

# Moving On

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT

## Nuclear politics today

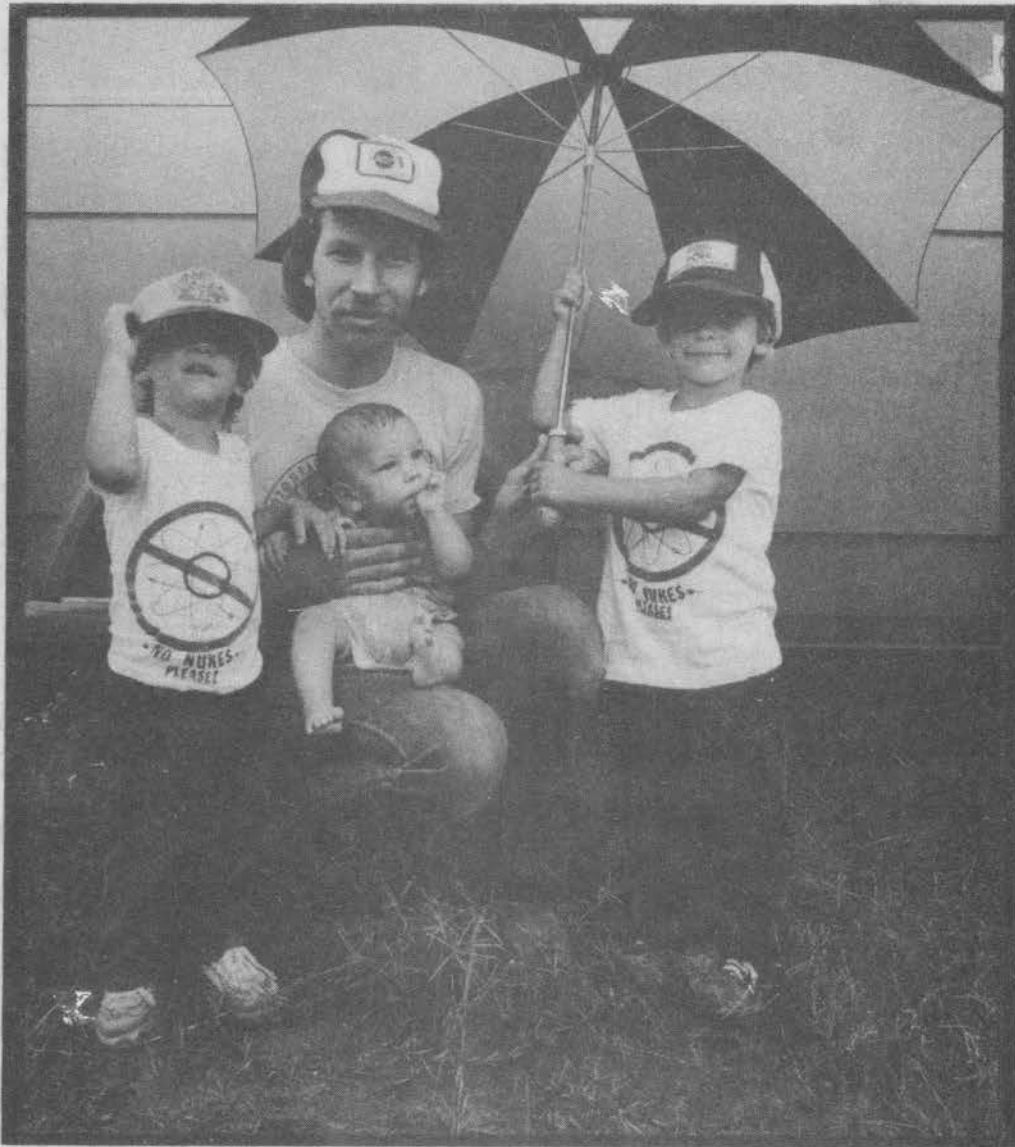


photo by Scott van Osdol

**AM radio— why do we keep humming those songs?  
 A debate on inflation: can something be done?**

*llll*

## Toward a socialist America

One of the unique aspects of **Moving On** is something that is rarely mentioned in most left or liberal publications—its conscious attempts to represent the interests, talents and concerns of women and minorities. Perhaps I bring this up now because I noticed that all the authors in this issue are white men. Although not uncommon for many magazines, this is very much the exception for us.

A glance at our masthead indicates that our staff actually is a majority women—including the leadership positions.

Although we do not have minority people on staff—and we are very aware of this lack—we have made consistent and serious efforts to solicit input and contributions. The result has been gratifying—Alice Walker's moving tribute to Zora Neale Hurston, Michelle Russell's beautiful drawings and book reviews, Manning Marable's challenging pieces on busing and socialism and the black movement. In addition, there have been articles on a Latina women's organization, the Weber case and affirmative action, the defeat of Rizzo's racism in Philadelphia and more.

