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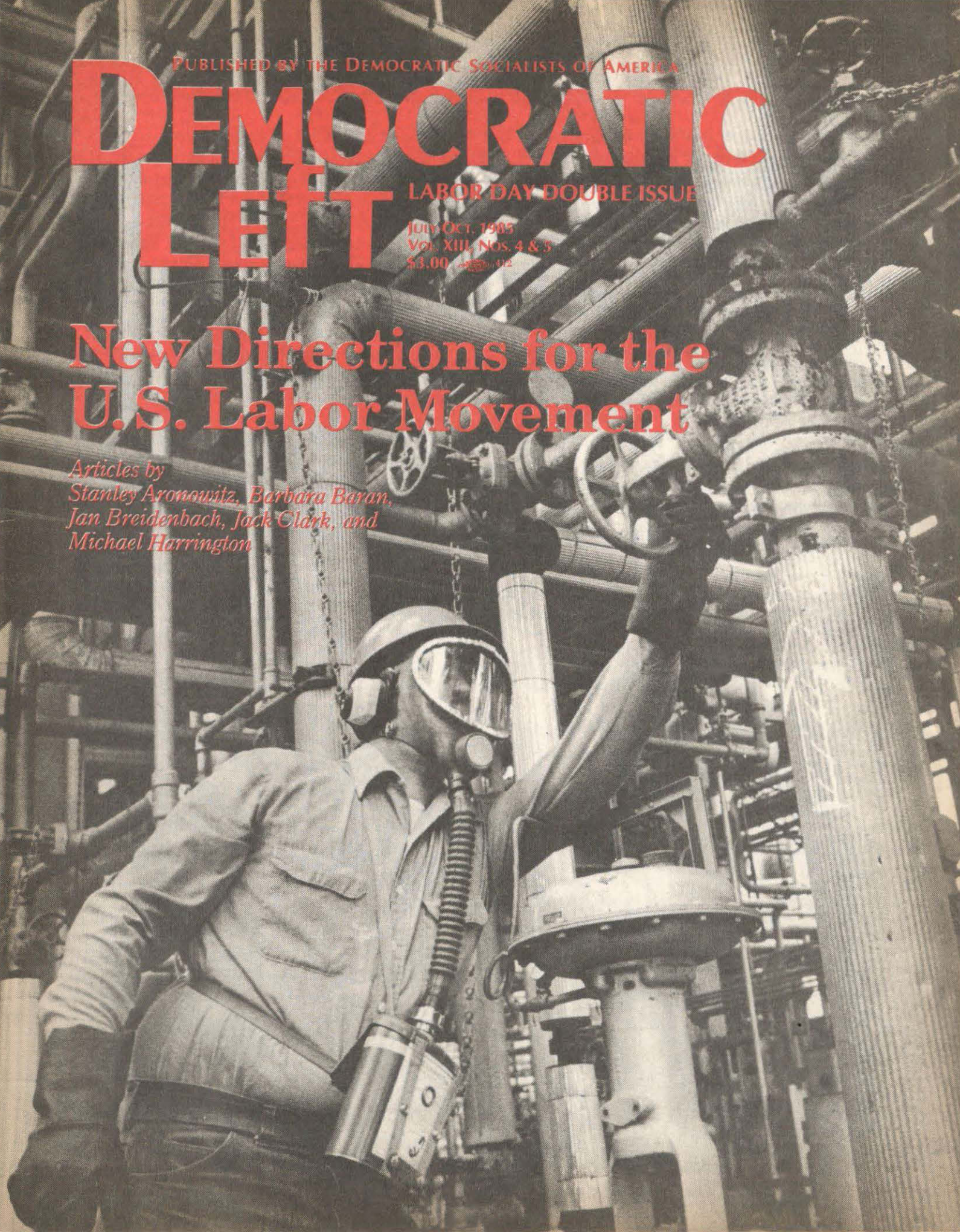
DEMOCRATIC Left

LABOR DAY DOUBLE ISSUE

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New Directions for the U.S. Labor Movement

*Articles by
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Jan Breidenbach, Jack Clark, and
Michael Harrington*



WE MAKE OUR OWN HISTORY

Fifty years ago, 200 autoworkers came together in Detroit for a meeting that would change the course of American history. Dreaming of justice on the job and off, they embarked on a course of collective action. The first step, on August 26, 1935, was the chartering of the United Auto Workers union.

In the half-century since that event, the UAW and its friends on the democratic left have pursued the goal of social justice through hard times and good. Together, we have seized the dreams of those early pioneers and turned many of them into reality. As we push into our second half-century, we salute *Democratic Left*, DSA, and all the other staunch allies who have fought the good fight with us.

Many battles remain, however,

before we can fulfill all our dreams. To wage those battles, the UAW continues to re-forge strong ties with other groups in our communities and across our land. Together we can wage and win the fight for workplace democracy, industrial growth, human rights, an end to the arms race, fair trade, and grassroots prosperity in the 1980s and beyond.

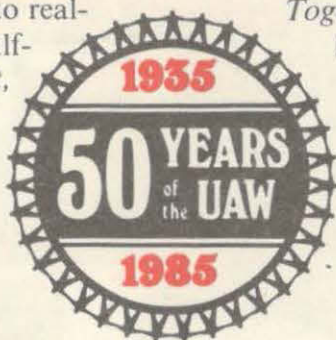
The words of our 50th anniversary song, currently being heard in television messages around the country, capture the spirit of the struggles we share with the democratic left:

Together,

We can do it if we only work together.

We can make our dream come true.

We can build for the future of America.



International Union, UAW

Owen Bieber, President



CAN LABOR COME BACK?

by Michael Harrington

On Labor Day 1985, the four-year-old anti-union offensive that began with the breaking of the air traffic controllers strike continues on its brutal course. Two recent examples make the point. Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel used the bankruptcy laws to attempt to tear up the contract with the United Steel Workers (USWA) a year early. Wheeling-Pittsburgh wanted to cut wages in half, excluding fringes, from \$14 an hour to \$7, and to rewrite all of the work rules. The court gave permission to the company to introduce an immediate 18 percent cut in pay and benefits. The union then rightly called the first steel strike in 26 years and began a battle that will shape labor patterns, not simply in its own industry, but in much of America for years to come.

That was July. In August, AT&T announced the purge of 24,000 employees from AT&T Information Systems—30 percent of them managerial, many of the remaining 70 percent members of the Communication Workers of America (CWA). The circumstances under which this mass firing was announced were particularly outrageous. At the very same time that AT&T Information Systems told about the firings, it also revealed that it was increasing management pensions by 8.5 percent and that the Information Systems division had been making money quite nicely even though the computer and equipment market in which it operates is in a tailspin.

Why should there be cruel, austerity firings in a company that is making money? After talking about Information Systems' upbeat performance, its chairman, Robert E. Allen, said, "It's somewhat awkward to be saying that and announcing layoffs at the same time. But profitability is not at the levels our shareholders deserve." There was, of course, no mention of what "our" workers might deserve from a profitable company.

These unconscionable developments are part of a larger trend: a recovery based on concessions exacted from unions through the menace of job destruction, military Keynesianism that threatens the planet, the reduction of food stamps and medicine for the working poor, and handsome tax subsidies for the rich. Although these reactionary measures did allow Reagan to stumble into an economic advance, they were accompanied by a 7.3 percent unemployment rate and a

much-vaunted drop in the poverty percentage that leaves the rate higher than it was in 1966!

There is no point in reciting more of the miserable details. I want to focus, rather, on some of the larger themes that the unions must take up if next Labor Day is not to be even bleaker.

I proceed in this way in part because I am optimistic even after what I have just written. The Reagan recovery, which is built on sand, will come tumbling down sooner or later, perhaps sooner than many people think. When it does, the unions and the other progressive movements will find that the Great Communicator's magic spell has been broken, just as it was during the depths of the 1982 recession. *If* labor has something to say, there will be an audience.

But what should labor say? Without a pretense of being exhaustive, let me suggest three ideas and a tactic to go with them.

Participation

Historically, American unions have been hostile to the notion of taking a share of management, generally for good reasons. Our job, labor said, is to organize the workers on an adversarial basis to get the best wages, hours, and fringes possible. If, the argument continued, we begin to take responsibility for management decisions with-

out real managerial power, we will be co-opted. In this context, most corporate schemes for cooperation, communication and "work enrichment" were regarded as manipulative scams. And rightly so.

However, a minority view, particularly in the UAW, held that, within the context of union economic power, some forms of participation could result in real gains. And, with the proper qualifications, that is true too. However, life has now posed a new, if related, problem: how, when workers strive desperately to avoid shutdowns and bankruptcies that would end their jobs, can buy-outs and stockholder participation be made an instrument of genuine labor advances? (See Jack Clark's article in this issue for a more detailed discussion of the issue.)

The recent evidence is not very encouraging. Many managements have used the Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs), which were conceived as a specifically *capitalist* form of nonparticipatory, individualistic worker ownership by investment banker Louis Kelso and shepherded in congress by Russell Long. Companies with ESOPs may borrow tax-sheltered funds and need not grant any voting rights to the workers. Indeed, the wheeling and dealing has been so flagrant that government bureaucrats recently slapped some corporate wrists for being too obvious in playing this game.



Roger Robinson

The *reductio ad absurdum* of this trend occurred during the South Bend Lathe Company strike when workers picketed "their" company, in which they had practically no say whatsoever.

But there are also some cases in which workers actually won a measure of power. The agreement between Eastern Air Lines and three unions (the Machinists, Pilots and Flight Attendants) gave a substantial minority stockholder position on the board of directors to the unions. To be sure, management then turned around and tried to use this relationship to rob the workers blind. The unions, however, had enough power to beat back that move and the arrangement continues.

More recently, the unions of TWA helped block a takeover of that airline by antiunion Texas Air and concluded an agreement that gave control to corporate raider Carl C. Ichan. Keeping in mind the Eastern precedent and the fact that Ichan is better known as a greenmailer than a prolabor manager, one has to be cautious. But the example shows that, in this era of rampant corporate restructuring, unions need not be passive spectators.

Then there is the case of the O&O supermarket buy-out in Philadelphia (which was vigorously supported by the DSA chapter in that city). One of the factors that contributed to the success of this move is the existence of the Philadelphia Association for Coopera-

tive Enterprise which, Robert Kuttner noted in an excellent *New Republic* piece (June 17, 1985), gave the new worker-owners some desperately needed expertise. Not so incidentally, O&O has become more productive than A&P.

good, in and of itself, and widely recognized as such.

It also might increase the work available, but that is a little more problematic. Right now, the 40-hour week is an all but unenforced law, which is why sweatshops

"Above all, there is no way out of this crisis without an increase in government planned and stimulated employment."

Should not labor take the notion of worker ownership and/or participation as a major theme? On the most practical level it is imperative to rewrite the law to clearly outlaw the sham, manipulative ESOPs so popular in management circles. More broadly, the unions should centralize their expertise so that locals don't have to get advice on how to take corporate power from corporate outsiders such as Lazard Freres, which helped engineer the Weirton Steel buy-out.

But finally, if one understands that union organizing requires a sense of vision, raising the question of ownership in its broader implications makes sense. This has been particularly successful in the low-wage sectors. The farmworkers and hospital workers, where they have succeeded, have done so as *movements* and not simply as economic organizations.

I hasten to add that this idea is not simply a socialist one. Indeed, there is a historic tendency in the American labor movement, often rooted in Catholic social thought—and exemplified by Philip Murray and the CIO—which long talked of worker participation in this sense. The draft pastoral on the economy of the American Catholic bishops has raised this theme once again and the Swedish socialists, with their wage earner funds, have supplied one model of a practical program.

Quality of Work

A second theme is the reshaping of the working life of America. The American Federation of Labor raised the radical slogan of a 40-hour week in 1886 and the demonstrations for it created May Day in the process. This fall, on the eve of the one hundredth anniversary of the Haymarket Massacre that gave rise to that event, and 48 years after the New Deal adopted the 40-hour week, the AFL-CIO will hold its yearly convention. Could it not raise the concept of a 35- or 30-hour week for *all* Americans, union and nonunion? That would certainly increase the quality of life of the American people. It is a

can shamelessly exploit undocumented labor. Indeed, in raising this entire issue the unions should make strict enforcement of the hours law a progressive way of defending those undocumented workers, sending bosses to jail rather than workers to Immigration.

