.

DSA's involvement in this campaign will enable us to build working relationships with those at every level in the peace movement, the feminist movement, the labor movement, the black movement, who will carry on the struggle after the election. Our ideas and our program will be relevant to that coalition only to the extent that we will have proved ourselves to be loyal, active participants.

In the May-June issue of DEMOCRATIC LEFT, Michael Harrington compared the coming campaign to Harry Truman's "give-'em-hell" campaign in 1948. Clearly, that is the sort of bold, aggressive strategy that the Democrats must adopt this year if they are to win. In this context, it is useful to remember Truman's own post-mortem on that campaign: "I never gave them hell. I just told the truth, and the Republicans thought it was hell." If we are bold enough to tell the truth about the Republicans this year—about the phony "recovery" with its staggering interest rates and declining standards of living, about the insane arms race, about the brutal budget cuts and the dirty little war in Central America—then we can begin to build the foundations for a better world. ●

Timothy Sears is on the staff of the International Union of Bricklayers & Allied Crafts, co-chair of the Houston local, and a vice-chair of the DSA Labor Commission.



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LETTERS

Off the Mark

To the Editor:

At our last membership meeting the local discussed at length the DSA-NPAC statement on the presidential campaign that appeared in the July-August DEMOCRATIC LEFT. The overwhelming sentiment of the people at the meeting was that the statement does not represent an accurate reflection of the average member's feelings on the subject, and as one member put it, "it was too much puff and not enough substance."

While we do not disagree with the clear need to support Mondale-Ferraro in this most crucial of elections, for all the reasons alluded to in the DSA-NPAC position, we think any DSA statement on the election should also contain the following points:

1) An explicit acknowledgment of the tremendous contribution made by Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition in articulating a left program and mobilizing a large constituency behind that program during the primaries and at the convention.

2) Specific ways in which the platform of the D.P. and the campaign statements of the candidates do not address in adequate ways issues we in DSA have strong sentiments about and/or different positions on. These would include but are not limited to the following: no call for an absolute decrease in the absurd levels of military spending, no "no first use of nuclear weapons pledge," absence of a commitment to national health insurance or a federal jobs program, an unbalanced position on peace in the Middle East, and a mediocre position on the situation in El Salvador, etc.

While we will be working as hard on the elections as any other local in DSA, to do so without clearly acknowledging not only our support and agreement but also our differences is, we believe, an ineffective way for our organization to participate in the elections, and not particularly helpful to the campaign, either.

If we in DSA are serious about building a

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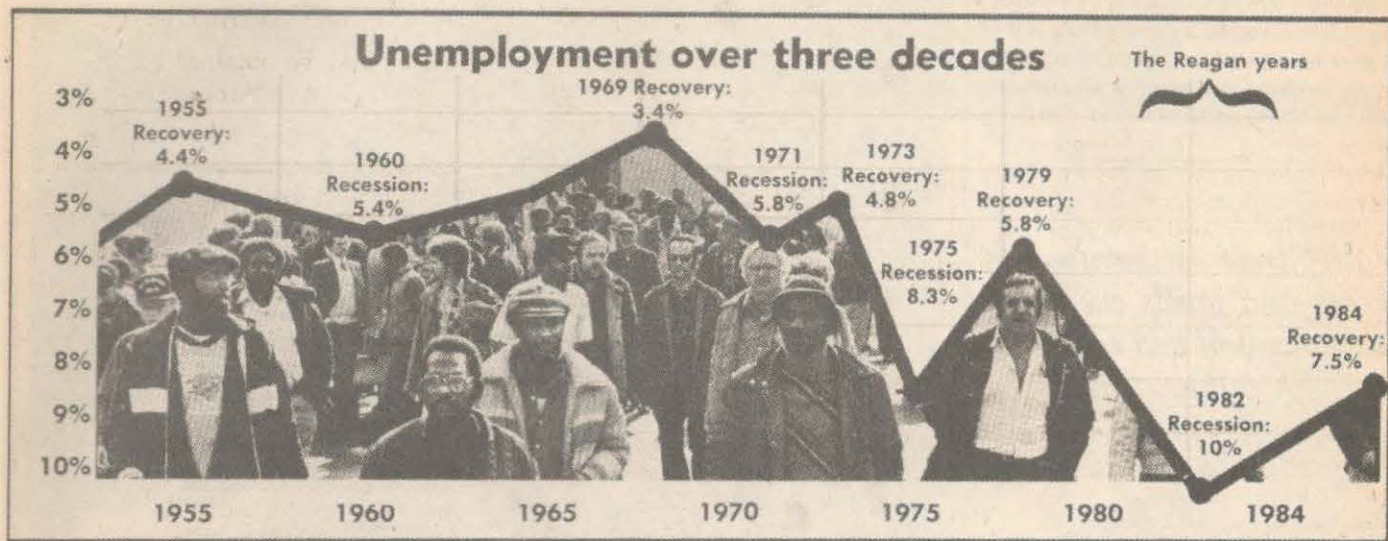
Every year at this time we publish a special Labor Day issue in which our friends and supporters take greetings to help sustain DEMOCRATIC LEFT. This year, our Labor Day-Election issue is geared to the Second Labor Day of the year—November 6. The coordinator for the greetings in this issue was our summer intern Ed Colon, whose work was invaluable in making this an issue with the broadest range of greetings we have had in years. We want to thank him publicly for his hard work and creativity in making this issue possible.

Cover: Photo by Earl Dotter/American Labor Education Center. Unemployed coal mining couple pick up free food distributed by Local Union 7113, UMWA.

left wing of the Democratic party, we must be part of a process of public programmatic critique and serious constituency mobilizations, not just a cheerleading squad of party loyalists.

Members of the Steering Committee
East Bay DSA
Oakland, CA

"Recovery" Masks Flaws



by Michael Harrington

I am going to engage in the murkiest and most dangerous of exercises in this Labor Day issue. I am going to talk about how the future may affect the American unions.

I do not do so out of any desire to play with a crystal ball. We have already pointed out in *DEMOCRATIC LEFT* that the Reagan recovery is, in considerable measure, both real and made out of sand. And that is, of course, a central point in the most crucial effort of this period: fighting to elect Mondale and Ferraro and to defeat Reagan-Bush.

It is also crucial to the future of unions, for it is impossible to engage in effective collective bargaining unless they have some sense of what the future holds. And that is why I want to write about the coming crisis of the American economy. Or rather, that is why I want to be more precise about how that crisis might well come about. Understanding why it is going to happen has a lot to do with realizing what programs might be pushed to counter it. We are not talking here about a coming storm or a hurricane that is an act of nature; we are confronting a future that can—and must—be changed.

I do not pretend to be able to predict when the crisis will come or what precise set of circumstances will trigger it. For almost a decade now, almost every such forecast has been a failure—even though the corporate analysts charge a high price for their bad guesses. What I want to do is to describe some of the economic factors that will most

certainly play a major role in the genesis and evolution of that crisis and to do so with an eye to what can be done in defense of working people.

Classic Cycles

First, there will be a crisis because the American economic system, for all of the changes that have been made in it, is still subject to classic capitalist business cycles. A recession, we must remember, is not simply a problem for our society; it is also a reactionary cure. And that truism never held so surely as it has in recent years.

Reagan's monetarism did fight inflation. The savage attack on unions was part of that process, a way of holding down the human cost of the production system. The firing of the PATCO controllers, the vicious assault on wages, the firings and plant shutdowns—all made sense from a corporate viewpoint. To be sure, they depressed profits and even drove some of the marginal—and not so marginal—enterprises out of business in 1982 and early 1983. But they also prepared the way for a recovery in which both inflation and wages would be low, which would permit profits to be higher than ever before.

But if the downturn prepares the way for a recovery in the business cycle, the recovery is the prelude to a downturn. As more workers return to the job, as plant capacity is utilized, as new investment proceeds, costs increase and bottlenecks appear. That is why Wall Street, already puzzled by the persistence of incredibly high real interest rates, is terrified of success and greets every announcement of bad economic

news with rapturous enthusiasm.

But here, too, there is a specific Reaganesque element. The president, we all know, totally failed to start a supply-side, investment-led boom; he was the beneficiary of a perverse, militaristic Keynesian demand-side upturn, the kind that he had denounced. But it is impossible to engage in the kind of irresponsible stimulus that Reagan has initiated without eventually paying a price, particularly when the ultra-Keynesian policy is accompanied by a genuine conservative refusal to control prices.

Second, and all of these factors relate to one another and will reinforce one another when the crisis comes, a conservative argument is finally coming true under conditions that should be disastrous for conservatives. In the seventies, it was rightwing gospel—and eventually the Carter administration itself took up the theme—that too much public and private spending on consumption was "crowding out" investment in new plants. That was a fantasy. But it could become a reality in the next period as the United States government tries to finance the stratospheric deficits that Ronald Reagan created when he reduced the tax base of the federal government, primarily by giving money away to the rich.

That same phenomenon also puts the United States at the mercy of foreigners to a degree never true in the past. One of the reasons why there has not already been a "crowding out" effect is that so much of the money that has financed Reagan's profligacy has come from abroad. Not so incidentally, that has created enormous problems for left

governments in Europe trying to push investment—that is, jobs—in their own societies. But it is also a clear and present danger to the United States.