Articles by and about women have also been stressed. Barbara Ehrenreich's seminal article on the cooptation of feminist ideas, as well as her description of socialist-feminism, first appeared in these pages. Judy MacLean has covered clerical workers. And we have explored the changing roles of women in such disparate areas as the labor movement, TV, and country music.

I mention all of this not to pat ourselves on the back; we know that there is still much to be done to improve **MO** in this respect. But I bring it up as a way of challenging the arguments of some publications that are dramatically weak in these areas and claim that there is no "talent" available.

We are a small—and very poor—publication, but we have generally been able to get high quality contributions from and about women and minorities—because we have placed a high priority on doing so. It's more than worth the effort.

*Roberta Lynch*

### Comment

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## Comment

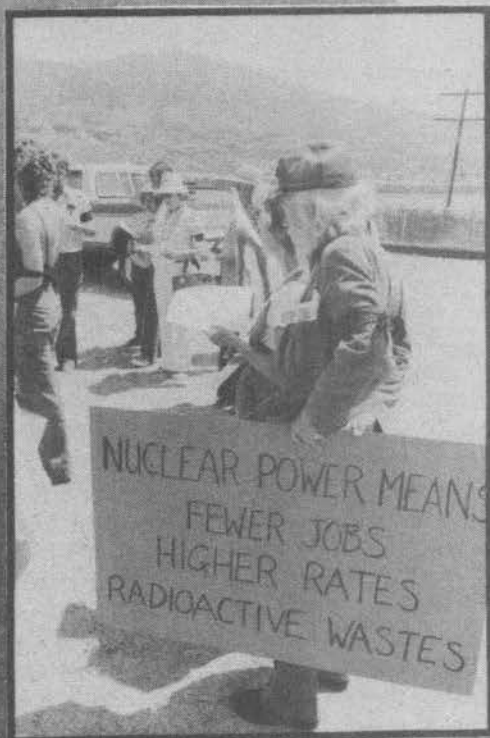
# At the core— nuclear politics today

by Paul Garver

**T**HE THREE MILE ISLAND ACCIDENT has accelerated the development of a popular movement against nuclear power comparable to the movement against the Vietnam War. It is a movement that can potentially win a major political victory over the nuclear and utility industries, and their allies in government. But that victory will require a bitter and protracted struggle, and will not occur unless the movement forges alliances with labor and racial minority groups not yet committed to the struggle. The socialist left must help develop a strategy to build those alliances.

Even before TMI, unresolved safety and technological problems were undercutting the extravagant promises of cheap nuclear electricity. Only government subsidies and tax breaks, as well as generous regulatory treatment by state utility commissions, disguised its soar-

*Paul Garver is a member of Pittsburgh NAM who works for the Service Employees International Union. He has been organizing and speaking on energy politics for several years now.*



ing costs. Now growing public awareness of the events surrounding the accident has led consumers and taxpayers across the nation to question whether they should continue to pay for a program of nuclear development that benefits only large corporate interests.

Although the most pressure is descending on General Public Utilities, [GPU] the giant holding company that owns Three Mile Island, Wall Street has already recorded major declines in stock prices of every electric utility with substantial nuclear investments.

GPU's reckless gamble in bringing the TMI #2 plant into commercial operation despite repeated malfunctions has triggered a kind of "financial fallout" that could force a shift of financial burdens from the consumer to the investor. GPU's Annual Report for 1977 repeatedly cited the anticipated completion of the plant in 1978 as absolutely vital to ease financial strains on the company caused by its expansion program.

By bringing the plant into commercial operation on December 30, 1978, GPU qualified for \$100 million annually in rate hikes and at least \$40 million in federal tax breaks for 1978. In its pursuit of higher profits, the giant company ignored a series of safety breakdowns and overworked its maintenance staff to exhaustion. The result was near catastrophe.

In its wake, growing political pressure has forced the Pennsylvania PUC to roll back rate hikes and to limit the company's ability to pass through to its consumers the costs of buying replacement power. GPU has had to reduce its dividend, slash management salaries, totally suspend its construction program, and threaten to lay off 600 workers. Because of the widespread public support for the area residents' and consumers' refusal to pay for GPU's nuclear mismanagement, a major federal bailout now appears to be the only alternative to bankruptcy.

GPU's financial difficulties are different only in degree, and not in kind, from other electric utility companies

with ambitious nuclear expansion programs. Nuclear plants have proved to be so dangerous and unreliable that many are currently shut down or operating at low capacity figures—which translates directly into higher costs to the consumer.