Moreover, right now one of the major trends in the economy is the increase in part-time work (between 1973 and 1982, it went from 3.1 percent of total employment to 6.5 percent). That is usually non and antiunion work, without fringe benefits or other guarantees and it is found in high-tech production work as well as small shops. This kind of inferior employment can reduce the average working week in a most reactionary way. Therefore, labor has to advocate, not simply a new law, but an enforcement procedure that will stop management from playing its usual games.

The demand is for 35 or 30 hours work at 40 hours pay. But if that were achieved solely through collective bargaining, it would raise corporate costs enormously and unquestionably destroy jobs in the process. That is why this goal has to be accomplished through higher wages *and* government transfers and tax cuts for working people. Indeed, the whole idea should be presented as a nineteen eighties, employment-generating revision of the traditional Keynesianism of the sixties. It should be pointed out that such a move would be in the interest of the entire American economy and not just of the workers who are the immediate beneficiaries.

Employment

Above all, there is no way out of this crisis without an increase in government planned and stimulated employment.

This can take two forms. Corporations, which are going to be around for the foreseeable future, could be given major tax subsidies if, but only if, they create new jobs in areas of high unemployment. All those other subsidies, which have been used to finance the "paper entrepreneurship" of mergers and greenmail and takeovers, should be abol-

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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ished, making a major reduction in federal tax expenditures. But there must also be new departures in the public sector, above all in repairing the decaying infrastructure of American society.

The Reagan illusion that "market forces" will miraculously resolve the greatest structural crisis of the economy in a century is nonsense. It was, the President said, "free enterprise" which in 1984 reduced poverty to 1966 levels. Free enterprise *and* two hundred billion dollars in militaristic, reactionary government stimulus. But beyond that obvious point, the unions *must* defend democratic planning because there is no progressive alternative to social investment. And they should make it clear that what they are raising is the idea that basic production, investment, and plant closing decisions have to take place with democratic public participation. Here, again, the draft pastoral letter of the American Catholic bishops has staked out an excellent position.

What Next?

How should unions act on these themes in Ronald Reagan's America?

The AFL-CIO gave an excellent answer to that question four years ago, but never followed up on it. At Solidarity Day, September 1981, the unions mobilized an incredible turnout of the rank and file *and* minority activists, feminists, peace advocates, liberals, and socialists. Labor, in short, placed itself at the center of a movement seeking to win social gains for all Americans. If there was any one weakness on that day it was that the indictments of Reagan were much more specific than the alternatives to him. The unions—and the broad mainstream left—were clearly suffering from the collapse of the New Deal Keynesianism that had provided them with an ideology for half a century.

What we need in 1986, in the streets and at the ballot box, is a Solidarity Mobilization around a program that can appeal both to workers and the general public

SEEING DOUBLE

If you're the kind of alert reader who notices the dates on each issue, then you've undoubtedly figured out that this is not only a special Labor Day issue, but a double issue combining the July-August and September-October numbers. Once again, as the cash flow crunch hit with the dog days of August, we had to save on mailing costs. The November-December issue will have a pre-convention focus.

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Labor's Pains, Progress, Prognosis

by Stanley Aronowitz

After nearly 100 years of the modern U.S. labor movement, the outlook has never seemed more grim. Although it is nearly a decade since employers insisted that labor must make economic concessions to keep American business more internationally competitive in a time of recession, the worst days passed and concessions continued. Contrary to AFL-CIO Research Director Rudy Oswald's confident 1983 prediction that good times would result in resumed progress for America's workers, the economic upswing of the past three years has not thwarted the intensified employer effort to roll back union gains. Hardworking union officials have been reduced to firefighters, at best, and, in industrial plants, to funeral directors. Nor has the attack been confined to hard-pressed manufacturing plants. The recently concluded New York hotel and national airline pilots' strikes showed that leading corporations in the service sector have got the news that now is the time to bring labor to its knees. Fortunately, in these instances, the efforts failed, but not before the pilots' union, in a struggle for survival, felt obliged to surrender some sacred principles of trade unionism, among them the refusal to admit a two-tier wage system among employees performing the same job.

Added to this, the Auto Workers are preparing to make an agreement with General Motors which, among other things, reduces workers' pay in the company's Saturn project to 80 percent of that which is provided in the industry-wide contract and would also restore the hated incentive pay system. At the same time, when public education has become a popular political topic, the president of the American Federation of Teachers has decided to make a concession. After years of opposition to the idea of merit pay and a national teachers' exam to prove their competency, Al Shanker has declared in favor of such proposals, which would introduce a two-tier system even in those school districts under union contract.

These are not the "new ideas" that labor needs. So much for the bad news. The good news is that the AFL-CIO recognizes the crisis of American labor and has produced two documents outlining some new approaches to problems of workers and their unions.

The first, published in the fall of 1983 with little fanfare, was *The Future of Work*. This pamphlet graphically states the key problems posed by automation and technological change to such concepts as full employment, job security and other traditional programs of organized labor. The evidence points to a serious erosion of jobs even if overall economic growth shows strides. The simple fact is that employment and growth are no longer directly related. In consequence the Federation reiterates its traditional call for government as employer of last resort and, for the most part, does not take up another of labor's traditional demands: the shorter work week and work day. Undoubtedly, this silence is a product of the hard political times we are in; yet, the renewal of the old welfare state program has less of a ring of truth than the old slogan of the 30-hour week first introduced by radicals in the depth of the Great Depression. Nevertheless, this is an important document. Labor and the left simply must take their heads out of the sand: the technical transformation of the American workplace is, by now, an irreversible trend. If the unions will not call for genuine workplace democracy, especially concerning technology decisions (except for the Machinists, AFSCME and a few others), surely the rank and file and secondary leadership should pay heed to this vital statement on the consequences of computers and other automatic technologies.

The second publication, *The Changing Situation of Workers and Their Unions* (Feb. 1985), is programmatically better. This first public self-examination by the AFL-CIO deserves the support of all progressives, both in and out of the labor movement. In many ways it opens up a discussion that is long overdue. First, it raises the question of organizing in a new way. Not only does it call for organizing among new constituencies, partic-

ularly professional and technical employees, but it also recognizes that unionism has been too closely tied to contracts, that unions must once more become social as well as economic organizations and meet the needs of members both at the workplace and in their neighborhoods. In a controversial section, *The Changing Situation of Workers and Their Unions* argues for the old principle that a worker can join and maintain membership in a union without the benefit of a contract, but may receive a wide variety of services instead. The document treads the thin line between seeing unions as a movement and introducing openly what has become commonplace in the labor movement: the analogy of unions to insurance companies.

Second, the AFL-CIO seems to have shed its passion for insularity. The report calls for a new era of public education about the labor movement, including union efforts to utilize the mass media for this purpose. This is not merely a new public relations campaign, but seems to indicate recognition by labor's leaders that negative "images" of labor are connected to the tendency of unions since the Second World War to narrow their interests and ignore the public interest. While the AFL and CIO as legislative and political organizations were not guilty of this, it is certainly true that the everyday life of union locals was built around contract enforcement. In effect, unions had become insurance agents. *The Changing Situation* breaks with this tradition and recognizes that the fortunes of the labor movement are intimately connected to public perceptions. For, among the members of that "public" are present and future union members.

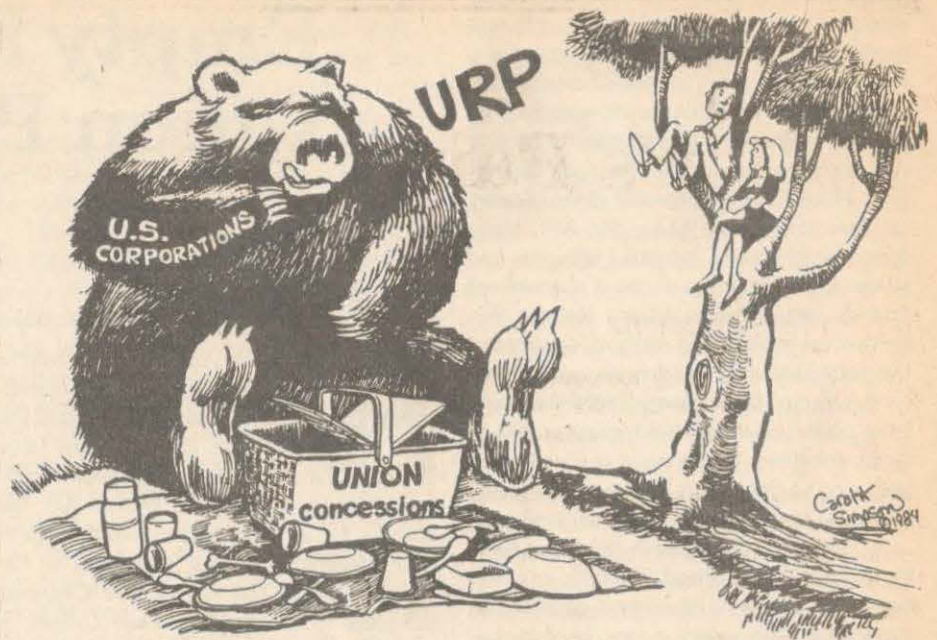
Although the report pays some attention to important new constituencies, others are left out. For example, almost no attention is given to the vital task of organizing among the working poor, the majority of whom are minorities, immigrants, women and youth, some of the most exploited participants in the work force. By focusing almost exclusively on professionals and technical people, the report gives the impression of trying to upscale union membership in social

terms. Now, the fact is that the most dynamic groups in the AFL-CIO are unions that organize among minorities and women, especially public and service employees unions. The old base of labor is changing rapidly and membership has been growing among these divergent constituents: professionals, especially doctors, lawyers, teachers and social service employees and the low-paid retail, clerical and administrative employees. Given most employment projections, the growth sectors will be predominantly among the low-paid service employees and these, not professionals, are people who have felt, rightly or wrongly, excluded from the house of labor in the past. By not emphasizing the importance of recruiting the excluded, the report sends the wrong signal. Unions are not exclusively for the skilled, the educated, the white and the male.

No Political Strategy

Moreover, the report fails to deal with the reasons for the reversing political fortunes of labor and its friends. This omission is unfortunate especially because the AFL-CIO charted an entirely new strategic course in the 1984 election. It abandoned labor's traditional "wait and see" stance towards Democratic presidential nominees by supporting Walter Mondale both in the primaries, where labor's financial and organizational assistance was vital for his nomination, and in the general election where Mondale was unable to overcome Ronald Reagan's wide base of support and lost. Since the election, labor has not matched its new candor in the organizational arena with some political self-revelation. It has refused to publicly disclose the basis of its strategy. Will the AFL-CIO depart from its reliance on the liberal wing of the Democratic party, currently in tatters, and forge its own coalition policy? What is labor's ideological stance likely to be in the wake of increasingly powerful bids by neoliberals such as Gary Hart and Richard Gephardt? Whether and under what circumstances would labor field its own candidates if the Democratic leadership refuses to accept them? In short, having taken a giant step forward in fact, the AFL-CIO has been hesitant to draw the implications of its new position.

One of the key elements of a serious political evaluation should be analysis of the results of the 1984 election, particularly the votes cast by union members. Although the AFL-CIO reported that a majority of unionists voted for Mondale, the composition of that vote remains unexplored. If 95 percent of black and 75 percent of Hispanic voters cast their ballots for Mondale/Ferraro and



"Who said feed'em a few scraps and they'll leave you alone?"

minorities constitute an increasing percentage of union membership even as white, male membership declines, then the statistic of labor's 60 percent support for the Democrats may conceal more than it reveals. It is likely that a majority of male, white union members voted for Reagan and that white women unionists were evenly divided between the two candidates.

If these figures are correct, labor has a big problem. The signs of disaffection among its own members may be indicative of the tendency of Americans to support Reagan. America is a racially divided society, and union members are not exempt from this trend. Race has become a code for class, sex and social issues of all kinds such as crime, abortion, education. The New Deal's social program for substantial state intervention in the economy remains powerful among minorities and many women, and a substantial segment of the aged. But in the absence of a powerful public debate about the relation of race, sex and class, conservatives have captured the hearts and minds of a significant portion of the working class and have combined racism with patriotism to forge a new political hegemony. About these questions which cut to the heart of labor's pains, the AFL-CIO report is completely mute. And, until the labor movement is prepared to openly confront these issues, it will continue to suffer the effects of a worsening ideological and political environment. That the AFL-CIO has failed to depart, to any significant extent, from the general drift of U.S. international

economic and political strategy since the end of the Second World War, was both the condition of its earlier success, in the late 1940s and '50s, and its later decline. For the labor movement's capacity for revival depends on its ability and will towards independence and opposition. Racism is at the heart of the new conventional wisdom and a bellicose, flag-waving patriotism is the basis of the new conservatism.