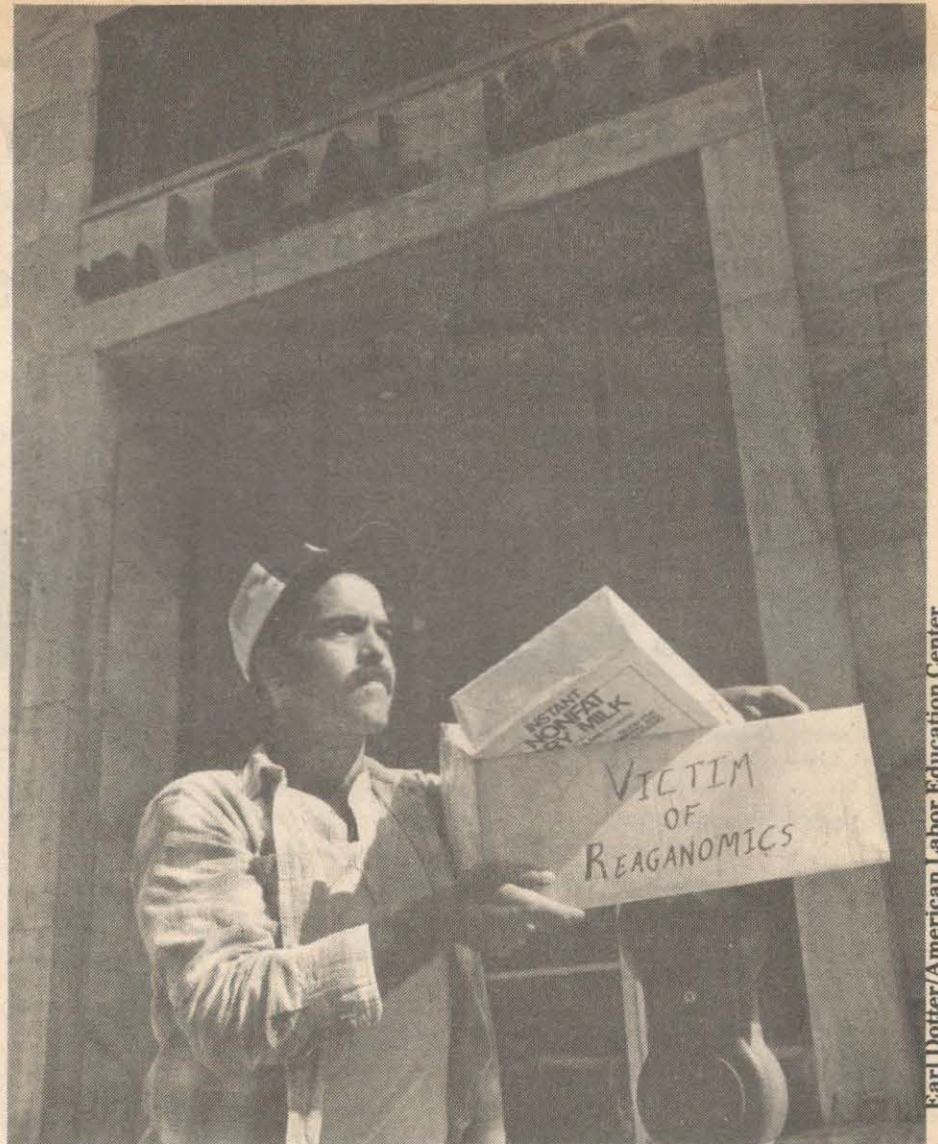
As Robert Heilbroner pointed out in a recent issue of *The New Yorker*, when a government's creditors are under its own taxing powers—when it owes money to its own citizens and has the power to take money from them as well as to pay it to them—it

“Wall Street is terrified of success and greets every announcement of bad economic news with enthusiasm.”

has, to put it mildly, a great deal of leverage. But when, as is now the case, the nation's creditors are foreign nationals, there is a completely new situation. If they decide that they no longer have confidence in the United States, for whatever reason, they can take their money and go home with impunity.

This point might seem preposterous right now when America's high interest rates make it the darling of the international rich. But what would happen if the business cycle reasserted itself? At that point, people outside the United States would have the ability to make a recession much worse than it would “naturally” be. And even now one of the reasons why we “enjoy” the confidence of those foreigners is that the dollar is overvalued in such a way as to take jobs away from workers in this country. Our present advantage, then, is being “funded” by unemployed, or underemployed, American workers, and it puts us in structural danger when the next crisis comes. Heads the bosses win, tails the workers lose.

A similar point can be made about the international debt crisis. The business press in recent weeks has been supremely confident that the danger of an international financial collapse has passed. The only cloud on the horizon, it is said, is Argentina, since Mexico and Brazil, the two other super debtors, have already been socially mean enough to satisfy the bankers. But what if, as a consequence of the business cycle of “crowding out,” the interest rates resume their upward march? Could that lead to more breakdowns and shamefaced nationalizations, like that of Continental in Chicago? I think so. But how many bankruptcies can conservatives nationalize? There are limits.



Earl Dotter/American Labor Education Center

At the same time, as we have pointed out before in *DL*, those low wages, which have saved on costs and made such a contribution to the recovery, also represent a shrinking market for the products of that recovery. In the first phase, the reorganization of the American occupational structure is a big plus for cost-conscious private producers; in the next phase it could be a disaster for sales-conscious private distributors.

The above holds for the continuing technological revolution. We know from the General Motors document that the UAW published that the company is planning a drastic reduction of its workforce, not simply through outsourcing, but through automation and robots. That limits markets, too. And, at the same time, an American capitalism with its tendencies toward “paper entrepreneurship”—speculative investments in takeovers and mergers, the corporate binge of short-term credit, the games played by the huge institutional investors in financial markets—has kept money from going into truly productive investments. Our declining steel indus-

try is now joined—in the midst of “prosperity”—by our declining machine tool industry.

That is one of the reasons why about 40 percent of the new machine tools being acquired by American business during this boom are being imported from Japan, West Germany and South Korea. In the short and middle runs, labor obviously has to insist that “free trade”—a doctrine honored in the breach in this country—not be used to justify destroying the living standards of auto and steel and machine tool workers. But in the middle and long runs, and particularly in view of the commitment to justice in the Third World, the only solution is to create a productive, full employment America.

How do these speculations on the future relate to the labor movement in the fall of 1984? There is one critical conclusion I would draw. Any attempt of the unions to build little Shangri Las of well-paid workers, isolated from these major trends, is going to fail. Either labor will come up with structural conclusions to a structural crisis, or we will all lose. ●

MORE THAN WORDS

by Jack Clark

Three years ago, the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) was still picketing at airports, trying to force the government to pay attention to the grievances of its members. Like the postal workers strike of the early 1970s, this walkout by federal employees was illegal. Like striking workers in most situations, the air traffic controllers had resorted to a work stoppage because every other means of airing their grievances and finding relief had failed. Of course, PATCO ran up against a president determined to resist unions. The air traffic controllers were fired, the union decertified, PATCO members barred from federal employment.

With the breaking of the air traffic controllers' union, Ronald Reagan began a new era in labor-management relations. Since the fall of 1981, employers have had open season on unions. Collective bargaining has shifted dramatically from disputes over wages and hours and conditions to battles over whether or not unions can survive. Not too long ago, workers would win some wage breakthrough or new benefit in one industry or sector, and unions would begin raising demands in other industries or sectors for that same victory. In the 1980s, any takeback that management wins in steel or auto or any other sector quickly becomes a universal management condition for collective bargaining. The original basis for conceding some amount of money or a portion of a benefit was that the employer faced difficult, even ruinous financial conditions. The basis for universalizing the takebacks has been sheer employer power, backed up in Washington and abetted by a climate of public opinion hostile to unions.

On November 6 DSA members, working with unionists, black, Latino and other minority activists, feminists and people concerned with the survival of the planet hope to do something about the anti-labor atmosphere in Washington. Even if we succeed in electing Mondale and Ferraro, though, the broad public antipathy to labor's goals will stand in the way of union gains at the bargaining table, in organizing campaigns, and in advancing the welfare state. If Ronald Reagan wins re-election, the offensive against unions will continue with a ferocity unknown since the Chamber of Commerce conducted its largely successful "American Plan" to drive down



Earl Dotter/American Labor Education Center

union membership in the 1920s.

The American Solidarity Movement was formed earlier this year by DSA Co-Chair Michael Harrington in conjunction with several other DSA leaders and public figures outside our organization's ranks who share this concern about the future of the labor movement. More than 150 prominent people signed a solidarity ad that appeared in the March 18 *New York Times*; none were staff or elected officials of unions.

At the time the ad appeared, Harrington

and others associated with the effort were blunt. If an ad was all that we could do, that effort would be well spent. Any visible support for the beleaguered labor movement is necessary and welcome. But the discussion began almost immediately: what can we do to make American Solidarity more than a *Times* ad?

One answer was and is that DSAers, working with other prolabor activists, can provide help to unions in immediate battles which often threaten the very existence of



SOLIDARITY

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The American Solidarity Movement needs to be built at the local level if it is to succeed. Ties between unionists and progressive activists were once natural and automatic, but for a variety of reasons, that natural coalition has broken down. Rebuilding the community-labor alliances will be crucial to the success of any of the projects of constituencies on the left. The early civil rights movement of the late 1950s benefitted from the experience of a corps of unionists; earlier, the breakthroughs in organizing mass industries in the late 1930s depended on labor having wide support in the community. How can you help to organize the American Solidarity Movement and begin rebuilding those ties?

1. Order a bundle of the new American Solidarity brochure. We're offering it at a rate of \$20 for a bundle of 100. The attractive presentation of the statement, ad, list of signers and article by Mike Harrington on myths about the labor movement makes it an excellent educational piece.

2. Schedule a discussion in your DSA local about the labor movement and how DSA and other activists relate to it. You can use the Solidarity pamphlet as a be-

ginning. Also ask members or friends active in the local union movement to help prepare the discussion. If there are local strikes underway, bring up the possibility of the local's doing some kind of support work.