### **Enormous investment**

Throughout the nation, consumer and utility activist groups are resisting rate hikes for nuclear plants and utility companies are reducing the forecasts for nuclear expansion. (In 1974 the Nuclear Regulatory Commission confidently predicted there would be 1000 plants by the year 2000!).

But our dream of totally foreclosing the nuclear nightmare is by no means assured. There are currently 70 nuclear plants in commercial operation (about a dozen of which are closed down for safety reasons), 90 more in various stages of construction, and about 50 more that have been ordered.

There is enormous capital investment tied up both in finished and unfinished nuclear plants. In 1978, 7% of the total capital spending by all U.S. business went into nuclear power plant construction. A nuclear moratorium, even one exempting most existing plants, would risk billions of dollars in investments and cause chaos in financial markets.

On the other hand, there is enough

surplus generating capacity in the nation to totally dispense with nuclear-generated electricity, which currently makes up only 9% of the installed generating capacity in the U.S. and is responsible for less than 3% of total energy production. The contradiction between the tremendous significance of nuclear power to major corporate and financial interests and its relative dispensability to the real needs of consumers lays the basis for a real popular challenge to the heart of capitalist institutions in America.

The U.S. government also has a major stake in the continued expansion of nuclear power. For twenty years now the government has subsidized the nuclear industry and advocated the so-called "peaceful" use of the atom. The issues of public health and safety raised by commercial nuclear power, particularly the issue of waste disposal, inevitability will undercut support for the nation's nuclear weapons program, a far worse offender. Thus any struggle to abolish nuclear electricity will be opposed by formidable capitalist and governmental interests committed to its preservation and expansion.

But there are also strong countervailing forces. When 15,000 citizens from all walks of life from normally conservative Central Pennsylvania can lead the march on Washington, it becomes clear that nuclear issues have the potential for reaching far beyond the usual

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**The contradiction between the significance of nuclear power to major corporate and financial interests and its relative dispensability to the real needs of consumers lays the basis for a real popular challenge to the heart of capitalist institutions in America.**

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social base of the movements of the 1970's. The Pennsylvania Alliance for Jobs and Energy in Pittsburgh, which is about half black in its leadership and membership, recently organized two militant demonstrations against Duquesne Light's nuclear plants, demonstrating that costs of nuclear electricity can bring black communities into the movement. But it will require hard work and conscious attention to fully involve new constituencies in a movement that remains stylistically tied to the middle strata.

### Labor connections

It is especially important to bring organized labor into the anti-nuclear movement. TMI has opened up the potential for discussion within the AFL-CIO itself. Although that body still remains committed to nuclear power, *The AFL-CIO News* of May 12 ran a detailed story on a study by Len Rodberg "Employment Impact of the Solar Transition" which favorably contrasted the employment effects of a solar and conservation energy approach with those of a continued reliance on nuclear and fossil fuels production.

Barry Commoner and the Environmentalists for Full Employment have had some success over the last few years

in demonstrating to labor audiences the interconnections between full employment, a healthy economy, and an energy policy based on solar sources and conservation. Although formally neutral on nuclear issues, the Citizens/Labor Energy Coalition has stressed job creation through alternate sources of energy and conservation.

The anti-nuke movement can also build bridges to organized labor by fully supporting efforts to fight higher prices for natural gas and gasoline, pointing out that there is a common enemy—the energy monopolies—that control all forms of energy.

It is unlikely, however, that there will be unified labor opposition to nuclear power in the immediate future because the building trades will continue to support nuclear plants until more socially useful capital investment (e.g. public works such as bridge and railroad rehabilitation) starts to replace nuclear construction. Specific concrete employment alternatives on the local and regional level can begin to move in that direction.

If the most important task of the left in the anti-nuclear movement is to develop a program to address the concerns of labor and racial minorities, it cannot neglect or disparage the groups already involved. The anti-nuclear move-

ment must be broad and flexible enough to accommodate a wide variety of tactics and styles of protest. The greater the number of people involved at various levels of struggle, the higher the economic and political costs to the ruling class will be.

The anti-nuclear movement also needs to develop a strategy complex enough to include immediate and intermediate goals, as well as ultimate objectives. It will be relatively easy to ban the licensing of new construction of nuclear plants where that construction has not yet begun. Plants in early stages of construction can be converted to burning biomass, solid wastes, or coal—without incurring prohibitive financial costs. But to immediately scrap existing plants or those near completion would require far greater consequences and hence far greater organized pressure.