In this connection, it would be important to show how America is rapidly becoming a two-tiered society with blacks and other minorities and women on the bottom and an ever-narrowing group of whites on top. This is the kind of society that needs a two-tiered wage system—America's contribution to the revival of caste as a factor in social and economic life. Unions would have to resolutely oppose the imposition of such systems, and take sharp issue with those within its own ranks who sanction them. The federated structure of the AFL-CIO militates against such policymaking, yet there are precedents. George Meany called for and executed the expulsion of the Teamsters and criticized others because of evidence of corruption within their ranks. However, beyond corruption the Federation seems left with pieties when it comes to the hard, day-to-day issues of union policies such as those which have been adopted to accommodate to employers. It is one thing to fight and lose the battle against caste; it's quite another to help construct a caste within the working class.

Criticism aside, there are mounting

signs that in these years of decline and regroupment, labor's leadership is trying to confront the serious crisis that afflicts the unions. Taking a historical glance, this was hardly the case in the 1920s and early '30s, when William Green, Samuel Gompers' successor as AFL president, stubbornly insisted on the viability of the craft union traditions that were virtually extinct by the mid-thirties. Thanks to the pragmatic vision of many national unions and locals, the AFL abandoned its refusal of industrial unionism and followed the CIO into a period of phenomenal growth unmatched in labor's history. But there were never open acknowledgments of the dire situation. Labor has always, until recently, blamed the economy, reactionary anti-labor politicians or the divisiveness of the left for its ill fortune. Finally we have a leadership prepared to come part of the way towards looking at itself for some of the answers.

The fact is that labor is still unprepared for the hard times ahead. There is no question of returning to the worst days of the open shop. But unless a new labor movement emerges, equipped with a passion, spirit and will to fight capital rather than capitulate to it, we could return to the days of the

"Labor has always blamed the economy, reactionary anti-labor politicians, or the divisiveness of the left for its ill fortune. Finally we have a leadership prepared to come part of the way toward looking at itself for some of the answers."

1920s when labor held on to the scraps of organization that remained after the open shop offensive and waited with bated breath for better times. They finally came in the rhetoric of a new corporativism led by Franklin Roosevelt. But, labor's fortunes were not really reversed until tens of thousands of truck drivers, longshoremen, autoworkers, rubber, textile and garment workers took matters into their own hands, before the New Deal and the Wagner Act.

Lane Kirkland, AFL-CIO president, has, with some irony, called for the repeal of the National Labor Relations Act because it has become an employer tool against unions. Perhaps this is the time to give our full support for this measure as the first blow in the birth of a new, self-reliant AFL-CIO. ●

Stanley Aronowitz, author of Working Class Hero, is the chair of the New York local.

Empty Spaces in Union Proposals

by Jan Breidenbach

Since it is customary to observe anniversaries, it seems significant that an important pronouncement from the American labor movement has been published 50 years after passage of the Wagner Act, the law that had so much influence on the type of labor organizations that now exist in the United States. The report, *The Changing Situation of Workers and Their Unions*, is noteworthy both for what it says and doesn't say. It made national news for a few of its more unusual recommendations regarding union membership and individual worker negotiations above collective minimums, as well as its admission that the labor movement's public image is not good, even among its own members. The real importance of the report, however, is whether or not it will mark a historical watershed in American labor history.

The report acknowledges that the problems of the union movement are a result of its moving more slowly than the rest of the country: "...[U]nions find themselves behind the pace of change. During the 1960s and 1970s, the American workforce grew in an unprecedented way...whereas the labor movement's membership remained static as gains made in organizing were offset due to job losses in basic industries." Three changes in the workforce are presented: the contraction of the industrial workforce compared to the expansion of the service sector; the movement of industry to the sunbelt; and the changing patterns of fulltime to part-time work and two wage earners per family. But though other sections of the report also mention employer resistance to unionization and pay equity, these issues are not connected with the above mentioned changes, or named in blunt terms: unionbusting through runaway shops and the feminization of the workforce. A full discussion of these issues would require that economic policy, racism and sexism be mentioned.

The report's recommendations relate only to organizing and internal structure. These are fine and long overdue. They deal

with experiments in approaching workers, in finding issues of concern to workers, establishing new categories of membership to maintain contact with workers who've left unionized places, proposed methods of increasing participation of members in their unions, using public relations to improve labor's image, training and improving the skills of organizers and rank-and-file leaders, facilitating union mergers and better coordination between unions. These recommendations are useful and in fact have been in place for some time in some progressive unions, with good records of success. However, there are empty spaces where one looks for recommendations and finds none.

There is one mention of pay equity as a concern of women, but no recommendation for coalition work to build political bridges on this vital issue. There is no recommendation to deal with deindustrialization and retraining of workers. If a unionized worker is laid off from a shut-down plant and gets a job washing cars or waitressing, simply allowing that member to retain his/her membership (if they can afford even reduced dues) is not enough to make that worker think the union will be able to organize the new workplace sufficiently to replace the lost wages and benefits. There is no recommendation regarding economic policy, the military budget as it relates to jobs or the uses of pension funds as a tool.

Most glaringly, there is no recommendation for political action. It is true that the basis of the labor movement must always be organizing, but disparate numbers of unconnected workers will not make up for a program of political action. Some leaders are aware of this; a few even call for a labor party to advance labor's interests. But a labor party is not on the immediate agenda and the labor movement cannot pull itself out of its present crisis without an overall political strategy that includes more than endorsements for the Democratic party nominee in presidential elections and campaign contributions funded by COPE donations to candidates who may or may not listen to labor after the election. Increased campaign sophistication, important as it is, will not turn around the political problems of the unions

and does not constitute a strategy.

Bad Image

The report recognizes that public perception of labor unions is not favorable. Ironically, even union members who are not only better paid than their nonunion counterparts, but also better educated and more "middle-class," themselves tend to think of unions in contradictory terms—as protectors of better working conditions for all at the same time as inhibitors of individual initiative through antidemocratic top-down decision-making.

The fact is, unions *are* contradictory. Undemocratic, conservative organizations, fighters for social justice and improved living conditions for all, they have been shaped in the last 50 years within the context of a federal labor policy as articulated by the Wagner Act. The failure of this labor law, although stated as a problem in the report, is not given the importance it deserves, since labor law itself, at its best, has limited the unions to roles in which they now feel constrained.

The Wagner Act (and subsequent amendments), which established the National Labor Relations Board, was passed to institutionalize and protect collective bargaining as the bedrock of a national labor policy. Actually, it reflected "free market" opposition to a federally-implemented labor policy which would establish and protect wages, hours and working conditions through legislation. (Only a few national laws exist regarding labor policy, these being the Fair Labor Standards Act, Occupational Safety and Health Act and the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, involving minimum wages, health and safety and pension regulation respectively. Other national laws, such as Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffith, were intended more to keep unions in line than to further government protection of workers' rights.) A report by the Subcommittee on Labor-Management Relations in the House of Representatives reported testimony given in October 1984:

Collective bargaining was preferred because it served two basic purposes. First, by providing more equal bargaining power, it reduced the need for government regulation to protect employees from socially destructive wages and working conditions. Free collective bargaining was the free market alternative to governmental control of the labor market. Second, collective bargaining provided a measure of industrial democracy by giving employees a voice in decisions which affected their working lives.

Considering how "free market" vagaries can and will destroy workers, unions have been tremendously successful at their

assigned task. However, with only 20 percent of the workforce currently engaged in this form of "industrial democracy," the rest have been left to the ravages of "socially destructive wages and working conditions." Under the Reagan administration, this "free market" of collective bargaining is being stripped of even its minimal protection, "deregulated" as it were, through the employer bias of the NLRB, leaving workers with only themselves and their unions to face capital.

The labor movement has become what the Wagner Act envisioned: separate organizations that respond and make demands on an individual employer (or, in a few advanced cases, groups of employers in one industry) every few years when a contract expires and a new one must be negotiated. In this unions have been quite successful, improving not only the lives of their members, but creating wage and benefit levels as a standard for the rest of the workforce. Success eludes them now, as the recession and the systemic crisis have sent them reeling. The free market is no longer free. The price to labor of continuing under old assumptions could be the loss of its institutions. The House subcommittee report quoted above concludes that the situation has become restrictive in "a manner that makes it increasingly difficult for workers to address their employment-related needs through collective bargaining."

A new political strategy will not come overnight. Collective bargaining will not disappear, no matter what happens with the NLRB. Labor law is not going to be revamped in favor of a federal labor policy that allows collective bargaining to take up local issues of concern because the larger issues of wages, hours, retirement, etc. have been effectively legislated. These changes will not come tomorrow, but watersheds are those places where the seemingly inexorable

course of events changes.

Thus, while the broad picture may be gloomy for labor, exciting things are happening. In spite of frustrations, the labor movement is a place of great activity, much of it inspired and led by socialists on all levels. This activity, including innovative organizing, local coalitions that really work, drafting of legislation and economic programs (instead of responses to others' programs), corporate campaigns that turn labor law on its head, is accelerating the pace of change. Even though anticommunism remains strong in the halls of the AFL-CIO, there is an openness to left ideas. Socialists are welcome in many unions both because they bring fresh ideas and are good organizers. DSAers and other socialists have a particular role to play. We must be foremost in the struggle to help our unions survive the attacks on them (for destruction of unions will not be a step forward, no matter how moribund some have become). At the same time, we must argue for an explicit political program that recognizes the limits of present collective bargaining, that goes beyond shoring up the NLRB into concerted political action, into legislation that restricts employers' ability to defeat unions, run away, pay unequal wages (on local, state and national levels). We must propose building coalitions with other unions and with other movements on social issues and always insist that it is possible to have a different kind of society.

The sleeping giant of the AFL-CIO has awakened to recognize it is being eaten alive. Its many heterogenous parts, the unions, are fighting back. Its report on its present situation is the first step in pulling together the troops for the battle.

Jan Breidenbach is a union activist and member of the DSA National Executive Committee.



Earl Dotter/American Labor

NEED NEW OFFICE PLANS



Earl Dotter/American Labor

by Barbara Baran

When Harry Braverman claimed in 1974 that the inexorable forward march of scientific management would transform offices into factories, the left drew some consolation from his depressing prediction. If blue-collar proletarianization could pave the way for the organizing drives of the CIO, then the industrialization of white-collar work could drive millions of unorganized female clerks into the arms of the labor movement.

Our hopes for an upsurge of union activity among women may have been well founded, but our analysis certainly was not. Partly because of Braverman's influence on our thinking, our images of the impact of automation on the labor force remain stuck in the smokestack era. This seems particularly true for our picture of clerical labor. Women's work, we frequently insist, is being "degraded and deskilled" just as men's work was at the turn of the century.

This analysis blinds us to the dramatic changes in white-collar work and to their ramifications for the female workforce. As long as we accept this analysis, our organizing strategies will also remain stuck in the smokestack era. In this brief article I want to sketch an alternative picture of how automation affects women workers in high volume paper-processing industries such as the insurance industry and offer some thoughts of how such changes may affect organizing possibilities.

If any industry is the site of Braverman's prototypical white-collar factories, it is insurance. However, it was the *pre*-automated labor processes in this industry that most closely resembled an industrial assembly line. Workers sat in huge open offices, grouped by function into sections of underwriters, raters, typists, and so on. The paper flowed manually from one section to another as each worker completed his or her portion of the production task. In line with established principles of scientific management, over the last few decades work was

increasingly fragmented and simpler functions turned over to cheaper labor.

Because of the technical requirements of the early mainframe computers and the tendency to automate in conformity with a rationalized bureaucratic structure, the early applications of data processing and text processing equipment tended to intensify task fragmentation and routinization. Keyboarding was separated more sharply from other clerical functions and was often physically isolated from the rest of the firm, in "electronic sweatshops." Work within the data processing and word processing centers was machine-linked, machine-paced, and often machine-monitored as well. Today, however, these processing centers are closing as fast as auto plants, although with much less fanfare, for with the new integrated, on-line computer systems, the white-collar assembly lines can be put within the machines themselves!