3. Introduce the American Solidarity pledge as a resolution at political clubs and other associations you belong to. Use the Solidarity brochure to help focus discussion about support for unions.

4. Form a local committee for American Solidarity. If people in your area signed the ad, contact them about helping to get a group going locally. Otherwise, approach people in your area who are equivalent to the national signers (e.g., the local leaders of NOW, prominent activists, religious leaders) about forming a local American Solidarity Committee. Taking an ad in your local newspaper is probably too expensive, but a press release about the formation of the group might attract some attention. Also, the local committee could issue a statement or leaflet in conjunction with support for a local or national labor struggle. Once formed, the committee could address itself to educational work around unions or to building practical support or both.

the union. Standing on the picket lines, getting publicity and public sympathy for strikers, raising money for strike funds, organizing protests that focus on the corporations trying to break unions all matter greatly. On a modest scale, the American Solidarity Movement has provided that kind of support—to Teamsters striking against the telecommunications giant, MCI, to the largely female bargaining unit organized by District 65 of the UAW at Harper & Row, to Steel Workers in Cicero, Illinois fighting against a brutal campaign of unionbusting by Danly Tools, to Salvadoran refugees trying to organize a sweatshop on Long Island. There is an urgent need to broaden and deepen labor support work of that kind. As more unions come up against the prospects faced by PAT-

CO, supporters can rally the unionists themselves and serve notice to employers that there are costs to unionbusting. In addition, labor support work provides a great training ground for left activists to learn more about the labor movement and about organizing generally; ask any veteran of the United Farm Worker boycotts.

Of course, one of the sharpest limits imposed on labor defense work is that in the 1980s there are relatively few people who understand why they should be on the picket line with strikers. The larger mission of the American Solidarity Movement must center on education on the role of unions and why the public, particularly the broad progressive community, should support labor. The American Solidarity Movement has begun

that educational work with the original ad (which has since appeared in more than half a dozen publications, including *The New Republic* and *Commonweal*), with a special printing of the Solidarity brochure, complete with the ad, a list of signers and a brief article by Mike Harrington on common myths about the labor movement, which was distributed widely at the Democratic Convention and is available for local distribution.

More American Solidarity activity is being planned. At least one major union has expressed interest in working with ASM on a project to address the consistent antilabor bias in the press. A series of conferences or teach-ins is possible. More literature will certainly be produced. As the ad continues to run in publications, a mailing list of supporters grows, and they are regularly called upon to lend support to specific labor struggles.

Whether or not the American Solidarity Movement becomes a significant force in creating a prolabor current in American politics will really depend on the response in dozens of communities across the country. Through something like a local American Solidarity committee, DSA members and their allies could begin to plan specific labor support actions, conduct public educational activities, build up ties to the local unions and begin to put together the sort of labor-community alliances that could make this a very different nation in the 1990s.

Or the project could end with a few ads and some worthy labor defense efforts. If that's the case, the American Solidarity Movement has been worth the effort but is less than it can be. ●

Jack Clark is a New York writer who has been active in ASM.

*"I'd rather
be in
Philadelphia
after
the election."
(See page 37.)*

DANLY WORKERS TAKE FIGHT NATIONWIDE

by Miriam Bensman

Steelworker Joe Romano admits that it may be difficult for people outside the plant to understand some of the big issues in his union local's strike at the Danly Machine Tool Plant in Cicero, Illinois, which has dragged on since May 1.

Take job combinations, for instance, a management proposal that has emerged in dozens of bitter labor conflicts in the last few years. Management wants to train people to do both mechanical and electrical work. In itself, that's not bad, but Romano, who is president of Steelworkers local 15271, says that the effect will be to make work unendurably hard.

Asked to explain work in the plant to someone who works in an office and takes little freedoms granted, Romano reflects, "When you're working on a machine, you're working like a mule. But when you finally get it running, there's a minute or two you can relax, maybe have a cigarette. If you're running two or three machines, you never have that minute. You become part of the machine. It's the same if you combine two jobs."

In a plant with a constant area of production, he adds, there are no long periods without work. The plant is not like a construction site, where a plumber sits for one or two hours while the cement is being poured.

Most of the jobs in the Danly Cicero plant are highly skilled. The company produces custom-designed presses and die sets that stamp sheet steel into auto body parts. Many of the presses weigh 2,000 tons and are as big as a three-story house.

The work involves heavy lifting for most employees. For the riggers, who hook up the presses for assembly, it is physical labor that strains their bodies to the utmost for hours, Romano says. During the 15 to 20 minutes that the skilled workers take over to assemble the pieces, the riggers sit and rest. Romano argues that they couldn't do that heavy work all day without the extra little rests, so they are only assigned to one area in the plant each day. Management now wants to "bounce riggers all over the plant, from one grueling job to the other," he says.

Management at the Danly plant has placed increased productivity through such work rule changes at the top of its list of



"After all the laid-off workers are recalled, new employees would start at \$5 less per hour. That will create nightmares in future negotiations."

demands, in the first negotiations since Ogdan Corporation acquired the family-owned company in 1981. The new management has also tried to increase efficiency by tightening discipline. Most of the workers receive incentive pay for producing work above the quota. Last year, they were no longer al-

lowed to forgo the extra money and take a little walk, get a cup of coffee, or ask a friend about his fishing trip when they got ahead of their target, Romano recalls. "People who could do an hour-and-a-half's work in one hour were expected to do so every hour. People were getting warnings for standing with their hands on their hips for two minutes. Management timed their trips to the washroom."

Management also cracked down on workers who didn't meet their production targets, even when it was just by a hair. "One fella, Ozzie, retired two days before the strike after working the plant for 30 years," Romano says. "A top machinist and an excellent worker," Ozzie had never had a problem, wasn't vocal, wasn't a union activist. One week, Ozzie received a warning for being only 98 percent efficient, and decided to call it quits. The old management seldom warned anyone who was at least 80 percent efficient, Romano says.

Romano adds that there were more grievances pending arbitration in the last year before the strike than in the previous 20 years combined. Most were over efficiency. Like Ozzie, 36 other people, fed up with the treatment, decided to retire in the last month before the strike. There are usually only four retirements a year.

The one thousand workers who remained voted 617 to 19 to reject management's offer, out of a possible 1000 votes.

Foreign Competition

Danly officials did not return this reporter's repeated calls, but in press releases and employee newsletters they make the company's position clear. The company, which lost money when the auto industry was hurting, will only be able to win the huge new contracts generated by the recovery if it can cut its costs enough to compete with press manufacturers abroad. International competition has increased, and Danly maintains that there is only room for three of the eight press manufacturers on the world market. The company must increase its efficiency to be one of those three, it says. The proposed work rule changes make it possible to cut costs without cutting wages, the company says.

The union counters that the contract would still hurt members economically.

Members would lose to inflation during the proposed three-year wage and pension freeze. Cutbacks in the benefit plan, particularly the proposal to make workers pay for increases in their health insurance premiums, could cost workers an average of \$40 a week over three years, the union estimates. The loss of paid lunch time and two holidays will also make the members work more for the same pay.

The company is also trying to reduce wages for new hires, with a two-tier wage structure that would eventually lower the average wages in its work force. After all the laid-off workers are recalled, new employees would start at approximately \$5 less per hour and later go up to about \$3 less. That will create nightmares in future negotiations, when old and new members make competing demands, Romano says. It may eventually hurt present members, he adds, if the new members insist that more of the money available in the next contract go to them to close the gap.

Romano also argues that many of management's noneconomic demands are items that the union "paid for" in previous negotiations. Seniority is a case in point. "In good years, when bargaining aggressively, the union often gave up on money to win stronger seniority provisions," he says, adding that almost nothing could be more important.

In the current negotiations, management has asked to ignore seniority when deciding which of several workers should be transferred or laid-off temporarily, for instance when a machine breaks down, or which should be promoted temporarily when someone is out sick. The union could live with that, Ed Sadlowski, sub-regional director in Chicago said, if there were a limit of only one two-week temporary change in each job every three months. Management refuses to accept that limit.

"They call it temporary, but it can last forever," Sadlowski says scornfully. He is helping the local with the strike and negotiations. "I've seen this in other plants. They put someone on temporarily for two weeks, send him back to the other job for two days, put him in again for two weeks. It's really permanent and it means no seniority."

The result, he says, would be a return to the nepotism and corruption that was rampant in the days before seniority was established. Romano adds that it could mean that older workers as they became less efficient, would be pushed out.

Sadlowski charges that the company is trying to bust the union, and forced them out on strike with demands it knew the union would never accept. Some of the demands attack the union directly, including an open shop and elimination of full-time pay for the union president and chief steward. During

the strike, management also informed the members of their legal right to quit the union and return to work. About 40 did so in the first two months. After management began hiring replacement workers who, it threatened, would take union members' jobs permanently, more members went back to work, for a total of about 150. The company is now asking that the workers crossing the picket lines be guaranteed jobs when the strike ends.

The strike has been long and ugly. Negotiations stall for weeks at a time. Each side accuses the other of failing to negotiate and of risking the loss of the huge contracts that could put the ailing company back on its feet, guaranteeing everyone's job.

Mass picketing in the first few weeks ended in violence. Management charges the workers with assault. Many of them were arrested. The union replies that the tussles were started by the Chicago policemen moonlighting as security guards, some of whom provoked workers with racial slurs. A court injunction put an end to the large demonstrations. Since then, the union has picketed in small groups at the plant gates, in shopping centers, at the homes of scabs and at Chicago's City Hall, to protest Mayor Washington's failure to control the off-duty police as he promised to do. In August Washington did ban off-duty Chicago police officers from working as security guards in strike situations. Workers have been arrested for leafleting, bringing the total number arrested to 20.