It would make sense to concentrate on particularly unreliable and expensive plants, those located near large population centers, and those with obvious safety violations, demanding that these plants be closed down and removed from the rate base so that consumers no longer pay for management errors. (Fortunately, the local anti-nuclear movements are strongest precisely where nuclear plants are especially objectionable). In this way, an ascending series of victories can build the resources and morale necessary to take on the industry where it is less vulnerable. The crisis of nuclear power is real, but it will not automatically resolve itself in our favor. Only determined political organizing over what may be decades of struggle can reclaim the future and offer a glimmer of hope. For about five years now, since the first "energy crisis," NAM and other energy activists have realized that energy policy is an arena where the people could successfully win victories against corporate power. Now Three Mile Island and renewed gasoline lines have laid the basis for a majority movement against the energy and nuclear industries. We can win an energy policy that serves the people's needs, by confronting capitalism at its very core.

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**Veteran of the Spanish Civil War, former Chairman of the Communist Party in Michigan, convicted and jailed for six months under the Smith Act in 1952, Saul Wellman was honored by the Detroit Common Council and the Michigan State Senate.**

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*event which will be used to start the Detroit Socialist Center in the Fall.*

**O**N APRIL 20 AN AMAZING CROSS-section of Detroiters and friends from around the globe gathered to honor longtime socialist Saul Wellman. Saul is a fascinating man, and the circumstances of the celebration were equally fascinating.

This was a veteran of the Spanish Civil War, a former Chairman of the Communist Party in Michigan, arrested and prosecuted under the Smith Act in 1952 and convicted and jailed for six months (though his conviction was later overturned). And here he was, being honored by the Detroit Common Council and the Michigan State Senate, in a college owned by the Catholic Sisters of Mercy.

That gathering was also a celebration of the best heritage of the American Left; and it was a consciously socialist event. Initiated by the Detroit Chapter of the New American Movement, the dinner drew together the widest spectrum of Left politics under one roof that anyone could remember. The air was political—walls covered with posters of

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*Charles Rooney is a member of American Christians Toward Socialism (ACTS) in Detroit.*

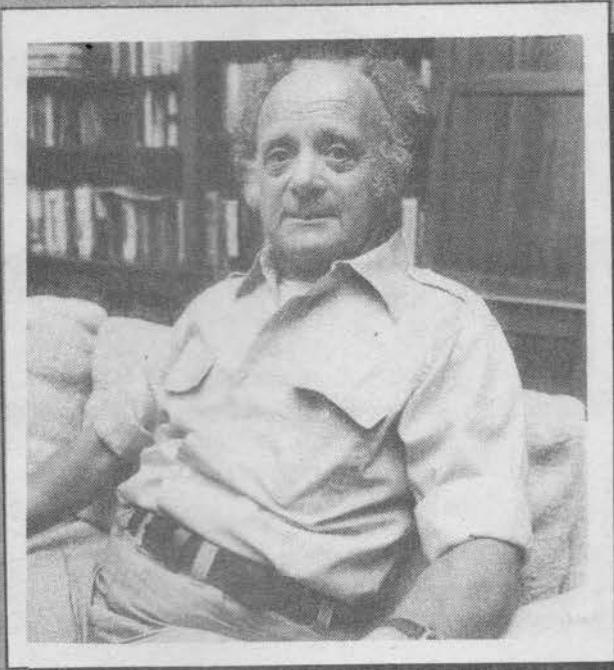
thing that touched our deepest aspirations and flashed out our noblest visions, was occurring—and we were part of it.

What could have been more fitting as a celebration of the world we envision than to celebrate a life that in capitalist terms was a waste, or, at best, nothing special. To capitalist society Saul Wellman is a talented man who could have been a “success” but chose to fight somebody else’s war (Spain); an honorable veteran who besmirched his service to his country by becoming a communist; a convicted felon; a black-listed organizer in the auto plants. He made trouble all his life and now, when he could be enjoying a prosperous retirement, he spends his days on Social Security infecting young people with his attitude.

This is the “common sense” of those who never question capitalist society. It was contradicted by the 300 plus people celebrating the life and work of Saully Wellman.

### **Poignant reminders**

They were old and young. For some Saul is a reminder of what they once could have become; for others, of what they hope to become. And Saul’s life is a witness to the cost of struggling for a better society. Featured speaker, Jessica Mitford, the noted author of *The Ameri-*



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# Carry it on—

## A tribute to Saul Wellman

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*can Way Of Dying*, reviewed some of the 1000 plus pages of Saul's FBI files, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.

His companions from Spain reviewed the dangers of fighting fascism before the rest of the world recognized the threat. A black brother from the UAW

organizing period recalled enemies in management and in the union. The reminders of the Smith Act trials were chilling, as was the realization that there were so few comrades from the old Communist Party to celebrate with.

And there were poignant reminders of the emotional losses for children and

parents: time away at meetings, in struggle in the underground. Nothing was more touching than the account of Saul's son, David, now a university professor, of the generational struggles, political differences and missed opportunities to enjoy life together as a family—the price of a lifetime commitment.