The ideal operative on Henry Ford's assembly line turned one bolt. The ideal production worker in the "insurance company of

the future"—with the aid of a sophisticated, computerized work station—rates, underwrites, and issues all new policies for some subset of the company's customers; handles the updates and renewals on those policies; and, as a byproduct, enters the information necessary for the automatic generation of managerial reports, actuarial decisions, and other information.

An executive of the Xerox Corporation describes the prototypical office worker of the future as an "information middleman" (really "middlewoman"). Using an individualized computer work station, this person would be able to represent in miniature all the services provided by a company to its customers. In this sense, the information middleman is the antithesis of Ford's "detail worker."

The trend in this direction is already visible in large insurance companies. First, in many cases, the traditional hierarchical and functionally stratified company is being reorganized into more flexible, multilevel teams of professionals and clericals. Second, the range of tasks performed by an individual worker is being expanded electronically. Specifically, new kinds of computer-linked skilled clerical (or paraprofessional) jobs are being designed that combine tasks formerly performed by data entry clerks, other clericals, and professionals. Finally, "mental" and "manual" labor are (slowly) being reintegrated as data entry functions are slipped unobtrusively into the activity of professional workers.

For clericals, this new organization of work is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, skill levels seem to be rising. Because computers can assume menial tasks most easily, much low-skill clerical work is being eliminated. At the same time, the decision parameters involved in professional work are being embedded in computer software, thus allowing skilled clericals to assume routine professional functions. Although closely circumscribed in their decisionmaking, these clerks are a long way from the typing pool. Judgment calls do have to be made, and often these clerks are required to interact directly with agents or customers, a level of responsibility formerly reserved for professionals. Most important, these workers (limited by the rules built into the machines) are almost solely responsible for the soundness and (especially) accuracy of the millions of routine risks their companies write and claims they settle.

On the other hand, despite rising skill requirements, opportunities for occupational mobility seem to be declining. As routine professional functions are automated, lower

level professional and technical jobs—which have provided clericals with whatever limited access they now have to the upper reaches of the occupational ladder—are also being eliminated. In the words of one personnel manager, there may increasingly be a "quantum leap" between the new computer-linked clerical positions and the remaining highly skilled professional and technical positions.

In the past the barrier to mobility between clerical and professional work was primarily sex discrimination. Men were underwriters; women were raters. Theoretically a rater could be prepared by her job and on-the-job training for an underwriting position, although in the early years this rarely happened because of the gender-identification of job categories. The affirmative action victories of the last decade created new opportunities for women to move up. Now, if "bridge jobs" are eliminated, a new kind of structural barrier to mobility may be created just as the older sexual barrier is being eroded.

This does not mean that the occupational hierarchy will be as gender segregated as in the past. In the last ten to fifteen years, women in the insurance industry have been moving into managerial, professional, and technical occupations in record numbers and should continue to do so. What this does mean, however, is that the impact of automation on the female workforce will vary widely by class and race. For minority women and less educated working-class women in general, the threat of redundancy is particularly serious.

Minority women, excluded for years from office employment, have filled the bottom of the clerical hierarchy, in precisely the jobs that are now being automated. In addition, many of the routine clerical jobs that do remain—and the more skilled clerical jobs being created—are moving out of the central cities to white suburbs and small towns.

offer companies a partial solution to this dilemma. Because of household and childcare responsibilities, such women are less career oriented and therefore more willing to accept jobs with limited occupational mobility; they may trade higher wages for flexible or shorter hours. These women also, according to clerical organizers, are considerably less likely to be responsive to union initiatives than their urban counterparts, many of whom are the sole support of families. For all these reasons, in the last few years there has been a significant suburbanization of automated office activities which directly threatens minority clerical employment.

For women at the bottom of the clerical hierarchy then, the danger is not deskilling but redundancy. For skilled clerks, there will be jobs but no career opportunities. Only in the case of college-educated women are there likely to be both. In this sense, the *female* occupational structure may be bifurcating, lessening the egalitarianism of such feminist strategies as affirmative action.

Organizing Prospects

How are these trends apt to affect our chances of organizing in sectors such as this? The bad news is, first, that greater locational mobility clearly makes organizing more difficult. Entire plants can shut down and move when threatened by union drives, as in the case of Blue Cross/Blue Shield in Northern California. Companies are consciously settling in fairly inhospitable locations. Second, the new team arrangements may make it hard for clerical workers to develop a sense of solidarity with one another and may encourage identification with management. Finally, as computer systems become cheaper and more sophisticated, there is the real danger that companies will respond to labor unrest with even more extensive automation of the production process.

"For women at the bottom of the clerical hierarchy then, the danger is not deskilling but redundancy."

As telecommunications technologies make a wide variety of operations relatively mobile, labor force characteristics are increasingly important to companies' location decisions. The automated production centers require an educated workforce for jobs that are routinized and underpaid. In today's environment, however, it is increasingly difficult to attract educated women into dead-end, low-wage work. Suburban housewives

The good news is that the new skilled clerical categories being developed place women in precisely the kind of ambiguous and frustrating position that seems to be the basis for successful organizing drives. Both Working Women and SEIU 925, for example, have had greater success in attracting skilled clerks (such as legal secretaries) than "back office" clericals (such as data processing operators). The new computer-linked jobs

Youth Group Targets Apartheid

by Paul Baer

The energy of the spring's anti-apartheid protests was a strong influence on both the tone and content of the Tenth Annual DSA Youth Section Summer Conference. Over 80 Youth Section members gathered August 22-25 at California University of Pennsylvania, 35 miles south of Pittsburgh, to talk about "Socialists and the New Student Activism." Between the opening on Thursday evening and the closing on Sunday afternoon, activists from about 25 campuses spent long hours in discussion and debate.

At the heart of the conference was the approval of this year's political priorities. Unsurprisingly, anti-apartheid activity topped the list. Other priorities include work on Central America, reproductive rights, campus unionization, political education and fighting the campus right. The South Africa section of the political priorities statement was shaped by an active Third World caucus, the strongest yet at a Youth Section summer conference. The adopted draft focuses on the relation of anti-apartheid work to racism in the United States and on working in coalition with Third World activists and organizations. The Youth Section also endorsed the national day of anti-apartheid protests called for October 11.

The final night of the conference, which included a marathon debate over political priorities and the election of new officers, ended with comic tributes to Jeremy Karparkin, outgoing youth organizer, and Amy Bachrach, outgoing chair. That the Youth Section is in such good health is due in large part to their fine work. The new chair, Carisa Cunningham, is an Oberlin College graduate who now works in New York City. She is joined by Tom Canel as vice-chair, Ben Meskin as secretary-treasurer, and Paul Baer as corresponding secretary. Members of the executive committee are: Amy Bachrach, Josh Bornstein, Peggy Grimes, Steve Hanna, Paul Kumar, Lisa Laufer, Sherri Levine, Neil McLaughlin, Paul Meyer, Paul Schimek, Elizabeth Szanto, and Janet Wilder.

Paul Baer is the organizer for the New York DSA Local.

contain contradictions similar to those experienced in secretarial work: skills are undervalued and career ladders virtually nonexistent. In addition, computer-mediated work processes introduce new levels of stress, particularly when performance is machine-monitored. In the future, then, issues such as pay equity, access to training programs, and even job design may become increasingly contentious and provide new openings for the trade union movement, despite the obvious intransigence of the companies. Let us hope so.

Barbara Baran is a doctoral student in the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of California, Berkeley, and researcher with the Berkeley Roundtable on the International Economy (BRIE), and a member of San Francisco DSA.

A longer version of this argument is made in: Barbara Baran, "Office Automation and Women's Work: The Technological Transformation of the Insurance Industry," in Manuel Castells, ed., *High Technology, Space, and Society*. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1985. For an opposing view, see: Roslyn Feldberg and Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Degraded and Deskkilled: The Proletarianization of Clerical Work," *Social Problems* 25, October 1977.

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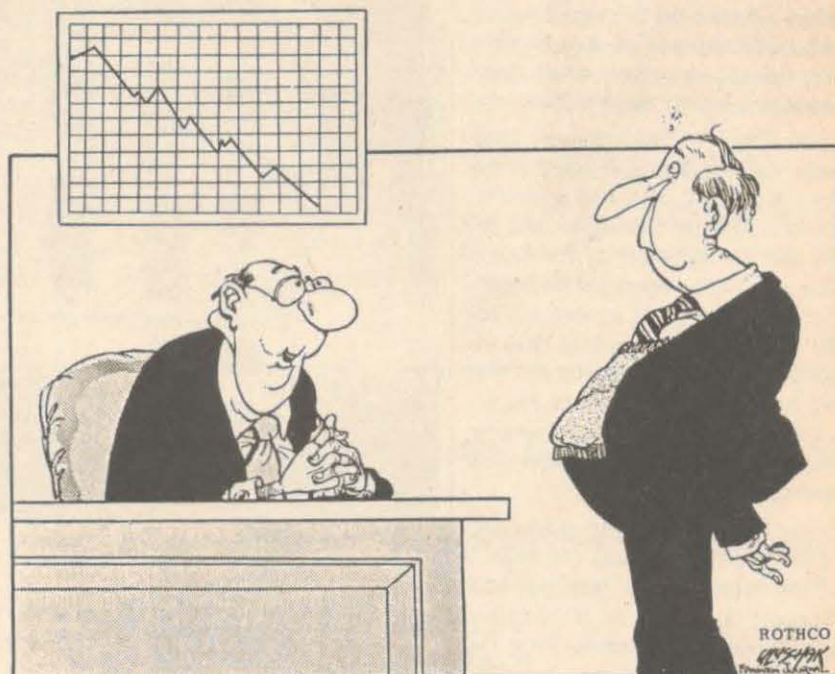
by Jack Clark

The aggressively enterprising magazine for entrepreneurs, *Inc.*, carried an April cover story on employee stock ownership, but *Business Week's* cover posed the question more provocatively: "ESOPs [Employee Stock Ownership Plans]: Revolution or Ripoff?" *The New Republic's* June 17 cover headlined an article on "Blue Collar Board Rooms," and even *The National Review* got into the act with a February piece heralding the employee ownership at Weirton Steel.

Clearly discussion of worker ownership has traveled well beyond the small circles of intellectuals and advocates traditionally interested in the topic. If there is something substantial in it (and I think there is), the often competing claims must be sorted out. Like an old-fashioned American patent medicine, worker ownership is being sold as the cure for whatever ails us, from lack of democracy to lack of productivity at the workplace. Even more miraculously, the cure is guaranteed to lead us to a booming source of investment, to a revitalized union movement, to a people's capitalism, to a democratic and decentralized socialism.

Robert Kuttner's piece in *The New Republic* offers, as is frequently the case with his writing, a useful guide through difficult terrain. He identified three historic sources for the current movement for worker ownership: an old tradition of worker co-ops, which predates the American Federation of Labor as the primary form of working class organization in America; business paternalism, which has long stressed employee identification with company objectives and has often used employee stock options (and company unions) to foster that identification; and the troubled industrial economy of the last ten years, which has encouraged everyone to look for new solutions.

These three traditions do not carry equal weight in the 1980s drive for employee ownership. The most common form of employee ownership is the Employee Stock Ownership Plan, or ESOP, which grants companies and banks very substantial tax benefits. The most typical form of ownership is the Employee Stock Ownership Plan or ESOP. Congress has lavished tax breaks



"You're in luck—instead of a raise, we've decided to put you on our profit-sharing scheme."

worth up to \$4.4 billion on this particular form of "worker ownership," but ESOPs often have nothing to do with worker control. Companies can be purchased through an ESOP which formally puts the ownership in employee hands. Employers can deduct the full amount of the annual payment to an ESOP from taxable corporate income. Banks pay a federal tax on only one-half of the payment of loan interest from an ESOP. The chief executive of a food service company experimenting with employee stock ownership told *Inc.* that employees are "breaking their necks" to keep the company healthy. Numbers like 7,000 companies and 10 million workers are bandied about in discussions of worker ownership in the U.S., but seem less significant in light of *Business Week's* report that in 85 percent of companies with ESOPs, worker-owners lack voting rights to choose the corporate board of directors. In all of these companies, employees have given up something, often making substantial concessions on wages or fringe benefits, to become "owners." Many of the 10 million lack union protections. Often workers faced the loaded gun at their heads of a possible plant closing if they didn't ante up to buy the company or a major stake of it.