In late July, thugs attacked Romano in his car. He fought them off, but shortly after they attacked the empty vehicle with a sledge hammer.

In an effort to increase pressure on the company, the union hired Kamber Associates, a Washington-based consulting firm, in mid-July, to mount a corporate campaign. The campaign will focus on Ogden's Corporation's board of directors and on financial institutions that provide capital and own stock. It will also look at the finances of Ogden subsidiaries, which range from marine companies to food processors. Strikers are leafleting at Ogden subsidiaries. N.Y. DSA members picketed corporate headquarters this summer.

In many ways, Romano says, the strike is "going great." Participation in meetings and pickets is high and the increased publicity and new tactics are helping to keep up morale. The "scabs" are what "really hurts," he adds wearily. Some of the people who voted for the strike are going back into the plant. Other members feel betrayed.

The Dany strike is hardly unique. Similar demands have been made by both private and public employers over the last few years. Job combinations have figured prominently in Steelworkers and Machinists negotiations;

two-tier wage structures in basic industry, private hospital and the U.S. Postal Service negotiations. Businesses are acutely conscious of the trend: Ogden mentioned it specifically in its annual corporate report this year.

The concession bargaining that started in basic industries hurt by the recession and increased international competition, and in those hurt by deregulation, has spread to many parts of the economy. Small companies, like Dany, that are acquired by large conglomerates, often are most willing to take a long strike.

At Dany, workers are still walking the picket lines, with no end in sight. ●

Miriam Bensman is a New York based writer and a longtime DSA Youth Section activist.

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EQUAL PAY BATTLES

by Jan Rosenberg

Once upon a time in the mid-1960s many right-thinking people felt that women's equality demanded two basic changes. First, women had to move en masse into the labor force, breaking down the public/private distinctions in which male and female roles were embedded, and second (the corollary), women must receive equal pay for equal work. No sooner did the "equal pay for equal work" demand become law and gain wide (though not unanimous) acceptance than new, less tangible goals came to the fore. To younger feminists (at first) the personal issues concerning identity, socialization, sexuality, female friendship, mother-daughter relationships and so forth supplanted the relatively straightforward, public economic and legal concerns of the older, women's rights branch of the

movement. Although many agreed that the more prosaic economic and legal problems existed, there was a shared expectation that they could be eliminated rather quickly and painlessly. Women, after all, *were* moving into the labor force in record numbers. Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act had banned discrimination in employment based on sex and, it was assumed, was the beginning of the end of gender-based inequality in the workplace.

Now it is 1984, and we find that we face basic economic issues and problems more daunting than we first imagined. More and more women have moved into the work force, but the wage gap between female and male employees remains the same as it was in 1939! In 1984, as in 1939, women earn about 59¢ for every dollar that men earn.

What are the reasons for the persistent

gap between men's and women's wages? And what should be done about it? Sex role socialization, a family-wage ideology that says men should be paid more to support their families, and knitting these together, the continuation of a sex-segregated occupational structure, account for the wage gap, it is argued. The remedy urged by increasingly frustrated trade unionists and feminists is comparable worth, a reform which takes into account the deep structures of gender inequality. Proponents of comparable worth, or pay equity, as it is also called, argue that those jobs held primarily by women (more than 70 percent), such as librarian, nurse, stenographer, appear, from an "objective" evaluation of their content, to be paid at wages less than their skill and credentials would demand if they were held by white men. Until now, they contend, this has been



a self-fulfilling prophecy: most women are concentrated in jobs which have been traditionally underpaid and undervalued because they are filled by women. In spite of the visions held out by feminists in the sixties and seventies, the great majority of women continue to move into "women's work." Thus the only way to narrow the wage gap is to force up the pay women earn

Comparable worth is the name of the burgeoning movement that has as its main goal equal pay for women who hold jobs *comparable in worth* to those that white men have traditionally occupied. According to its advocates, the value of a job can be assessed by an evaluation system that does not incorporate the sexist biases institutionalized in our society. To those who would object that there is no legitimate way to measure the worth of a job because jobs have no intrinsic worth, that this is a kind of technocratic mumbo jumbo and moral posturing meant to obscure the raw power struggles at the heart of wage-setting processes, comparable worth supporters argue that job evaluation systems are old hat in many industries and have been the measuring rod for setting pay scales for fifty years. Carol O'Cleireacain, chief economist at D.C. 37 in New York City, contends that comparable worth is a natural extension of established collective bargaining practices. According to O'Cleireacain, about two-thirds of all U.S. workers are now pay-graded by evaluation systems. Comparable worth just seeks to extend these procedures after eliminating the anti-female biases that earlier evaluation systems implicitly incorporated. What's new is that traditional evaluation systems did not measure the worth of the jobs with an eye to seeing how males and females fared in relation to each other. They accepted and thus replicated the wider beliefs about the greater worth of men's work in comparison to women's. In comparable worth studies, jobs are evaluated in a deliberately sex-neutral way, then actual male and female wages are compared to what they "should" be (according to the statistical regression model) if the jobs were all filled by *white men*.

The question of race, though recognized on some level by the advocates and evaluators, does not figure explicitly into the abstract discussions of comparable worth. Empirically, however, female government workers (the main group affected by comparable worth) include a high proportion of black women.

What are the "factors" that comparable worth studies typically select to measure? The widely mentioned Willis scale (used in the landmark case in which the State of Washington must raise the wages of thousands of its women employees) breaks all jobs down into four factors constituting in-

trinsic job content: knowledge and skills, mental demands, accountability, and working conditions. Each factor is then broken down into two or three more to allow for more precise measurement. "Knowledge and skills," for example, embodies both "job knowledge" and "interpersonal skills." Some skeptics and outright critics have argued, predictably, that these are illusive qualities that can't be adequately quantified. As Geoffrey Cowley recently wrote in the neoliberal *Washington Monthly*, job evaluation systems "share a cheerfully mathematical view of

Several congressional committees and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission all held hearings on the issue last June. Politicians, keenly aware of the widely publicized "gender gap" have jumped on the comparable worth band wagon.

Comparable worth offers predominantly female unions an important bargaining chip in their recent efforts to organize new women workers and, perhaps more important, to solidify the support of their heavily female memberships. This is particularly the case for public employees unions like the Ameri-

"More and more women have moved into the work force, but the wage gap between female and male employees remains the same as it was in 1939."

qualities that you would think would be hard to quantify." In addition, and at the heart of the most trenchant criticisms, these qualities are very closely linked to education and training, thus leading some to argue that comparable worth, while it democratizes (by admitting women), also reinforces the credentialism already so rampant in our society

Break with Tradition

Oddly enough, though supported by key trade unions, the theory and measuring instruments of comparable worth overlook the crucial historical role played by unions in raising wages of low-paid workers. Many of the best paying blue-collar jobs made their gains not because of "job content" or the related factor of credentials, but because trade unionists fought for what they needed for a better life for themselves and their families. The meritocratic thrust of comparable worth might be expected to make many traditional trade unionists uneasy. On the contrary, comparable worth has already gathered a great deal of steam and shows no signs of slowing down. Virtually all feminist organizations and leaders support comparable worth, as do numerous government officials including Mary Rose Oakar, Geraldine Ferraro, Gary Hart, and many others. Both Walter Mondale and Jesse Jackson have endorsed the idea, and even Reagan administration spokesmen have waffled somewhat on the issue. Many state governments have instituted comparable worth studies (Wisconsin, Oregon, Kentucky, Alaska, New York, and Maine); in the past these studies have been the first step toward comparable worth actions in collective bargaining or the courts. Some states have passed laws mandating pay equity (California and Iowa), and still others (Minnesota, New Mexico, and Idaho) have already appropriated money to raise women's wages up to their evaluated worth.

can Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees [AFSCME], the undisputed leader of the nationwide movement for comparable worth. (Sixty percent of all government workers are women.)

Union leaders, aware of the divisive possibilities in comparable worth strategy, have thus far avoided polarizing their members into warring male and female camps. For the past ten years AFSCME's DC 37, for example, won wage agreements that give relatively greater dollar increases to low-paid workers, many of whom are both female and minorities. This "floors" policy has eliminated about one-third of the male-female wage gap among these union workers, but at this rate it would still take 19 years to eliminate the gap, an unacceptable length of time, according to union leaders. The union has also fought to open lines of advancement to previously "stuck" workers, another approach with comparable worth consequences among its broader effects. In advocating comparable worth directly, unions emphasize the extent and injustice of the pay gap between males and females and stress the fact that women's wages help their entire families (their brothers, husbands, fathers, and children) as well as themselves. AFSCME business agent Bill Callahan was quoted in a large, prominent feature article in the union newspaper regarding the 1981 AFSCME strike in San Jose, "There was a feeling of solidarity and support from the men, because of the basic fairness of it. And from an economic standpoint, with so many two-paycheck families, men see that women only earn half of what they deserve, it hurts the men too."

But the sailing may not always be so smooth. In the state of Washington, for example, most unions (having predominantly male memberships) opposed implementation of the comparable worth decision won by AFSCME. One comparable worth proponent

and analyst argues that sex equity efforts must be camouflaged and sold to members on other bases!

In trying to raise the economic and occupational position of women *qua* women, comparable worth challenges some of our basic assumptions about the structure of inequality. Social science graduate students since the sixties cut their teeth on the functionalist vs. conflict debates about the meaning of social stratification. Most of us, especially those on the left, were persuaded that when all was said and done the conflict position explained much more than its rival. People were not rewarded, as the functionalists

claimed, on the basis of the intrinsic worth of their work to the society; rather, they struggled with other groups to claim all they could and pass it on to their children (though differently to their sons and daughters) and if successful could even persuade others (and themselves) that they deserved to have all they had. The rhetoric of comparable worth turns this logic on its head.