But in the midst of all the real suffering, there shone a warmth: of a family deeply committed to each other; of another generation borne into the movement, children of blood and children of the spirit. There were the smiles, the songs, the applause, the recognition of a lifelong battle well fought. There was the telegram from the Central Committee of the Spanish Communist Party: they did not forget.

The most eloquent testimonial of the power of that evening was that it lasted 5 hours, yet we felt as absorbed at the end as at the beginning. Everything was carefully prepared. Music, slides, storytelling, awards, toasts, humor melded to evoke the spirit of a man, a family, a movement, a tradition. For the eldest it is a tradition with which they have kept faith throughout a lifetime. For the younger, it is a tradition they have helped to build. For the youngest it is a bit nebulous, mysterious, to be taken seriously but not quite revered.

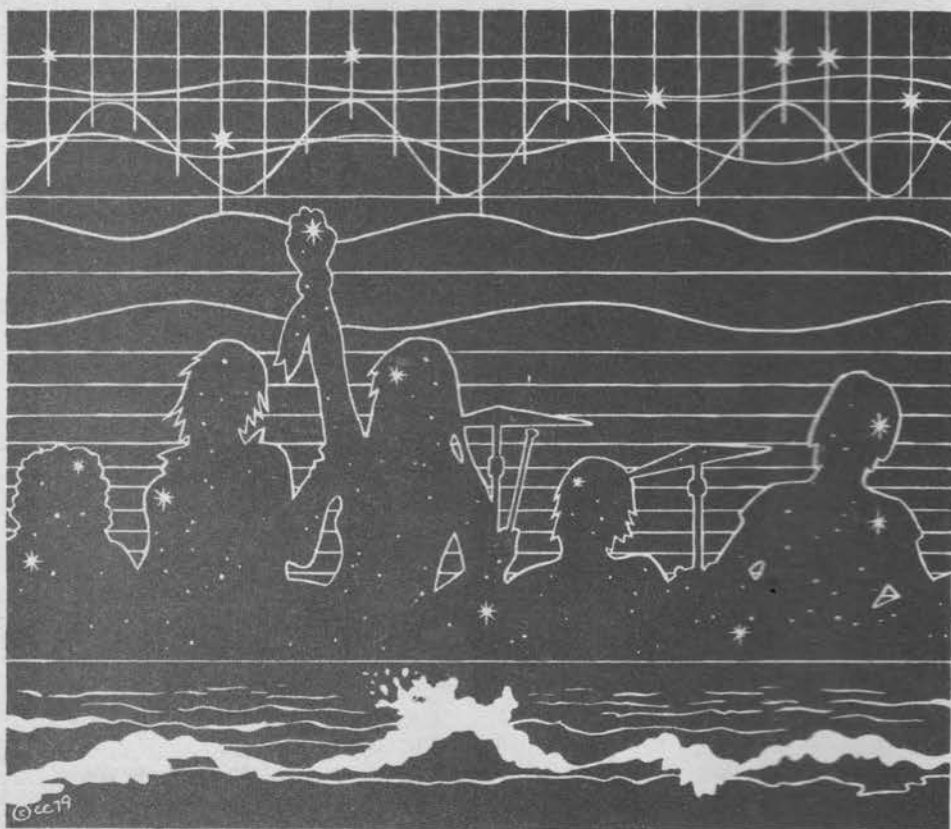
All of us, particularly the youngest, share in the historical amnesia which condemns the ignorant to repeat the mistakes of their predecessors. We are determined to make our lives our own, to reclaim them from the rotting influence of capitalist institutions; we are also determined to deal respectfully with the tradition which has nourished us.

*That* is what this evening meant to us: to be able, undefensively, to recognize and acknowledge our living continuity with the past while being confident we represent the future. We are not the first, and we are not isolated. We are many, we are strong. And this night we experienced anew why we are strong.

For this realization we thank Saul Wellman. With him we celebrated the people we are becoming.

# ROLL OVER TOP 40

The Pop Music Scene





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A genuinely popular music arises directly out of the collective experience and struggle of a unified social group—and is somehow expressive of the group's collective life.

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by Fred Pfeil

**T**OP 40, OR WHAT IS FALSELY CALLED "popular" music, has to have some effect on our lives if only because it is so inescapable. It comes out of the car radio and vibrates your dashboard on the way to work; it comes out of transistors on the side of someone's desk in the office or beside the belts at the plant; homogenized versions of it, rendered by a thousand muzak strings, ooze out of the overhead speakers in dentists' offices, bus stations, K-Marts and shopping malls.

In fact, the Marxist cultural critic Fredric Jameson has recently argued that the familiarity and pervasiveness of pop music are essential parts of our response to it.