If this picture of worker ownership in America fails to bring on the inspirational glow of a vision of human solidarity as imagined by Robert Owen or the Knights of Labor, don't be surprised. The substantial tax advantages enjoyed by ESOPs do not grow out of seminars on utopian socialist thought attended by Capitol Hill staffers. Rather, like the Second French Empire, they are an example of the nephew making a mockery of the uncle's grand demagogery. In the 1930s, Huey Long could proclaim "every man a king"; in the 1970s, his more respectable nephew Russell, who chairs the Senate Finance Committee, could be inspired by Louis Kelso's *Capitalist Manifesto* to legislate "every person a capitalist."

The decline of older industries spurred corporate managers to use ESOPs as a new way to pick employees' pockets in the late 1970s and 1980s. Louis Kelso and Russell Long, those true revolutionaries dedicated to that coming classless society where everyone is a capitalist, have no room in their vision for such antiquated forms as independent workers' organizations.

Advocates of "workplace democracy" often cite the hostility of bureaucrats afraid that an educated and mobilized workforce

will do them in. That's only part of the story. Historically unions have been cool to the idea of worker ownership. Although that attitude is changing, it would be useful to understand why there is—and has been—so much labor opposition to owning the firm.

Workers' co-ops predated the unions as collective bargaining agents as we know them today. About a century ago, nascent AFL unions and Knights of Labor coops were engaged in fierce debate about which strategy would advance workers more effectively.

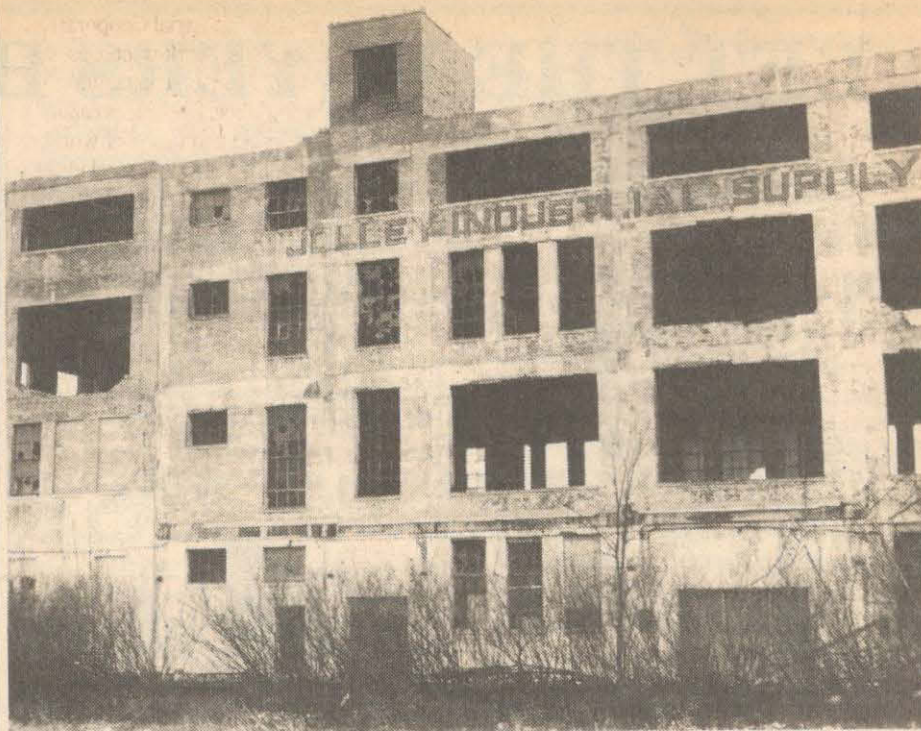
Samuel Gompers, the immigrant cigar maker who was the dominant figure in the emergence of the AFL, shrewdly applied insights from a Marxist training he had rejected to the United States of the Gilded Age. Business unions operating on bread-and-butter principles could survive and advance the workers' cause; working-class societies for the liberation of all humanity could not. That hard-headed pragmatism has remained a powerful legacy within American labor, as any socialist who has attended a few union meetings knows.

Gompers-style pragmatism marks one strand of working-class opposition to ideas of worker ownership. Another very powerful source of opposition grows out of the radical opposition to business unionism. Since the decline of the Knights of Labor, working-class radicals have rarely sought co-ops as an ideal. From socialist opponents inside and outside the AFL of Gompers' day, through the IWW and the CIO, left organizers and theorists in the working class movement sought to build a militant movement in opposition to capital. The boss is the boss; the workers are the workers; the class struggle is the class struggle, and like Harlan County in the Mineworkers' song, there are no neutrals there.

Thus in the current debate over worker ownership, some of the most skeptical and even hostile voices come from left militants in unions like the UE or networks like *Labor Notes*. While Kuttner, unarguably one of the most prolabor journalists now writing, hails the partial worker ownership at Eastern Air Lines, DSA activists like Paul Baicich, an Eastern baggage handler and rank-and-file leader in the Washington, D.C. International Association of Machinists, decry the deal as leading to company unionism.

With dubious friends in management and worthy enemies in unions, does worker ownership have any redeeming social value?

Properly understood, the answer must be a resounding yes. In increasing numbers, workers in troubled industries have resorted to the idea that "we can manage this place better than the owner." Technical experts



Steve Cagan

"Workers interested in owning the company need to be sure the company is worth owning. Lemon socialism is one major trap for the worker ownership movement."

sympathetic to labor have been working with unions to manipulate the substantial ESOP advantages to the workers' favor and to practice such cherished corporate practices as the leveraged buyout on behalf of employees.

The record to date on these employee-owned companies is mixed. In 1979, Rath Packing in Waterloo, Iowa became a worker-owned company; after five difficult years, Rath closed in 1984. A Hyatt ball-bearing plant in Clark, N.J., which supplies General Motors, went to worker ownership as an alternative to closing in 1981. The union has remained strong, and labor-management conflict has been intense. Some layoffs have taken place, and recently the workers decided to try to sell the company to conventional investor-owners. When A&P was closing down Philadelphia supermarkets, the United Food and Commercial Workers local helped form committees to set up worker Owned and Operated stores. The O&Os have been so successful that new stores have opened in underserved inner city areas. Jobs have been saved and expanded.

Whether the specific worker ownership experiments succeed or fail or fall somewhere in between, unionists and worker coop advocates are learning from the experiences. Significantly, when the Midwest Labor Re-

search Center published a collection of articles examining several cases, including evident failures like Rath, the record showed that unionists involved in the efforts remained favorable to the idea of worker ownership. There may have been problems implementing the idea here, was the common refrain, but the idea remains a good one.

Spurred on by this accumulation of practical experience, the worker ownership movement may be resurfacing at the opportune historical moment. Worker co-ops were crushed a century ago as the nation rushed toward industrialization and a new concentration of wealth. With the nation rushing toward deindustrialization and new concentrations of wealth, worker co-ops might be an extremely relevant form of resistance as well as being models for a new society.

Workers interested in owning the company need to be sure the company is worth owning. Lemon socialism is one major trap for the worker ownership movement. Despite great sacrifices, workers may just see their investment of work and money evaporate if they're taking over a plant that simply cannot turn a profit. Rath Packing seems to have had that problem in part. The worker-owners probably kept going longer than anyone else could have, but it just was no longer

a profitable operation.

In the current context of plant closings, profitable operations often face shutdowns. These factories are making money but are not making enough money to meet the profit targets of the multinational conglomerates which own them. These same conglomerates have used their industrial holdings as cash cows to be milked for immediate profits, thus providing capital for other acquisitions. Worker ownership of, say, a machine tool company in Massachusetts or Michigan could prevent the closing of the plant as an immediate benefit and keep the facility running indefinitely with some re-investment and modernization.

Beyond the narrow promise of worker ownership to avoid plant closings, the restructuring of the world and national economies may offer wider opportunities for worker co-ops. Virtually all analysts of the current malaise of the American economy pinpoint declining productivity growth as a key part of the problem.

Analysts like Robert Reich, Charles Sabel and Michael Piore point to a crisis in American management as the central cause of the decline in productivity growth. For a century, the United States led the world in productivity growth because of a system of "scientific management" which rationalized mass production. Unit costs went down, profitability and wages went up as tasks were broken down further and further. That mass production technology is now available throughout the world. For the simple production of standardized goods, this analysis holds, the advanced industrial economies can no longer compete with low-wage producers in the Third World. Where the advanced economies can compete, Reich, Sabel and Piore argue, is in more specialized production, custom-designed to a buyer's specific needs or dependent on rapidly changing technologies or precision engineering. This "batch production" rather than "mass production" puts a much higher premium on workers' skills and on workers sharing their skills and knowledge.

Through quality circles and production teams, major corporations like General Motors are attempting to build in the productivity advantages of this new batch or flexible-system production. The ESOPs promoted by Russell Long and Louis Kelso address the productivity problem by offering bogus ownership as a psychological inducement to work harder. There is some evidence that even this psychological inducement works; the employee-owned companies do have higher productivity growth. Genuine worker co-ops would have the potential of capturing these

productivity advantages associated with batch production for the workers themselves. As David Ellerman of the Industrial Cooperative Association states, real worker co-ops reverse the standard form of capitalism. Instead of capital hiring labor, labor hires capital.

Worker ownership and forms of worker control are no longer fancy impractical ideas, as even Russell Long's interest testifies. Major companies want the advantages of these forms without the inconvenience of workers having real control. For union militants concerned that the growth of worker co-ops will undermine union militance, there is at least the possibility that genuine worker co-ops can provide models of shop floor power which aids the workers and makes the enterprise more successful. For socialists, there is the promise of a growing sector of

the economy which puts into practice our venerable idea that democracy can be relevant in the economy.

Those circumstances argue strongly for more experiments in worker control. Around the idea of nurturing those experiments, it should be possible for the descendants of Gompers, the descendants of Debs and the descendants of the earlier radicals who advocated co-ops to find common ground. We need not agree that worker ownership will be a panacea, but with a lot of hard work, perhaps we can begin to answer the question posed by *Business Week* in our own way—"ESOPs: Revolution or Ripoff?" ●

Jack Clark is a member of the DSA National Executive Committee and active in the Labor Commission.

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Openings for Brazilian Labor

by Stanley A. Gacek

Chegou a hora que a onca vai beber agua.
(The time has come when the wildcat will drink from the water.)

—Luiz Inacio da Silva ("Lula"), in a solidarity speech to Brazilian farm workers, 1980.

Lula, the world-renowned Brazilian trade union leader and president of the Brazilian Workers' party, used the above proverb to say that the rich and powerful would have to account for their longstanding exploitation of Brazilian workers. Brazilian prosecutors argued that Lula's colloquialism "incited class violence" and violated the National Security Law, but the government decided to drop these charges in March of 1984.

A recent Brazilian strike wave augurs the day of reckoning that Lula noted figuratively. Less than two months after the inauguration of the Sarney government in March 1985, economic strikes broke out among air and transport workers, auto and metalworkers, postal workers, telecommunications workers, utility workers, and farm laborers, to name a few. There had been other instances of such militancy in the recent past, such as the metalworkers' general strikes of 1978-80, but what distinguishes these strikes is the Brazilian government's decision not to crush them. As late as 1983, the Brazilian Labor Ministry responded to such actions by imprisoning the strike leadership.

Since the mid-seventies, there has been a direct and dynamic relationship between political liberalization, known as *abertura*, and increased labor militancy. Indeed, the non-interventionist policy of Labor Minister Almir Pazzianotto, a former Sao Paulo union lawyer, is one symptom of this political opening.

Unless one is a Brazilian *cartomante*, or fortuneteller, it is impossible to predict the final outcome of this dynamic between a new labor policy and the aspirations of Brazilian workers. Some experts, such as University of Rio political scientist Amaury de Souza, foresee a kind of "corporatist syndicalism" unfolding in Brazil—a continuation of the state paternalism with some more union autonomy. But one thing is sure: the conflict between the existing corporatist labor structure and the militancy at the rank-and-file



"As late as 1983 the Brazilian Labor Ministry responded to [strikes] by imprisoning the strike leadership."

level will only increase, unless more collective bargaining freedom and a genuine right to strike are permitted.