"Comparable worth" has indeed become "the women's issue of the eighties," as Eleanor Holmes Norton, then head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, predicted back in 1978. In going beyond "equal pay for equal work" it raises questions and

makes claims about the *moral* bases of economic and hence social inequality. Comparable worth seeks to eliminate gender as a continuing basis of occupational differentiation and inequality. Its democratic promise, some fear, is undercut by the prospect of a bureaucratically-imposed meritocracy—a world in which formal credentials become the sole, essential key to success. ●

Jan Rosenberg is a sociologist teaching at Long Island University in Brooklyn. She is the author of Women's Reflections: The Feminist Film Movement (UMI Research Press).

REAL, FALSE DILEMMAS

by Jo Freeman

Comparable worth is one of those complex political issues that, unscrutinized, offers something to everyone. Proponents see in it everything from a mundane application of Title VII by unions who are looking to the courts to give them wage increases they cannot get at the bargaining table to the answer to the gender wage gap. Opponents in turn characterize it as everything from a reactionary measure that will co-opt the push by women into traditionally male jobs by paying them to stay in their place, to an attempt to radically restructure the economy and abolish the free market.

Politicians are especially fond of comparable worth. Supporters, such as Representatives Pat Schroeder, Mary Rose Oskar, Dan Evans, Olympia Snowe and others have found it an excellent issue around which to hold highly publicized hearings. Opponents, particularly Phyllis Schlafly, see it as the next feminist monster against which to mobilize their troops. The Democratic and Republican parties have taken diametrically opposed positions on comparable worth virtually without debate, let alone a definition of the term.

Unions, by and large, support comparable worth, though only a couple have given much more than lip service to it. AFL-CIO unions have unanimously refused to fall for the "divide and conquer" strategy of the Reagan administration, which has sought to pit white- and blue-collar workers against each other. Employers in the private sector have also taken a unanimous position. They are quite frightened of it, because even with the most mundane interpretation it threatens to undermine traditional pay practices built upon a history of paying women less. The



Business Roundtable paid some prominent academics as much as \$5,000 each to write articles for a book on its invalidity as basis for establishing pay rates.

What is this strange creature that evokes such passionate responses and so little understanding? To explore this question it is necessary to ask it on two separate planes which have virtually nothing to do with each other: the practical and the theoretical.

The Real Controversy

On a practical level "it is really nothing more than plain old garden variety, job-rate inequity with which the labor movement has historically wrestled. Unions have regularly grieved and arbitrated the proper rate for the job and arbitrators have regularly been called upon to resolve disputes over these rates and to establish rates that employers must pay," according to Winn Newman, the attorney who has argued most of the key cases.

"Employers are often more concerned with maintaining historic 'internal alignments' than with following the market."

Newman declines to use the terms "comparable worth" or "pay equity" on the grounds that they are not legal terms and that they obscure what is at stake. He has spent more than 15 years litigating cases charging employers with "sex-based wage discrimination," which is prohibited by Title VII. The initial cases were filed on behalf of the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (IUE), of which he was general counsel. These cases sought to rectify long existing wage inequities that had been identified as early as World War II.

Under pressure from the War Labor Board to stabilize wages and avoid strikes, employers such as General Electric and Westinghouse hired consultants to evaluate their jobs and assign them points based on the skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions involved. Relative wages were determined by each job's relative point values, except that those jobs in which women predominated had their rates lowered by one-third so that the highest paid "women's jobs" paid less than the lowest paid "men's jobs." Newman and IUE achieved some major wage gains for women workers in the electrical industry through settlements simply because the historical devaluation of women's wages solely due to their sex was so blatant.

Public sector employers became prime targets for these Title VII suits when Newman became general counsel of AFSCME

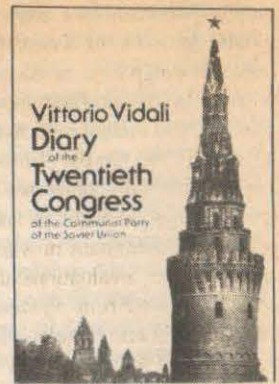
employers are much more susceptible to this strategy for raising wages than private employers. Most of AFSCME's members are women. Many are in jurisdictions which limit the freedom of their union to bargain over wages or to strike. Data can be obtained through freedom of information requests which is not available from private employers. Political pressure can be used. Public employers, through their taxing power, have much greater ability to raise money if ordered to do so by a court than private employers who might go bankrupt.

In 1981 AFSCME's Washington State affiliate sued the state for failing to implement several studies commissioned as early as 1974 which showed that there was a 32 percent disparity between the average wages of traditionally male and female job classifications. In 1983 federal District Judge Jack E. Tanner found that the state had knowingly and deliberately discriminated

under Jerry Wurf, who saw in comparable worth a means of increasing women's wages without pushing them into men's jobs. Public against women by underpaying those jobs that were at least 70 percent female and ordered that back pay be computed from September 1979 (the maximum possible under Title VII). How much this comes to is still being disputed, but is expected to be approximately a half billion dollars.

The decision in this case and the size of the award brought the issue of comparable worth to national attention. Those alarmed by the size of the award overlook the fact that it is mostly for back pay; if the results of the studies had been implemented in timely fashion the effect on the state's budget would have been minimal. This is the approach being taken by Minnesota, which found that it could achieve pay equity in its civil service by spending only four percent of the state's annual payroll or point three percent (.3) of the total biannual budget. It has appropriated \$22 million for initial pay equity adjustments and expects to continue doing so until all pay rates are "comparable."

Tanner's decision has been appealed to the Ninth Circuit and will be heard sometime next year. The Reagan administration is still debating whether to file an amicus brief for the state, but has decided to do nothing until after the election. In the meantime several other suits have been filed by organizations representing occupations primarily filled by



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ployee organizations whose members are mostly women, of feminists seeking to increase women's economic resources, and of politicians seeking their support.

The two major criticisms of comparable worth on the practical level are that it is impossible to do "objective" evaluations and that the free market is and should be the primary determinant of wages. No one contends that job evaluations are purely "objective." The current systems, which have been refined and developed over a period of forty years, have never even controlled for perceptual bias due to the sex of the primary job holder. However, all try to evaluate the job and not the worker in it. Thus the credentials of individuals holding jobs should be irrelevant to what that job is "worth" to an employer. An employer may agree to pay an employee more than what the job is worth because of credentials, seniority, individual productivity or any other *legal* reason (i.e. not sex or race). All job evaluations do is quantify what a job is worth to an employer compared to other jobs according to criteria that have been agreed upon as important to that employer.

Nor does anyone contend that one system exists which will work for all employers. Professional evaluators use different systems and stress that none can be arbitrarily applied by an outside expert. To work, it is necessary that representatives of each relevant unit of management and labor reach a consensus on the factors that are important in each job to a particular employer and what their relative value is. Because this consen-

sus is crucial and achievable only within a firm, no proponent has ever suggested that an outside agency decide what jobs are worth and impose an "independent" evaluation on any firm, let alone all firms.

Employers are particularly fond of saying that they pay whatever the "free market" requires and thus are not responsible for the fact that women have traditionally been willing to work for less. Yet testimony in the Washington State and other cases clearly shows that employers are often more concerned with maintaining historic "internal alignments" than with following the market. The reason for this is not just that they want to pay as little as possible, but because experience has taught them that employees resent radical changes in what they are used to getting relative to their co-workers. Thus to admit that women's jobs have been underpaid relative to men's affects morale as well as the bottom line.

The reality is that most large employers have done job evaluations at one time or other to determine wage rates. No employer relies solely on the "free market" to determine wages. Relative pay rates are often negotiated with union representatives and the violation of agreed upon standards often results in wage rate grievances. The only new idea urged by comparable worth advocates is the use of these traditional tools to reevaluate the results of traditional wage setting to show that jobs predominantly occupied by women are *illegally* underpaid compared to those predominantly occupied by men.

Fantasy Controversy

At multiple hearings before Congress and other bodies last year, opponents of comparable worth described their worse paranoid fantasies about what comparable worth means as though the consequences were inevitable should the simplest study be done. They claimed that adoption of comparable worth policies will be the "entering wage" to "social engineering" by a federal agency that will eventually determine everyone's wages and make American industry uncompetitive with the rest of the world.

Phyllis Schlafly, in her Report of January 1984, wrote that "The Comparable Worth advocates want to establish a new wage structure in which those who have paper credentials (certificates and diplomas) are paid more than those whose jobs require strenuous and risky work, unpleasant working conditions, and uncertain tenure. Comparable Worth advocates want to bring about a redistribution of wages through bureaucratic power and judicial activism.... Comparable Worth is another gimmick to get the American people to accept more and more Federal control of our economy."

Schlafly has done an excellent job of making comparable worth the latest target in her war against women's liberation by using women (librarians and nurses), and dozens of states and municipalities are doing studies to ascertain if they are underpaying some of their workers. The assertion that women are *illegally* underpaid relative to men has become the latest tool in the arsenal of em-



the same techniques she used against the ERA: create horrible fantasies about its consequences and savagely attack the fantasies. Even conservative Representative Jack Kemp (R-NY) was roundly criticized at Jerry Falwell's Family Forum III in Dallas last August for voting for the Oakar bill to commission a study of wage-based sex discrimination in the federal government. "We don't want to bring in the ERA through the back door" he was told by a woman wearing an Eagle Forum sticker.

This "domino theory" of social change is not rare. Many white Southerners honestly thought that the tiniest bit of integration would lead to compulsory miscegenation. Many women believe Phyllis Schlafly's claim that feminists want government mandated role reversals and the ERA would require unisex toilets. Many Americans really believe that socialism is when the Russians take over the government. Thus we should not be surprised that some people actually believe that comparable worth creates the "prospect of a bureaucratically-imposed meritocracy—a world in which formal credentials become the sole, essential key to success."