The passionate attachment one can form to this or that pop single, the rich personal investment of all kinds of private associations and existential symbolism which is the feature of such attachment, are fully as much a function of our own familiarity as of the work itself: the pop single, by means of repetition, insensibly becomes part

of the existential fabric of our own lives, so that what we listen to is ourselves, our own previous auditions.

Anyone who has ever let her or himself swoon back to a fall day in 1969 in the arms of a Beatle hit, or been a part of those weirdly interesting conversations about What-were-you-doing-when-you-first-heard-X knows what Jameson is talking about here. Yet the sum total of these private reactions and associations to and with, say, "Miss You" is not a popular response; just because "Miss You" has a private resonance for both you and me does not bring us together in any meaningful way, any more than the semi-mythic working-class background of the Stones connects us with them.

A genuinely popular music (or popular culture of any kind) arises directly out of the collective experience and struggle of a unified social group—be it the European nobility of the 14th century, or the marginally employed urban black population of the 20th—and is somehow expressive of the group's collective life.

Top 40 does not arise from any such group. It does not express any collective experience, viewpoint, or struggle, but appeals to us as private, separate individuals. After all, the purpose of the single, and of Top 40 generally, is to reach the widest market; to "smash" across real social divisions into our private lives; to be a "hit."

The more you learn about Top 40 and how hits are made, the clearer such a distinction becomes. The basic situation is very simple; the record companies have lots of "product" (the inside term for pop music); a new album appears every 90 seconds in America, and each pop album holds an average of 12 single cuts. The companies therefore need to get as much airplay for as much

product as they can. For unless the group that made the music already has a widely established name (e.g. the Stones or some other "monster" group as they are known) or the entire rock press (*Rolling Stone*, *Crawdaddy*, *Creem*) gives the product a heavy hype, it will rot on the few stands it reaches. In industry terms, it will be a "stiff."

### Different purpose

The radio station has a different purpose: its profits come from advertising; its function is to supply its advertisers with as much of our attention as possible. Ratings, then, are as important in radio as they are in television; when ARB (American Research Bureau) ratings drop, advertising revenues dry up and program directors lose jobs.

So no radio station is going to want to take any more chances with new material than it has to. Even the program director with the time to listen to the 25 new singles and 15 albums that come in per week *on a minimum* is not going to risk choosing what reaches the airwaves on the basis of some gut hunch for what people are going to like.

The Top 40 format, invented by a New Orleans deejay in the mid-50's, resolved the dilemma of choice by limiting airplay to product that is already nationally hot, and thus minimizing the risk of a ratings drop. The system spread rapidly across the nation, with only two "minor" side-effects, hardly noticed at the time: it reduced the deejay's role to announcing the next song and giving the station's name and call number; and it effectively squelched a rising tide of truly popular black blues and rock and roll, as one local station after another either went Top 40 or went under, and the "race music" they had played effectively disappeared.

Today, as Top 40 radio spreads into FM as well as AM bands, other major

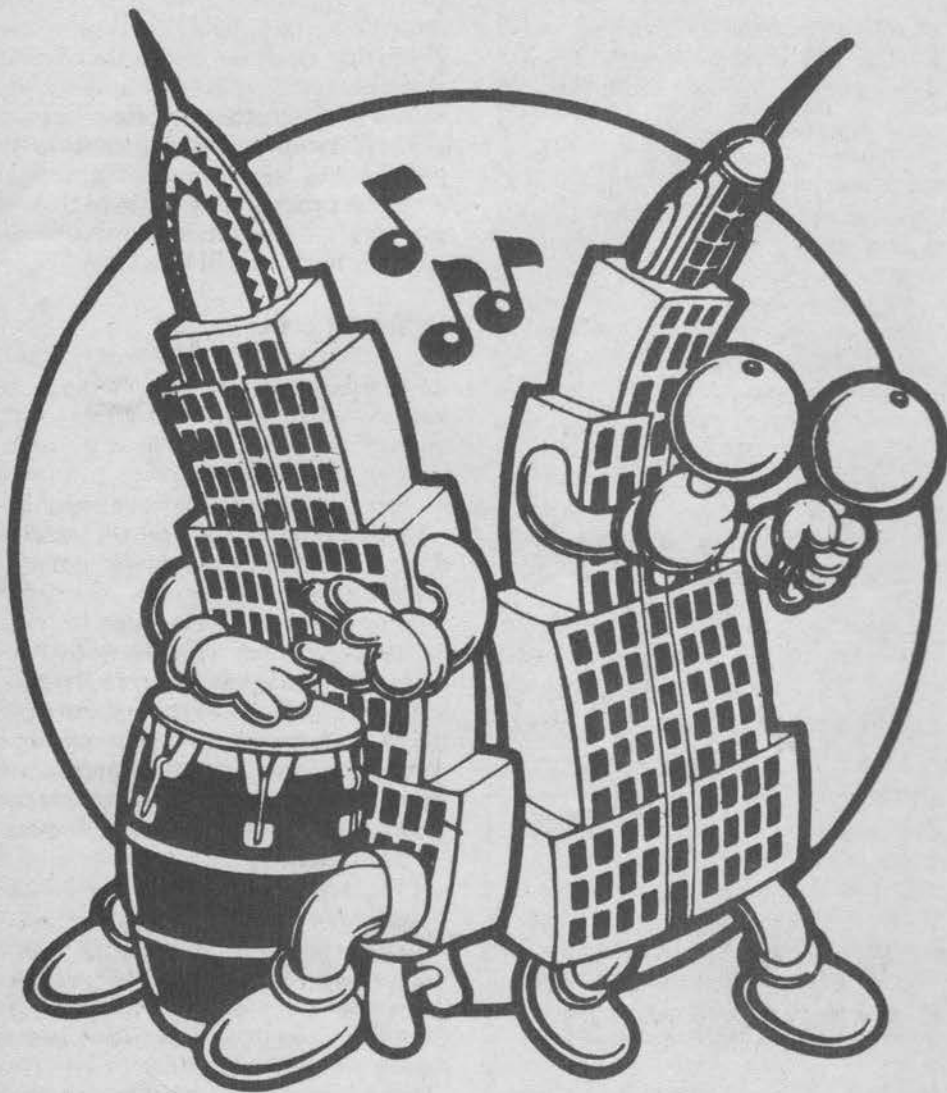
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Fred Pfeil is a writer, teacher and NAM member in Oregon.