Getulio Vargas, the populist president-dictator, who rose to power after the Revolution of 1930, is credited with having built most of the corporatist labor relations structure. He created three levels of trade union organization: the syndicate, which generally includes the workers of a professional category for a city or *município* (equivalent to a U.S. county or township); the federation, which represents at least five syndicates of the same professional category, generally at the state level; and the confederation, which includes at least three federations, and represents the professional category at the national level. There are currently eight national confederations.

The Labor Ministry annually collects a *contribucao sindical*, or trade union tax, from all workers, regardless of their union membership. The tax amounts to one day's salary. The funds are held in the Banco de Brasil and can be frozen by the government at any time if the unions do not comply with the legal

requirements. The unions can use the funds only to provide for social programs and legal and medical assistance to members. The unions are prohibited from using the funds for strike support or political campaigns.

Unlike the United States, union recognition in Brazil depends entirely on the government, not on the employer. A petition for union recognition must be submitted by an association representing at least one-third of the workers of a professional category in a *município*. If two associations are competing for representation of the same professional category, the Labor Ministry will choose between the more "active" of the two. Obviously, the government can grant recognition to those organizations that it considers to be more politically acquiescent. If a union violates any section of the CLT (Consolidation of Brazilian Labor Laws), the government can remove the leaders and replace them with its own intervenors.

A frequent pretext for state intervention is violation of the strike law. There are many technical prerequisites for a strike, including five days' notice to the employer and

a secret ballot vote of the union members. Even when the union complies with the legal requirements, most strikes are made futile by a process known as the *dissidio coletivo*.

If the union and management reach an impasse and the workers go out on strike, the employer or the Justice Ministry can petition the labor court for the *dissidio*—a binding decision setting out the terms of the collective bargaining agreement. Once the court has made its decision, the union is prohibited from continuing the strike. In most cases, the court can arrive at a decision within 48 hours of the petition.

After the 1964 military coup, the military governments made certain that the workers tolerated this repressive system by enforcing the policy of *cassacao*—removing the more militant leadership and throwing them in prison, replacing them with docile intervenors. In addition, the *dissidio coletivo* system attempted to provide most of the Brazilian working class with wages that rose with the cost of living.

By 1978, the Geisel government had made enough promises about returning Brazil to civilian democracy that all elements of civil society, including the workers, took the assurances seriously. At the same time, the wage policy of the labor justice system had severely understated the real cost of living since 1973. The auto and metalworkers of the greater Sao Paulo area responded with mass general strikes from 1978 to 1980.

Using the National Security Law, the heavy hand of the government came crashing down on the militant Sao Paulo trade union leadership, but the Brazilian working class decided to test the system's limits from April through June of this year. Although most of the unions failed to get *trimestralidade* (upward wage adjustments three times rather than twice a year), many of the strikers achieved wage gains of more than 100 percent of the cost of living index and obtained some short-term guarantees against economic firings and layoffs. Striking sugar workers in the Northeast won remarkable salary gains and job safety measures. Many of these accomplishments were the fruits of direct bargaining and the exercise of sheer economic power.

The new government certainly has not overhauled the repressive legal system. Although Pazzianotto has submitted a labor law reform proposal to Congress which purports to liberalize the strike law, the *dissidio coletivo* mechanism which voids strikes would remain intact. The difference is that Pazzianotto is not *applying* the repressive apparatus. Even though many of the recent strikes were technically illegal, he did not exercise the power of *cassacao*. Also, he has been

meeting informally with the leadership of the CUT (United Central of Workers) and the CONCLAT (Congress of the Working Class), two movements attempting to build a labor central in Brazil, to discuss labor problems. Former Labor Minister Murilo Macedo of the Figueiredo government had declared these organizations illegal.

A current debate in the Brazilian Congress threatens to shake the corporatist structure to its foundations, even though no radical labor law reform proposals are on the table. In August of 1984, the Brazilian House of Deputies voted to adopt the International Labor Organization's Convention Number 87, which demands trade union autonomy and prohibits government abridgment of worker association rights. If Brazil were to abide by both the spirit and the letter of Convention 87, the Brazilian government probably would have to eliminate or reform the *contribucao sindical*, revise the Labor Ministry's exclusive power to recognize trade unions, and permit trade union pluralism. Convention 87 awaits approval in the Senate, and the discussion should prove to

be most heated.

Pazzianotto's noninterventionism depends on his already tenuous relationship with other cabinet members and the rest of the government. The continued pressure from the International Monetary Fund for wage limitation could very well clash with a policy which leaves wage determination to free negotiation.

Many obstacles stand in the way of a free, democratic and militant Brazilian trade unionism, including the draconian wage policies of international lending institutions, recalcitrant employers, collaborationist labor leaders, and reactionaries who have not left the Brazilian government. Nevertheless, the Brazilian spring of 1985 suggests that the wildcat has already ventured to the river for a drink. ●

Stanley A. Gacek is a labor attorney and assistant director of the International Affairs Department of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW). He was recently in Brazil to meet with trade unionists and with the new labor minister.

GRAPE BOYCOTT

Can the United Farm Workers of America inspire millions of people to boycott grapes as it did in the late '60s and '70? California agribusiness is betting "no," but union leader Cesar Chavez and his supporters think they can win this time around, too.



Don't buy table grapes from California unless you see the Black Eagle label on the carton.

Why a grape boycott in the '80s? Didn't the last boycott end after a landmark farm labor law was passed in California in 1975? Aren't union members covered by contracts now? Yes and no. The law that was supposed to protect farm workers is still on the books. But with a governor who received a million

dollars in campaign contributions from agribusiness sitting in Sacramento, the atmosphere has changed. Growers flout the law and refuse to renew contracts. Living conditions for farm workers have worsened, and stories of workers forced to live in the fields and use water from irrigation ditches for all their needs are common.

Chavez charges that California governor Deukmejian has effectively gutted the farm labor law by appointing pro-grower members to the Agricultural Labor Relations Board, which enforces the law. A 30 percent cut in the ALRB's budget was aimed at the investigators, prosecutors, and hearing judges who enforce the law on a daily basis. The backlog of uninvestigated farm worker charges against growers has swelled even though the governor's appointees issued wholesale dismissals of worker-filed charges so that the governor could claim that the backlog had been nearly eliminated. The process of collecting the \$30 millions of dollars in back pay that convicted growers owe farm workers has been closed off. Many cases have been settled for ten cents on the dollar, robbing farm workers of any chance for just recompensation. Lawyers for a major lettuce grower were given unrestricted access to privileged ALRB files that held the names of farm workers who bore witness against the

firm on the promise of confidentiality from state prosecutors.

"Since taking office, Deukmejian has paid back his debt to the growers with the blood and sweat of California farm workers," says Chavez. Unable to seek legal redress for noncompliance and harassment, facing competition from the Teamsters Union, and suffering from a lack of interest by a public that thinks the battles have been won, the union launched a boycott of fresh California table grapes last summer. (Three percent of California grapes are grown under union contract.) Announcement of the boycott was lost amid news of the Democratic National Convention and the summer Olympics, but since July 1984 Chavez has been on the road taking news of the boycott to many cities, and direct mail campaigns have been targeted at potential boycott supporters.

Growers think that the support isn't there. "Most of the liberals from the 1960s have kids now, homes, other things to think

about. The climate on the campuses has changed. It's different now," says Ed Thomas, executive secretary of the South Central Farmers Committee, which represents grape growers. At its height in the '70s, the grape boycott was supported by some 17 million people, according to a Louis Harris poll. The union is counting on public education and targetting of outlets for the grapes to duplicate that victory. The boycott has the backing of the AFL-CIO. Resolutions supporting the boycott have been passed by the San Francisco City Council and the Boston City Council. The United Church of Christ has endorsed the boycott. At its September meeting the DSA National Executive Committee endorsed it and called on all locals to work for the boycott. The union believes that if five percent of the population supported the boycott the effect would be very strong. "A boycott isn't like an election," says Chavez. "We don't need to get 51 percent; the polls don't close at 8 o'clock. We can wait." ●



Roger Robinson

Jim Shoch, top, and Bill Lucy address the Labor Commission conference.

DSA Labor Activists Gather in Detroit

by Roger Robinson

Over the past few years, two things about the relationship between the labor movement and the socialists within it have become clear. The first is not just that the movement needs us, but that more and more it *knows* that it needs us. The second is that we are not there for it—at least, not yet. To be sure, we're there as individuals. There are DSA members and democratic socialists throughout the movement, at all levels, in all sectors, in every state. But though our work may be informed by socialist perspective and critiques, often these are positions arrived at individually and acted on in relative isolation.

It was with this understanding that more than 100 DSA Labor Commission members met in conference on June 8-9 in Detroit to "put our own house in order." The conference had two purposes: 1. To provide a forum for sharing experiences and tactics as well as for developing a socialist perspective on labor's direction; 2. To conduct an organizational meeting of the DSA Labor Commission to strengthen its work and consider the hiring of full-time staff and a new organizational structure.

The conference was organized around three themes: Our (socialist) contribution to the labor movement, building a solidaristic movement, and coalition politics.

Robert Lekachman opened the conference with a keynote on Current Political Economy and DSA Co-Chair Barbara Ehrenreich, UAW Research Director Sheldon Friedman, and Machinists activist Paul Baicich responded. The closing session featured AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer William Lucy and DSA Field Director Jim Shoch on "Vision, Solidarity and Coalition."

In between, workshops were held on labor and foreign policy, new trends in bargaining and organizing, rewinning workers to unionism, socialist activism in the labor movement, women and minorities, developing relationships with the communities, vision for labor, inter-union solidarity, and building political alliances.

The organization session, organized and chaired by Penny Schantz, worked on and passed in spirit a "DSA Draft Perspective on the U.S. Labor Movement and Constructive Socialist Politics in the 1980's." It is hoped that a final version will be adopted by the Labor Commission at the DSA Convention this fall.

The conference elected an interim

steering committee to function until the 1985 DSA Convention made up of: co-chairs Penny Schantz, Santa Cruz, Ca. and Tim Sears, Washington, D.C.; and at-large members: Jan Breidenbach, Los Angeles; Jack Clark, Boston; Suzanne Crowell, Washington, D.C.; Paul Garver, Pittsburgh; Larry Mishel, Detroit; Dave Rathke, St. Louis; Roger Robinson, Detroit; Kurt Stand, Washington, D.C.; and Margaret Zimmeth, Detroit.

The commission decided that it needs staff and that the steering committee in conjunction with the DSA National Executive Committee should develop a plan and a budget for a Labor Commission staff person. This person would be responsible to the Labor Commission and the DSA NEC. In order to finance a staff person, the group passed a proposal calling for a monthly dues structure for regular Labor Commission membership with a lesser annual payment for people who wanted associate membership in the commission.

Prior to the Detroit conference, Washington, D.C. and Detroit had local Labor Committees. The commission set a goal of organizing three more local Labor Committees by the end of 1985. ●

Roger Robinson was one of the primary organizers of the Detroit conference and is a longtime DSA labor activist.

**(S)he who renounces
the struggle
for socialism
renounces
the labor movement
and democracy.**

Rosa Luxemburg

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agitate, educate, and organize.
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We Shall Overcome!
GORDON HASKELL

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Robert & Josephine Pasciullo

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 —**Adolph Lusthaus**

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 socialist, George Gibson, died 1983.
 —**Charles W. Mitchell**

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**'The union...is not for yourself
but for your children'**

*In these difficult days of
adversity, the Steelwork-
ers recall the tribute by
author Murray Kempton
to two of its leaders,
Philip Murray and Joseph
P. Molony:*

"The Steelworkers union taught me very early how grand the many can be when they are together, and Mr. Murray taught me, too, how noble the few can be when they keep themselves intact for a time when they are needed to stand alone for the many. The union is not for yourself but for your children. It does not arise to avenge the past but to claim the future. It is not just an economic weapon; it is a spiritual instrument. It is an expression not of the dignity of its leaders but of the dignity of all. It was not called into being to celebrate the power and majesty of one man, and it does not live to serve the self-indulgence of another. It is not property but mission. Every decent moment in the history of a union is the assertion of an affronted conscience.

"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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REVIEWS

by Maurice Isserman

LABOUR IN POWER, 1945-1951, by Kenneth O. Morgan. Oxford University Press, 1984, \$34.95, hardcover.