These fantasies aside it is nonetheless worthwhile for socialists to speculate on what comparable worth would mean in the

abstract, provided that we don't confuse it with what's currently going on. It is worthwhile because one criticism made by opponents is accurate. In the abstract, (and only in the abstract), comparable worth is, as delegate Peggy Miller of West Virginia told the Platform Committee at the Republican National Convention last August, "a socialist idea."

While there is little consensus on what a truly socialist society would be like, one area of agreement is that wages—or more specifically one's material income—would not be set by the free market. Income would be determined by some combination of need and contribution, though exactly what combination (and whether or not need should be the sole determinant) is open to question. Since such a socialist society is not looming on the horizon, how to determine one's needs or one's contributions has not been the subject of intensive analysis. Perhaps the comparable worth debate has signaled that this is the time to begin. If wages were really set by some government authority, how would it be accomplished? If not, then who would determine wages?

The job evaluation systems used to determine the comparable value of unequal jobs are one way of measuring contribution. They are limited systems in that they apply only

within firms, to jobs not individuals, and attempt to measure only what that job contributes to that employer. If these limited systems are inherently fraught with as many problems as critics suggest such that they cannot even adequately perform the limited role of assessing sex bias in wages within a firm, how do we expect a socialist society to devise means to fairly judge one's contribution to society as a whole?

If the problem is that these systems are technically poor, in that they rely on the wrong factors or the wrong relative weights, then it is incumbent on socialists to devise fairer systems. But if they are inherently unfair, or their goal of comparing the unequal is unachievable, what then do socialists propose as the means of assessing contribution so wages can be fairly set in a socialist society?

The current controversy over comparable worth presents socialists with a rare opportunity: that of devising a practical system to apply a socialist idea to a current problem. Can we meet that challenge? ●

Jo Freeman is a Washington-based political scientist and lawyer. Parts of this article are adapted from a series that appeared in In These Times. © Copyright 1984, Jo Freeman Earl Dotter/American Labor Education Center

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"Anyone can belong to a union, but a union belongs to no one and least of all to anyone who is ashamed of where he came from and indifferent to those he left behind. The union leader is not the owner of an institution; he is the caretaker of a tradition. He does not rise above ordinary men; he rises with them."

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 Marjorie Phyfe, Penny Schantz
 Co-Chairs, DSA Labor Commission

I join with you in the struggle
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 INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

GREETINGS

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SONIA FINDLAY
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Next to socialism, the best thing
 is working for it.
Natalie & Harry Fleischman

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ON THE LEFT

by HARRY FLEISCHMAN



NATIONAL ROUNDUP

California

Los Angeles DSA is concentrating its electoral efforts on Jobs With Peace, No on Proposition 41—an anti-welfare initiative, and Millions More October 4—National Voter Registration Day... The Jobs With Peace Initiative has registered over 18,000 new voters... A new LA DSA branch is forming in Echo Lake/Silverlake... The Youth/Student DSA is organizing voter registration on several LA campuses... Bay Area DSA held a Campaign '84 Mobilization Brunch in Oakland... Many Berkeley members are working in DSA member Nancy Skinner's campaign for city council and Representative Ron Dellums' re-election drive... The Harvey Milk Lesbian and Gay Democratic Club and DSA hosted a fundraiser Sept. 21 for Supervisor Harry Britt and College Board member Tim Wolfred...

Connecticut

DSA member Vern Rossman sends us a change of address now that he has been sentenced to three years in the Federal Prison Camp at Danbury for taking part in a "swords into plowshares" raid on the B-52 cruise missile system at Griffiss Air Force Base near Syracuse, NY, last Thanksgiving. The Griffiss Plowshares group was acquitted of sabotage but convicted of the felony of destruction of government property and conspiracy to do the same. The judge commented that he doubted whether they could be rehabilitated. Vern reports that other incorrigibles at the camp include Rev. Moon, who sets tables in the morning, and ex-Representative John Murphy (convicted in the Abscam scandal), the camp clerk. Letters or cards may be sent to Vern Rossman #01266-052, Federal Prison Camp, Danbury, CT 06810.

District of Columbia

Washington Socialist has a new format. It features an interview with Dorothy Healey and information about the *Seeing Red* benefit September 24.

Kentucky

Central Kentucky DSA sponsored a *Seeing Red* premier September 22 in the old U.K. Student Center Theater... DSA joined NOW in co-sponsoring a film showing of "Women's Voices: The Gender Gap Movie" Sept. 11... A Kentucky Tax Policy Conference involving several DSAers brought together 60 participants in August from a dozen cities and led to a drive for a "Progressive Tax Agenda" for the state. There was excellent coverage in the Louisville *Courier-Journal*... DSA West Coast organizer Jim Shoch met with Lexington DSAers after the Democratic convention.

Michigan

Ann Arbor DSA voted to focus on voter registration and labor support over the next year, and will run an education program on the basics of socialism... The local newsletter had an article on Sweden's Meidner Plan and a listing of the candidates endorsed by SOCPAC. At a Bastille Day barbecue with Zolton Ferency as guest of honor, they endorsed Perry Bullard for reelection to the Michigan House; George Wahr Sallade for Washtenaw County Prosecuting Attorney; James Murray for Probate Judge; John R. Minock for Juvenile Court Judge and Donald Grimes for U.S. Congress. Also Susan J. Greenberg for Washtenaw County Clerk and Kenneth J. Latta for County Treasurer.

New York

Albany DSA helped elect two Democratic Committee members from its own ranks and played a significant role in the election of other local reformers... On Saturday, November 10, John Funicello of AFSCME will receive Albany DSA's Eugene V. Debs Award at its annual dinner. Funicello is founder of the Solidarity Committee of the Capital District.

Capital District... Nassau DSA heard Jim Lafferty of Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Military Intervention in Central America at its last meeting. The local is working with the Long Island Progressive Coalition and the L.I. Network for Peace and Justice on registration and voter education drives... LIPC is pushing for a Suffolk County public power takeover of the Long Island Lighting Co., without the Shoreham nuclear power plant. Thousands of petitions were presented to Governor Cuomo... New York DSA's School has launched its fall schedule. For details phone John Keefe, local organizer, at 260-3270... Vilma Nunez,

Vice President, Supreme Court of Nicaragua, spoke in September on "The Nicaraguan Election: Democracy in a New Society" at Columbia Law School, sponsored by DSA, Barnard Women's Center and other groups... New York DSA will present its Debs-Thomas Award to Cleveland Robinson on November 16 at the John Jay College. Toastmaster will be Bill Lucy, secretary-treasurer of AFSCME. The local's Conscience of New York Award will be presented to Human Serve. For ticket info call the local at 260-3270. The Local convention will be held on Sunday, November 18... "Balloons at Noon" was the way Radio Station WMCA heralded its September 7 interview with Workers Defense League chair Harry Fleischman. The WDL, Full Employment Action Council, NOW, ACT-WU, ILGWU, and other union and civil rights groups demonstrated with balloons saying "Jobs—Not Hot Air" before the Bureau of Labor Statistics in New York... New York DSA supported congressional candidates Major Owens and Betty Lall in the primaries. Owens won. Local organizer John Keefe took a leave of absence to run the state assembly campaign of DSA member Jim Brennan. In a stunning upset, Brennan was ahead by 4 votes at day's end, and won a special election later.

Oregon

Corvallis DSA held a Town Hall Meeting on "Feminist Visions" that attracted 120 people from the progressive and feminist communities... The local has been active in work on Central America and voter registration and has held many educational meetings.

Pennsylvania

A national DSA conference on new political directions for socialists is planned for Philadelphia the first weekend in December. It will be built around the DSA National Board meeting. For details, write to the National Office... Hulbert James, national director of Human Serve, spoke on "Voter Mobilization to Defeat Reaganism" at a workshop of Philadelphia DSA September 8... Other speakers included Dennis Brunn, Jeremy Karpatkin, Babette Josephs, Ralph Acosta and Gail Radford... The last issue of *Democratic Left* reported that Pittsburgh DSAer Stu Cohen had personally registered 4,000 new voters. As of early September Cohen's count is now over 5,000. What this nation needs is a thousand Stuart Cohens! The *Allegheny Socialist* is urging all its members to try to emulate Cohen.

IN MEMORIAM

Hugh W. Chaffin, an 84-year-old Ithaca DSA member, was found murdered in his home in Freeville August 1st. The murderer has not yet been found. Hugh, a life-long active socialist, was an organic farmer who sold, and often gave away, his vegetables and flowers at the local farmers' market. Ithaca DSA has established a Hugh Chaffin Memorial Fund. Contributions may be sent to Ithaca DSA, 206 Eddy Street, Ithaca, NY 14850.

DSA member and longtime socialist Jerry Voorhis died at the age of 83 in a retirement home in Claremont, California. Voorhis served five terms in Congress from 1936 to 1946, compiling one of the most liberal voting records in the House. Before running as a New Dealer he had been a registered Socialist. His 1946 defeat went down in history for launching the political career of young Republican Richard M. Nixon. After his congressional defeat Voorhis began a new career as executive director of the Cooperative League of the U.S.A., a group that helped set up food and other cooperatives...

Texas

DSAers are active in the Lloyd Doggett for U.S. Senate campaign... Mike Harrington is scheduled to speak at the University of Houston October 27 and at a DSA reception the same day... New Houston DSA officers are Vicky Harris and Tim Sears, co-chairs; Bruce Griffiths, treasurer; and Greg Davis, secretary.