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## Looking for America

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innovations have been added to it, most notably the "clock" and the "belt." The clock format, first devised in 1965 at station KHJ of Los Angeles, is a division of each clock hour of radio time into so many distinct spots, each of which must be filled in with a particular *kind* of Top 40 song.

In the first half hour, for example, the deejay of a particular station might be required to play in the following order (1) a golden oldie, upbeat; (2) a current Top 40 hit between 1 and 20 on the charts, progressive or upbeat sound; (3)

a current Top 40 hit between 20 and 40, smooth middle-of-the-road listening; (4) a golden oldie, middle-of-the-road; (5) a current Top 40 hit between 1 and 20, disco beat; (6) "wax to watch"—an up-and-comer on the charts, upbeat sound; (7) current Top 40 between 20 and 40, upbeat; and (8) a golden oldie, upbeat.

In the belt format, based on close demographic studies of what social groups form the audience during various time periods, the emphasis of the clock format changes throughout the day. In midafternoon, it may be on middle-of-

the-road programming, if the core listening group is housewives in the 25-35 age group; late at night, when the audience is mainly young workers and students, programming may be centered around progressive or hard rock.

Not all Top 40 stations today have clocks; and few stations outside major cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York work belts. Yet these systems, and Top 40 generally, have had their effect everywhere. At a small station in Jefferson City, Missouri, for example, the programming director makes all the selections for each deejay's airshift and even writes out what she will say between songs. She records these hooks and bridges, they are spliced into the tape of the songs, and the program is delivered to her listeners entirely by machine. (Needless to say, song requests are not honored at the station except at various specified times.)

Such a situation is not atypical. Even the terms themselves—"clock," "belt," "product"—suggest the true state of things in Top 40 radio; it is in fact as thoroughly industrialized, standardized and alienating as the most "efficient," scientifically-managed factory.

### Catch-22

Yet the system contains a built-in Catch-22. For Top 40 changes; last week's number 1 drop to number 8, the song that was 48 last week may be 15 today, and the program director must stay hip to what is coming next. Here is where the record industry—*not*, you will notice, the people—re-enters the picture.

At the Jefferson City station I'm familiar with, a representative of each major record company calls twice every week: once to let the programming director know of hot new product (the songs it has preselected for national promotion and publicity), once later in the week to find out how the program director "likes" the songs and how often they have been aired.

The programming directors in most small cities also depend heavily on various industry "tip sheets" for their picks. These publications—*Music Pro-*

grammer's Guide, The Gavin Report, etc.—are basically lists of what's being played where and how often, supplemented by a few short columns of radio and record industry gossip.

So the small-station PD's look to the record promoters and the tip sheets while the large-station PD's look to the record promoters and the size of the band's name. (In *Solid Gold*, the best available book on the pop music industry, sociologist R. Denisoff tells how Paul Jacobs, the inventor of the belt and clock, insisted that there *were* some "incredible" records the station had "stuck its neck out for" that went nowhere; then could not remember a single one.)