In July 1945 the British Labour party won a smashing electoral victory over Winston Churchill's Tories, gaining an absolute majority in Parliament and taking control of Britain's government. Stanley Plastrik was then a young socialist in the United States (or, to be more specific, he was a member of the Workers party, a small left-wing sect which, after several decades and innumerable ideological and organizational twists and turns, would contribute many of the founding members of DSA—but that's a subject for another column). Fifteen years later, by then an editor of *Dissent*, Plastrik still fondly recalled that summer of 1945: "Who cannot remember the sense of elation we felt at the stunning defeat *our* party administered to Winston Churchill?" The emphasis is in the original, and the intent only in part ironic. The use of the possessive pronoun was not Plastrik's personal idiosyncrasy. In 1945 radicals of many different persuasions looked to the Labour party's triumph as a harbinger of a future and similar American socialist victory. I.F. Stone, who would not have found many other topics to agree with Plastrik on in 1945, wrote that year in the *Nation*: "The hope of achieving socialism without... dictatorship, of developing a democratic socialism suited to the Western European and American peoples [depends] on the outcome in Britain."*

Kenneth O. Morgan, an English political historian, offers a detailed and balanced account of the British Labour government in *Labour in Power, 1945-1951*. Because of the nature of Morgan's subject, and the somewhat stolid character of his prose, *Labour in Power* doesn't stack up with *Ten Days that Shook the World* as a "good read," but when the great Day of Jubilee finally does arrive and the speaker of the House of Representatives suggests that Congress open its deliberations with a rousing chorus or two of "Solidarity Forever," the American political situation will undoubtedly bear much closer resemblance to Britain's in 1945 than to Russia's in 1917 (and for that, at least, we can be thankful).

The suffering and sacrifices imposed on the British people during the Second World War strengthened egalitarian sentiments in a society where class lines were starkly drawn. In the early days of the war George Orwell had imagined that in the event of a Nazi invasion across the English Channel, British workers would rise up in revolutionary fury against both the foreign invader and their own ruling class, as the workers of Paris had done in the days of the Commune. The Germans never made it across the Channel, but at the end of the war the British working class was in a radical if not insurrectionary mood. In the hard times of the 1930s, during most of which the Conservatives were in power and the British Labour party was weak, divided and uncertain of its direction, Britain underwent no equivalent of the American New Deal. Only in the aftermath of Labour's 1945 victory did British workers get their New Deal and a good deal more: a "cradle to grave" welfare system that included the national health insurance which still remains a utopian dream in America, full employment, and the nationalization of the Bank of England, railways, utilities, and the coal, iron and steel industries. If

all of this added up to something less than the glories of the "New Jerusalem" that British radicals had dreamed of since the beginning of the age of revolution in the 17th century, it also added up to something considerably better than the working-class privation and degradation Orwell had found so prevalent on the road to Wigan Pier in the 1930s.

Morgan is appreciative of the real achievements of the Labour party, and sympathetic to the constraints its leaders faced as they attempted both to meet the needs of their working-class constituents and rebuild a devastated British economy. But he is critical of the limits of Labour policies, particularly the absence of any attempt to increase worker control in the newly nationalized industries (the long-range results of that failure can be seen in the outcome of the recent British coal strike). He is also critical of the Labour government's failure to steer an independent course in the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, its decision to begin an economically disastrous rearmament program, and its attacks on Communist trade unionists (which contributed to a mini-Red Scare atmosphere in England, a time of troubles familiar to any devotee of the early Doris Lessing novels).

In 1951 the Labour party was turned out of office (it actually outpolled the Conservatives in the popular vote, but due to the peculiarities of the British political structure the Conservatives gained a majority in Parliament). It has returned to power on subsequent occasions, but never has inspired the same sense among its domestic supporters or foreign admirers of being about to usher in a new world. In 1945, Morgan notes, the Labour party benefited from "the overwhelming mood of popular idealism released by the ending of six years of total war, an overpowering urge that a people's war should this time be followed by a people's peace." The problem faced by the British Labour party—and shared by socialists in the United States—is how, in ordinary times and among ordinary people, to unlock that spirit of collective idealism which sometimes surfaces in wartime and rarely survives in peacetime. In other words, could we just get on with establishing the "people's peace" and skip the war? ●

*For a good account of American reactions to Labour's victory, see Theodore Rosenof, "The American Democratic Left Looks at the British Labour Government, 1945-1951," *Historian*, Vol. 38 (1975).

Maurice Isserman is teaching at the University of Sussex in England this fall and making a determined effort to overcome the language barrier.

**Will you be in
Berkeley on
November 8-11?**

ON THE LEFT

by HARRY FLEISCHMAN



NATIONAL ROUNDUP

California

Los Angeles DSAer Kathleen Sheldon was awarded the 1985 Pergamon/National Women's Studies Association Graduate Scholarship in Women's Studies for "her outstanding contribution to feminist research"... East Bay DSA heard William M. Sullivan, co-author of *Habits of the Heart*, speak on "The Culture of American Politics" in August. The local also held an all-day workshop at UC Berkeley, with Duane Campbell and Mel Pritchard as speakers... The July San Diego DSA meeting focused on the Managed Growth Initiative (MGI), whose supporters filed over 74,000 signatures on a petition to force San Diego to live up to its growth management plan... Rick Longinotti and Rev. Robert Hemstreet spoke at a Berkeley Unitarian Universalist seminary workshop on "Humanist Approaches to Economic Justice."

DSA members Barbara Moulton, Rick Longinotti and Nickie Gonzales were among the 78 arrested in San Francisco for opposition to the Contra Aid vote... DSAer Bob Heifetz was among the Witness for Peace members captured in August by the *contras* and released the next day.

Colorado

Denver DSA held a Bastille Day party July 14 featuring a spaghetti picnic lunch.

District of Columbia

The DC/MD DSA will honor Victor Reuther at its annual Debs-Thomas dinner Oct. 17 at the National Press Club.

Illinois

Five DSAers at Western Illinois University at Macomb—William Davenport, Jean and Copland Whitehead, Dave Miller and Everett Hughes—participated in an August 6 "death shadows" demonstration marking the 40th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Similar actions were held in Chicago, Champaign, Rockford and Springfield...

Iowa

The Iowa City DSA met in July to consider support for the Kubby council campaign and to plan support work for the clerks at Eagle supermarkets, who are being forced to train their own replacement workers...

Kentucky

Twelve people protesting U.S. aid to Nicaraguan *contras* were arrested for refusing to leave U.S. Rep. Larry Hopkins' Lexington office at closing time. Five were DSA members... Central Kentucky DSA participated in the Lexington Fourth of July parade with banners for peace and justice.

Maryland

Howard County DSA met in August to review the activities of the New Right and plan action to combat it. Abe Bates reported on "Politics and Population in the Philippines" as well as on his visit to China... Baltimore DSA joined The Ribbon—10 miles of colorful banners and thousands of people covering the Pentagon and the White House with the message that Americans don't want nuclear war... The local also held a fundraiser at a ballgame between the Baltimore Orioles and the Chicago White Sox.

Massachusetts

Boston DSA's affinity group joined in a rally of over 2,000 people to protest Reagan's policies in Central America. Over 500, including six DSAers, were arrested in the Federal Building when they refused to leave at closing time... The *Boston Globe* carried an item saying: "See, Edith, I told you they was Commies." In reply, the mailing labels of the current issue of the *Yankee Radical*, the local's monthly publication, carry a chirpy "Happy May Day" message. "DSA members are both socialists and Democrats. Some Republicans claim all Democrats are socialists."... Also in the news was DSAer Jim Marzilli, speaking at a press conference about the Progressive Caucus's efforts at the Democratic Issues Convention. He was on Channel 2's 10 P.M. news... Progressives won in Brookline when voters ousted a conservative incumbent on the Board of Selectmen and voted in two progressives: Marty Rosenthal and Estelle Katz. Rosenthal's campaign was managed by DSAer Julie Johnson... DSPAC voted to endorse DSAers David Scondras and David Sullivan, council members in Boston and Cambridge respectively.

Michigan

For the first time since 1971, Democrats have taken control of Ann Arbor. Ed Pierce, former state senator, was elected mayor and DSA members Lowell Peterson and Jeff Epton both easily won re-election as city councilors. Kathy Edgren joined them by a 1,237-vote victory in a supposed swing ward. The turn-around came after the Republicans tried to gerrymander themselves into permanent control... In August, Ann Arbor DSA joined Detroit in a rally to support the Phelps Dodge strikers... Ed Asner joined feminist poet Adrienne Rich and Rabbi Marshall Meyer at a sold-out meeting at the convention of the New Jewish Agenda in Ann Arbor in July. The convention also heard Rabbis Leonard Beerman and Laura Geller and NYC Councilmember Ruth Messinger.

New York

Albany DSA is on the air over WRPI (91.5 FM) for three broadcasts. The first, August 25, featured interviews of Dorothy Tristman and Bruce Miroff on DSA's goals and strategy... Irving Howe will speak on "Socialism in America" on October 9 at SUNY/Albany's uptown campus, sponsored by labor and student groups. It will be followed by a DSA wine and cheese reception... Four DSAers were among 22 arrested August 6 for acts of nonviolent civil disobedience at General Electric's Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory. This was part of the nationwide observance of the Hiroshima-Nagasaki bombings... DSA's campaign to back Democratic Alderwoman Nancy Burton for re-election against the city machine was successful... Ithaca DSAers are backing Al Davidoff for the County Board and David Lytel for Common Council... DSAers were among those involved in anti-apartheid activities at Cornell.

Nassau DSA completed a series of Saturday seminars on economic policies and strategies for mobilizing political action... The local participated in rallies on Hiroshima Day and to stop U.S. intervention in Central America... DSAer Shubert Frye was one of the Witness for Peace members kidnapped by Nicaraguan *contras* this August... New York City DSA is enthusiastic over the two-to-one primary victory of DSAer David Dinkins for Manhattan Borough President. His expected election in November will mark the first time since 1977 that a black will be on the Board of

Estimate. Dinkins garnered 91 percent of the black vote, 88 percent of the Hispanic, a majority of the Jewish vote and 50 percent of other white votes. He polled 94,651 to Jerry Nadler's 51,518... DSAer Ruth Messinger was renominated for City Council with 20,310 against pro-Ed Koch Pat Wagner's 6,849... Steve Dibrienza, backed by DSA, was nominated for City Council in Brooklyn in a close race.

Ohio

Northeast Ohio DSA sponsored an Industrial Heartland leadership school.

Cleveland DSA heard Seth Rosen and George Smilnak on the Ohio Bell strike. George is treasurer of CWA Local 4309... Kent State DSA has carried out numerous activities recently. They include a "Right-to-Know" legislative campaign in Kent plus action on toxic chemicals; economic education dealing with the Brandt Commission on Global Cooperation and the Kent State Worker Buyout Project.

Oregon

Corvallis DSA and a coalition, Corvallis Organized for South African Freedom, lobbied the state legislature in Salem for divestment of state funds.

Pennsylvania

Central Pa. DSA met in August, with Jack Spooner showing slides and describing his recent trip to Mexico and Nicaragua... The annual meeting September 15 expects to hear the Ambassador of Nicaragua or his representative... Ed Nakawatase of Philadelphia DSA was part of a North American delegation that visited Indian communities and organizations in Honduras, Costa Rica and Nicaragua to study the condition of the Miskitos of Nicaragua. His report was critical of the Nicaraguan government and raised the question of how the Indians can sustain their culture and traditional land bases within a revolutionary framework. However, he was hopeful that, if the Sandinistas and the Indians can continue the process now under way, it may be one of the most revolutionary achievements of the Sandinistas... On June 22, the local hosted a leadership training school for the mid-Atlantic region. Several Philadelphia public interest researchers, including four DSA members, have begun a study of the power structure in the Delaware Valley, tentatively titled, "Who Rules Philadelphia?"...

RESOURCES

The Progressive has a marvelous column, "No Comment," which includes news items that are almost too weird to believe. Now it's out as a book, *No Comment*, issued by Vintage Press. Among the items: Martin Lovelace, an official of the National Rifle Association, said a gun is "a recreational tool, like a golf club or a tennis racket. You can kill someone with a golf club, you know." Or take this remark by S.I. Hayakawa, former Republican Senator from California, about the Panama Canal: "We should keep it. After all, we stole it fair and square."