MIDWEST ORGANIZER

Adina Kelman has been hired as the Midwest organizer, replacing Holly Graff, who resigned this past spring. A recent graduate of Oberlin College, Adina was active in Oberlin DSA and was elected to the National Youth Section Executive Committee. At Oberlin she was chair of the Feminist Committee. She was a draft counselor for Oberlin Against the Draft, and served as a canvasser for the Ohio Public Interest Campaign in Cleveland. She was a Freedom Summer coordinator for voter registration activities in Cleveland this summer. We welcome Adine to the staff and look forward to working with her.

FEMINIST CONFERENCE

A national conference on socialist feminism has been scheduled for August 2-4, 1985 in Chicago. DSA locals across the country are planning educational and fund-raising events geared to the conference, which will be the first such national gathering in ten years.

DSA LABOR MEMO

The August *DSA Labor Memo* features articles by Jack Clark on the American Solidarity Movement, by Tony Howe on the Austin Central Labor Council, the Detroit DSA's Labor Commission statement, "No Is Not A Program," Gene Carroll on "Economic Conversion," and a report on the *Labor Notes* conference... Copies available from Rm 810-A, 1346 Connecticut Ave., Washington, D.C. 20036.

RELIGIOUS SOCIALISM

The major articles in the Spring and Summer issue of *Religious Socialism* are "An American Socialism: A Just Economic Order" by Rosemary R. Ruether and "Christian Socialism" by John Cort. Very much of interest is a review by Dr. Calvin Morris of *Black Socialist Preacher* by Philip S. Foner. Subscriptions are \$3 per year from 1 Maolis Road, Nahant, MA. 01908.

THIRD WORLD SOCIALISTS

The Summer 1984 issue of *Third World Socialists*, includes articles on "The Jackson Campaign—A Critical Assessment," "South Africa and the 1984 Elections," "Unlearning Racism," "The Black Church and Socialist Politics" and many more. Subs at \$6 per year are available

NORMAN THOMAS CENTENNIAL

The Centennial of the birth of Norman Thomas, "America's conscience," will be marked by conferences and forums in the east and midwest. A symposium at Norman Thomas High School on November 17 will focus on "The Continuing Influence of Norman Thomas" and will feature as speakers three leaders of organizations with roots in the Socialist party that Thomas led for many years. They are Michael Harrington, co-chair of DSA, Bayard Rustin, chair of Social Democrats-U.S.A. and Frank Zeidler, chair of the Socialist Party-U.S.A. Other speakers include James Farmer, H.L. Mitchell, Fay Bennett, Gus Tyler, Aaron Levenstein and Millie Jeffrey. Harry Fleischman, a close friend, campaign manager

from the Institute for Democratic Socialism, 853 Broadway, New York, NY 10003.

NUESTRA LUCHA

The latest issue of *Nuestra Lucha*, newsletter of the Anti-Racism Commission and the Latino Commission of DSA, discusses questions of building a stronger Third World presence in DSA and commitment to pluralism. Membership in the Commission is \$6 per year and includes a subscription to the newsletter. Write to 2827 Catania Way, Sacramento, Calif. 95826.

RESOURCES

The Washington Office on Africa now has an *Anti-Apartheid Action Hotline* that gives a 3-minute taped message on up-to-date legislative information and action suggestions regarding congressional, national and local anti-apartheid actions. Call it at 202-546-0408.

A recent *Commonwork* pamphlet, entitled "Do Not Feed the South African War Machine" describes the situation in South Africa and outlines strategies for U.S. activists. Single copies, 50 cents each, ten or more, 25 cents, 100 or more, 15 cents. Order from *Commonwork Pamphlets*, P.O. Box 2026, New Haven, CT 06521-2026.

The *Peace Museum* in Chicago, the first and only museum of its kind, is now offering traveling exhibitions on peace for rental. They range from a collection of arpilleras, patchwork quilts from Chile, to a set of 25 posters on peace to a photographic exhibit of the work of Martin Luther King. For information on the exhibits and other material available from the museum, write to The Peace Museum, 364 W. Erie St., Chicago, IL 60610.

and biographer of Thomas who was also national secretary of the American Socialist Party, will be moderator for the symposium. Fleischman will be honored at the event for his half-century of activism and dedication to the ideals of socialism in the spirit of Norman Thomas.

Earlier in the month Thomas will be remembered at a conference on "Socialism in America" to be held at Princeton November 9-10.

On October 31 the life and influence of Thomas will be assessed at a symposium at Roosevelt University in Chicago. Speakers will look at Thomas's religion, his pacifism, his labor policy, his humanism, and end by asking, "What's Left of Thomas' Agenda?"

REVIEWS

by Maurice Isserman

WORKERS' SELF-MANAGEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, by Christopher Eaton Gunn. Cornell University Press, 1984. \$25 hardcover.

When Terence Powderly, Grand Master Workman of the Knights of Labor, appeared before the Knights' General Assembly in 1880 he contrasted the "wage system" with the "cooperative system" of production. The former, he declared

makes every railroad superintendent, every factory or mine superintendent, an autocrat at whose nod or beck the poor unrequited slave who labors must bow the head and bend the knee in humble supplication.

In contrast, the cooperative system

will eventually make every man his own master—every man his own employer; a system which will give the laborer a fair proportion of the products of his toil.

The Knights were the leading labor organization of the 1880s, and under Powderly's leadership regarded the fostering of worker-owned and controlled enterprises as their primary mission, treating what we have come to regard as unionism's primary function of representing workers in collective bargaining with employers as a matter of only secondary concern. The Knights established a fund to aid cooperative efforts, and launched an extensive educational effort on the principles of cooperative enterprise. By 1887 the Knights sponsored some 135 cooperative foundries and shoe and clothing factories. A sympathetic observer wrote of the Lynn [Massachusetts] Knights of Labor Cooperative Boot and Shoe Company in 1888:

The [workers] claimed that besides their share in the profits they receive the highest scale of wages in Lynn.

But a dark cloud loomed over the Lynn experiment and similar efforts around the country. Again, according to the 1888 report:

Some, it is to be hoped not many, of the other shoe manufacturers in Lynn are said to be bitterly opposed to this factory, since their employees, seeing the brilliant success of the cooperative company and learning the exact profit made on every shoe, demand for themselves a greater share of the product.

The Lynn factory, and the other Knights' cooperative experiments, did not survive. In a hostile political and economic environment sources of credit and raw materials could be easily choked off: the Populists would later learn the same lesson when their marketing and consumer cooperatives were destroyed in the 1890s. In time, union and radical leaders came to regard cooperative experiments as a snare and delusion: it made more sense to concentrate on winning as much as could be won within the framework of the existing wage system.

This was a practical decision, and probably a necessary one, but something was lost when it was made. By the early twentieth century the wage system no longer seemed to American workers the strange and undesirable innovation that it had through most of the nineteenth century. Workers lost the capacity to imagine any other way of structuring the workplace. Today, the logic of capitalist production is "common sense" and all that remains of the spirit which

animated the Lynn Knights of Labor is the widespread and vague dream of becoming one's own boss, by acquiring a small business, or farm, or perhaps managing a few rental units.

Christopher Gunn, an economist at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, argues in *Workers' Self-Management in the United States* that practical cooperative alternatives to the wage system already do exist, and—while they are not without problems—deserve to be studied and emulated. Gunn's book is built around a series of case studies of cooperatively owned and managed businesses in the United States: forest workers' cooperatives in the Northwest (who reseed logged-over areas for the U.S. Forest Service and private lumber companies); plywood manufacturing cooperatives in the Northwest; the Rath Packing Company in Waterloo, Iowa; and the Denver Yellow Cab Cooperative Association.

The forest workers' cooperatives seem closest to Gunn's own ideal model of how a cooperative should function: they are collectively owned and democratically run, and have a sense of their own mission in creating a restructured society. In addition to providing their several hundred members with satisfying if not particularly well-paid jobs, the forest workers' co-ops "help support, directly or indirectly, other alternate organizations, including health clinics, food distribution warehouses and co-ops, a community credit union, and an environmental research group." The problem is that they are the most marginal of the groups which Gunn has studied: they are in an industry that has minimal capital requirements, and one that makes unusual demands upon its workers (requiring them to live in primitive camps in the woods for weeks on end).

The Oregon and Washington plywood cooperatives are far closer to the mainstream. These are heavily capitalized factories providing secure year-round employment and a good income to their members. The co-ops are democratically controlled by their members, and have demonstrated higher labor productivity with less supervision than comparable privately-owned mills. They are practical, working examples of what socialists have always maintained: that bosses are superfluous if not downright harmful to the collective wellbeing of working people. The problem is that most plywood co-op members would reject out of hand the notion that what they are doing has anything to do with creating an alternative to capitalism. They have invested their own money (membership in a plywood cooperative can cost as much as \$100,000) in creating secure employment for themselves, and that is all they have done. The co-ops avoid publicity as much as possible (fearing unfavorable IRS attention), have done little or nothing to change the hierarchical and sometimes dangerous nature of the work process, and hire up to half their workforce on a seasonal basis. Non-members are paid less, have no say in management decisions, and are subject to layoff in slack times:

Balancing the strengths and weaknesses of each of his case studies, Gunn does not pretend that he has seen the future and it works. He does believe that cooperative experiments can inspire and supplement other struggles to democratize the workplace: "Bringing together a revitalized labor movement, autonomous rank-and-file initiatives, and legitimate efforts toward workers' control and self-management wherever they occur in the economy lies at the heart of workplace programs for any progressive politics in this country." Terence Powderly's way of putting things was a little more vivid, but Gunn's book should be read by anyone interested in the debate over workplace democratization. ●

Maurice Isserman teaches American History at Smith College.

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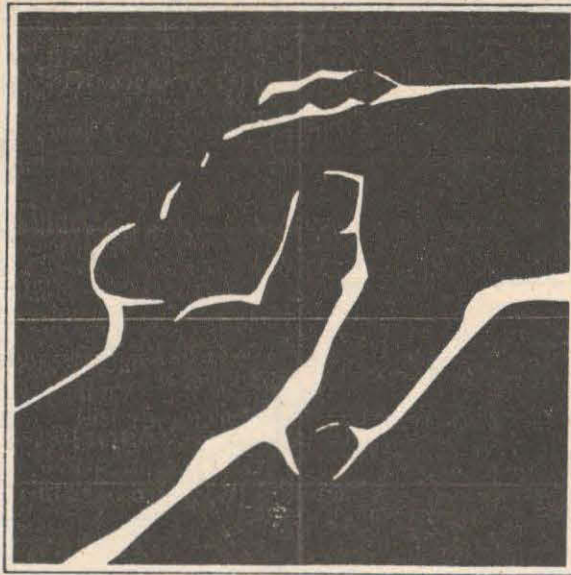


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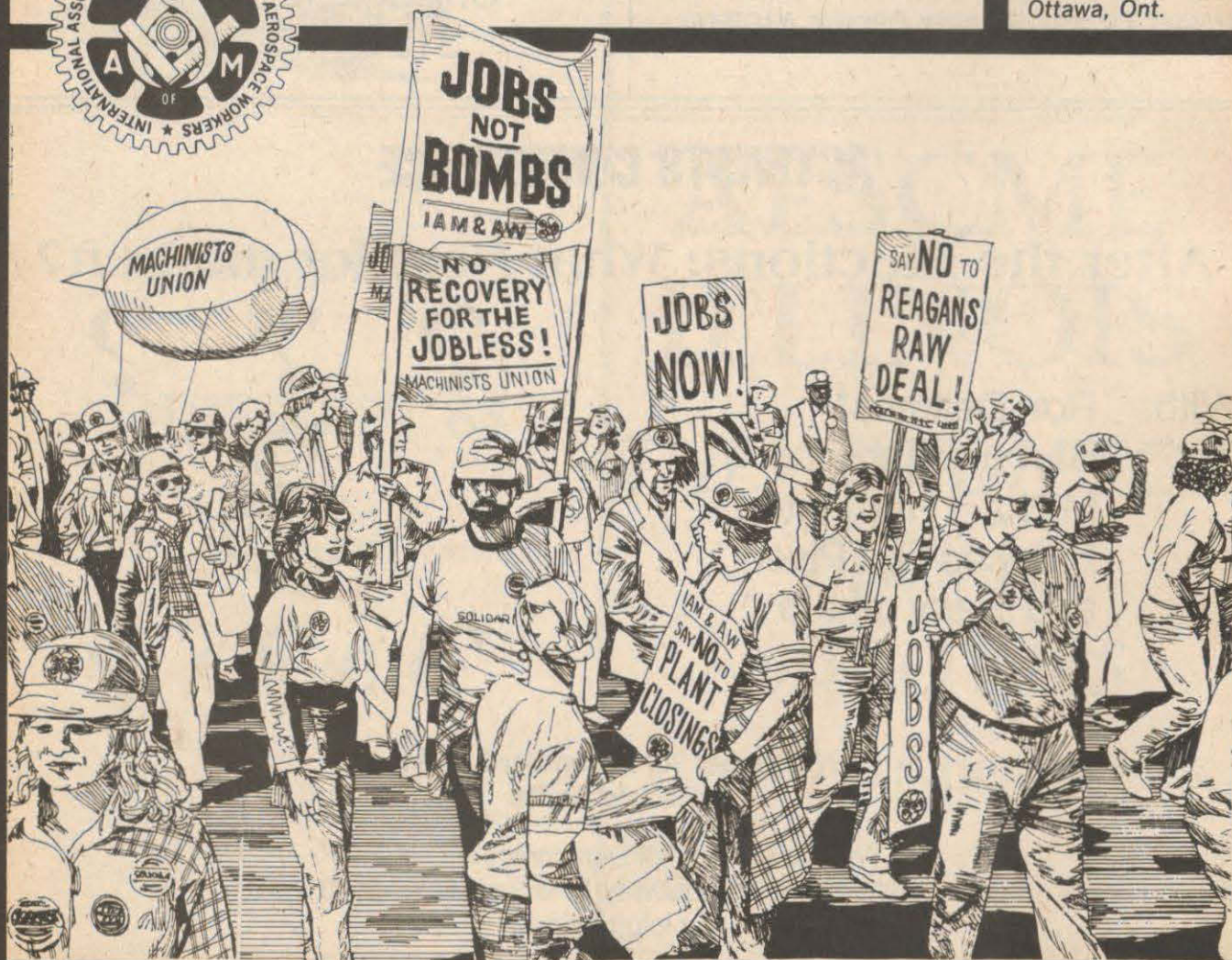
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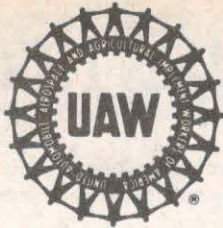
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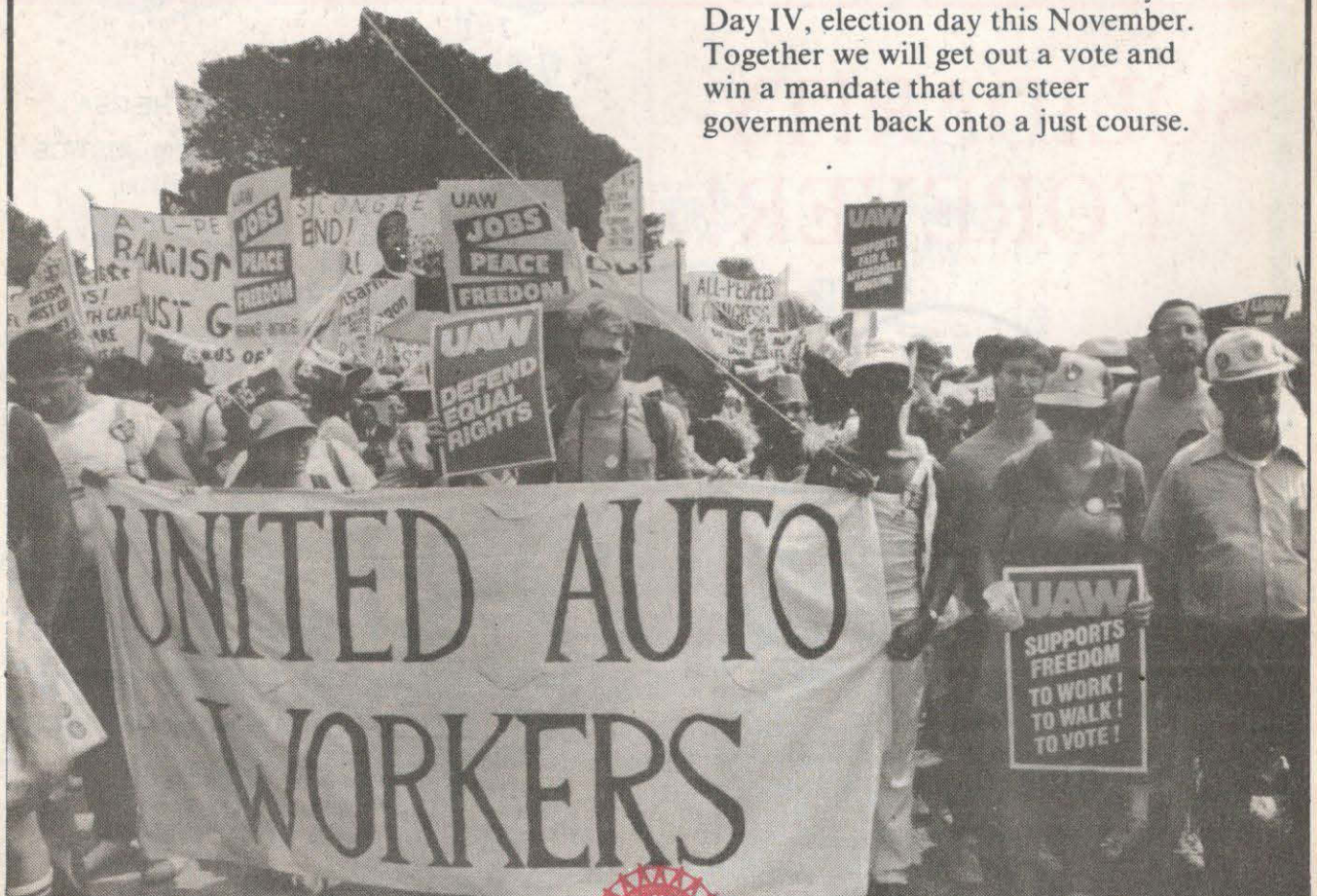
Our friends in the Democratic Left.

At a time when the labor movement is under assault from the most anti-labor administration in half a century, the UAW deeply appreciates your support for labor justice.

And we will continue to work together on the many other goals we hold in common: to elect a fair government that is committed to justice for all citizens; to become a nation that plans rationally for the future; to halt the insane arms race distorting both the nation's economy

and our vision of the world; to guarantee every citizen the opportunity to earn a decent living and to retire with security; to make our environment and workplaces safe and healthy; and to make equal opportunity for minorities and women a reality, not just a slogan.

Over the years, we've made progress toward these goals. But today, the progress we've struggled to win is being undermined. We warmly welcome your support for American labor again this labor day and look forward to working with the Democratic Left on Solidarity Day IV, election day this November. Together we will get out a vote and win a mandate that can steer government back onto a just course.



International Union, UAW



Owen Bieber, President