The Center for Economic Revitalization, Inc., 28 Main Street, Montpelier, Vt.

05602, has issued Catalyst "Guide to Investing in Social Change," available at \$5.

STAFF NOTES

Congratulations to West Coast Administrative Assistant Claire Reinelt, whose daughter Julia was born in July. Claire is on maternity leave now and will return to work soon.

We were sorry to say good-bye in September to Esmeralda Castillo, who has been invaluable in keeping our membership rolls straight and coordinating the transition to our own computer. She worked night and day, often seven days a week on this all-too-frustrating task, and still kept a sense of humor. She and her family have moved to New Hampshire, where she will be working as business manager for a small company.

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM AROUND THE WORLD

by Larry Wittner (reprinted from the *Albany Anvil*)

DSA is affiliated with the Socialist International—the world federation of Social Democratic, Socialist and Labor parties. Although election defeats suffered by the German Social Democrats and the British Laborites in 1983 have led conservative political commentators to talk of a socialist political decline, this claim is quite inaccurate. Not only have these two parties made impressive gains subsequently, but others have recently swept to power by substantial margins. Indeed, by the spring of 1985, a record total of 25 Socialist International parties were exercising governmental power, either alone or in coalition.

Today, SI parties exercise exclusive governing power or lead governing coalitions in: Aruba, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Finland, France, Greenland, Israel, Italy, Malta, New Zealand, Peru, Portugal, Senegal, Spain, Sweden and Venezuela. In addition, SI parties participate in governing coalitions in Ireland, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Mauritius, San Marino and Switzerland. Of course, many democratic socialist parties that are not in power today have provided their nations' governments in the past or will provide them in the future. These include powerful parties in places like Denmark, Japan, Belgium, the Netherlands, Iceland and Norway. And democratic socialists are also governing Manitoba and the Yukon in Canada as well as sharing power in Ontario. (DSA's sister party in

Canada is the small, but growing, New Democratic party.)

The rise of democratic socialism is exemplified by recent developments in Greece which, only a few years ago, seemed a land in which socialists could never triumph and where conservative forces would have a permanent monopoly on public office. Indeed, unlike most other democratic nations of Europe, Greece did not even have a noticeable Socialist party! But, in the mid-1970's, Andreas Papandreu put together the Panhellenic Socialist Movement which, in 1981, won a stunning election victory. Many political observers were convinced that it was a fluke and that the Socialists simply couldn't last. However, in June 1985, much to the distress of the Reagan administration, Papandreu's Socialists won another smashing victory at the polls, drawing 46 percent of the vote and acquiring a solid parliamentary majority. (The Communists garnered about 12 percent of the vote and the conservatives 41 percent.) Consequently, Greece today has a government committed to decentralized, democratic economic planning, full employment programs, the creation of a national health service, the development of agricultural cooperatives, and nuclear disarmament.

So the next time someone tells you that "democratic socialism can't work," just respond: "Sure it can! And it has—in most democratic nations! Isn't it about time we tried it here?"

KEEP ON LAUGHING

"What is the difference between the stockmarket and a toilet?"

In the stockmarket, the paper [prices of the stock] falls first and the crash comes later.

—Johann Most, once known as the "Rabelais of the Proletariat"

Heikl: Seen any honest news in an American newspaper?

Jeikl: Sure, the date and the price.

—Morris Winchevsky

Excerpts of immigrant humor from Labor's Joke Book.

by Paul Buhle

Labor and radical jokesters have long been the unsung heroes of the progressive movement. How many *In These Times* readers flip open the paper first to Sylvia's (Nicole Hollander's) page? How many DSA conference attendees remember afterwards the jokes better than the windy presentations? More to the point: how much of our intelligent conversation do we conduct by way of humor, because wit almost unaided says it all about the state of the world and the Sisyphian character of our tasks ahead? If you can answer those questions, then ask yourself why our favorite jokesters generally get a lot of love but (like Rodney Dangerfield) no respect, at least not as "serious intellectuals"?

We didn't create the problem. Socialists at the turn of the century had a wealth of great cartoonists, stand-up joke lecturers, funny labor agitators and poke-in-the-ribs newspaper columnists. Without figures such as Oscar Ameringer ("The Mark Twain of American Socialism") and cartoonist Art Young, the movement never would have grown so lustily strong. The First World War and the Russian Revolution, though, didn't do too much for the socialist sense of humor. The left suffered from a protracted case of self-righteousness. But the Communists didn't invent the sour puss by any means, and some pretty funny people (including S.J. Perelman, Stephen Leacock, Dorothy Parker and even the Marx Brothers) found their way to the Popular Front environment. Late in the Old Left day, with the Cold War pressing at the gates, Professor Irwin Corey and Paul Winchell put on a good progressive show.

Even then a noncommunist, nonsocialist, almost nonpolitical but very radical

younger generation was in the wings. They included artists and editors at *Mad* comics involved in attempts to organize cartoonists and bitterly critical of the engulfing popular culture; Paul Krassner, soon to publish his *Realist*; a very young Dick Gregory; and a host of others who would make their marks on the sixties. They were to do lots of good work. But they never quite reconnected with socialism and labor. A handful of "underground" comic artists, some feminist stand-up comics and a celebrity or two (one of the Smothers Brothers) became openly political. In too many cases, their audience vanished with the downfall of sixties radicalism. By the Radical Humor Festival of 1982, the big names seemed to have been taken from a 1969 speakers' list.

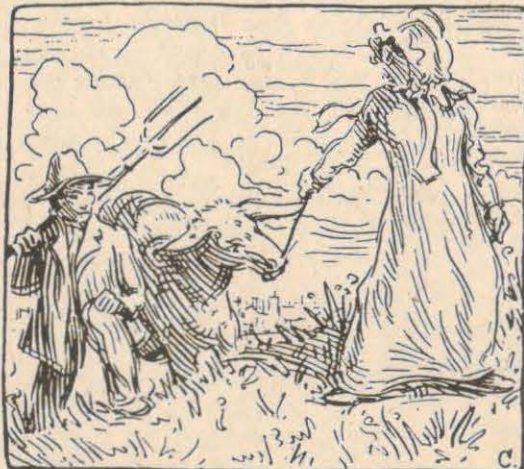
Something good happened amid all the bad things of the seventies. The surviving activists dug into their local communities and neighborhoods, and learned to live with the contradictions. A process of reconciliation

with the progressive edge of the labor movement took place, step-by-step. I went to a labor "roast" some months ago in Providence, Rhode Island, honoring this development: DSAers joined with labor leaders and victims of industrial accidents to toast an ex-Maoist who burned out after the Sadlowski campaign and came to create an organization for injured workers. The premier roaster, business agent of a social service local, donned Dylan garb and manner to intune the woes of the ex-revolutionary ("You used to be so amused, with the tactics the AFL used...") turned reformer. We all had a good laugh on ourselves, but not in despair. We had more in common with the ordinary union activist than we used to think. And they had more in common with us than they had imagined, too. Humor expressed that commonality.

Meanwhile, there are a lot of other developments: the New York Labor Theatre, the young labor cartoonists Gary Huck and Mike Konopacki, the *Mill Hunk Herald*, to name only a few. Look around. You'll see more, and if you encourage them with shows and performances at DSA and other progressive events, even more. Too bad elderly militant Moe Howard (of the Three Stooges) didn't survive to join DSA and to ask the turncoat Hollywoodite "how many" fingers. But not too late for us to laugh, and to look around. ●

Paul Buhle edited Labor's Joke Book and curates the traveling Radical Humor Show. Labor's Joke Book is available from WO Press, P.O. Box 24115, St. Louis, MO 63130.

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—Ryan Walker, *National Rip-Saw*, 1912

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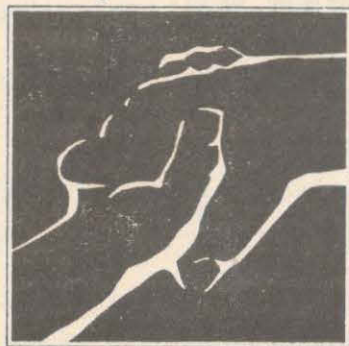
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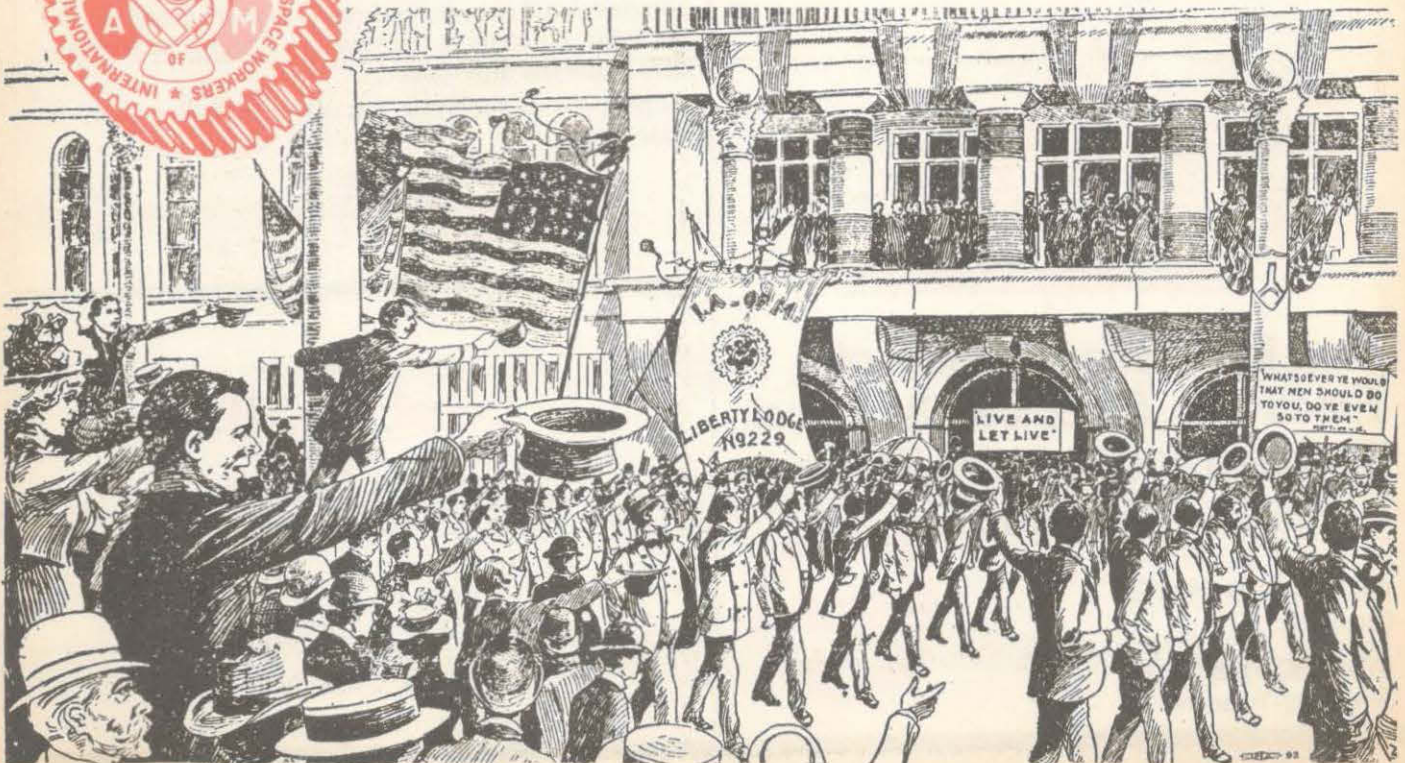
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International Union of
Electronic, Electrical, Technical,
Salaried and Machine Workers,
AFL-CIO

WILLIAM H. BYWATER
President

EDWARD FIRE
Secretary-Treasurer



**GREETINGS FROM
BURLINGTON, VERMONT!**

Bills passed in Washington show little basic difference between Democrats and Republicans. Give-and-take congressional negotiations result in more movement to the right. Citizens in Vermont by electing Mayor Sanders know the difference.

Hoping for Democratic Socialists or Labor Party in near future.

*Martin Greenberg,
Retired International Representative,
Region 9A, UAW*

Local 840, IBT

William O. Robinson
President

William Nuchow
Secretary/Treasurer