Yet knowing how the system works, and understanding how little pop music has to do with popularity, leaves one important question unanswered: why do people listen to and buy it? And that question does not go away even when we repeat that the music is all around us, and that we have very few alternatives to it: not unless we take the elitist and anti-Marxist position that people are sheep who will feed from any trough they are pushed to.

Having said this, though, I find it hard to speak with much authority about anyone else's taste but my own. I still like the energy of AM rock and roll. Behind the empty privateness of Billy Joel's "My Life" or the vicious sexism of the Pointer Sisters' "Fire" is a juice (admittedly watered-down and glossed-up) whose primary ingredient is group industrial work, collective energy coming out of electric-powered music machines. Surely there is something to be said for that.

There is even, I think (cautiously) something to be said for pop music's concentration on love relationships and personal life. It is perhaps a little too easy for us as Marxists to condemn this emphasis completely, knowing as we do that there is no private space to crawl into for fulfillment, that the personal—now, in late capitalism, more than ever—is the political.

But it may also be important for us

to acknowledge the legitimacy of people's desires for a world in which one's personal relationships could indeed be so primary, at the same time as we seek to show those we live and work with that only a truly socialist society could make such a world possible.

Such arguably positive elements, of course, do not "save" Top 40 radio or alter the basic effect of pop, which Adorno put with such clarity almost forty years ago: "Listeners are distracted from the demands of reality by entertainment that does not demand attention either."

"So you had better do what you are told," sings Elvis Costello in a song that didn't somehow get much airplay: "You better listen to the radio."

But the fact is, radio isn't telling us very much at all; it is *un*-telling us, privatizing our experience, keeping us apart. "I want to bite the hand that feeds me," the song continues: "I want to bite that hand so badly." But it does not go on to encourage us to get together and feed ourselves. That message, that kind of song, has to come from us.

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## The cure may be worse

by Frank Ackerman

**F**EW ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ARE AS important—or as widely misunderstood—as inflation. And unfortunately, the socialist left, though committed to a thorough critique of our economic system, still usually blows it when it comes to analyzing modern capitalism's chronic problem. Four principal myths are involved in the most common left approaches.

Myth Number One: Wages are not keeping up with inflation. In fact, average "real wages"—that's wages corrected for inflation—are about the same today as in the late 1960s. The average weekly takehome pay (after federal taxes) of a worker with three dependents was \$90.86 in 1967; in February 1979, if measured in 1967 dollars, it was 90.85. To be sure, there are short periods of time when almost all workers' wages fall behind inflation. And there are particular groups of workers who continually fall behind.

*Frank Ackerman is a member of NAM in Somerville, MA and an editor of Dollars and Sense magazine.*

# Inflation: Capitalism's chronic ailment



But on the average through the 1970s, wages have almost exactly kept up with inflation.

Two-parent family incomes have even inched up slightly faster than inflation—due to the growing tendency to have two or more wage-earners per family.

From 1970 to 1977, the median real income for two-parent families rose 7%. In the same period, the median real income for female-headed families declined 2%, partly due to the failure of welfare payments to keep up with inflation.

So when it comes to keeping up with inflation, there are a variety of experiences. Welfare recipients and retired people have generally fallen behind; the average individual worker has almost

*continued on page sixteen*

It is clear that the American dream of achieving an ever higher standard of living is no longer real for the majority of working people.

## Something can be done

by Doyle Niemann

**E**CONOMIC REALITY IS VERY COMPLEX, and at any given time there are a number of ways that it can be interpreted, each with some claim to truth and some foundation in data. So it is with inflation. The choice of one interpretation over another, however, is not an academic exercise; it has great strategic import. How we choose to explain a phenomena like inflation will determine the kinds of action we initiate.

In this context, Frank Ackerman's interpretation is woefully inadequate. Rather than a blueprint for action, Ackerman offers a blueprint for political irrelevancy. His analysis can be boiled down into three (somewhat oversimplified) propositions:

1. Inflation is not really a problem for most working people (with exceptions conceded);

2. To the extent there is a problem, workers are to blame since price in-

*Doyle Niemann is a staff member of the Exploratory Project for Economic Alternatives.*

creases (inflation) follow from wage increases;

3. The best response to inflation is to ignore it as an issue, compensating for its effects by struggling for higher wage increases (which according to Ackerman's analysis will lead to more price increases and higher rates of inflation).

Is inflation a problem? The data on this is contradictory, and the statistical answer depends very much on who is being examined and what assumptions are made. Ackerman cites figures showing that, on the average, wages have kept up with inflation. True, but the averages hide wide differences. Clearly, those on fixed incomes, those without the bargaining power to win wage increases, welfare recipients. This is a fair number of people, and includes much of the working and non-working poor.

Moreover, people feel they are being hurt by inflation. A visit to the grocery store or the gas station, where prices go up every week, easily leads to the conclusion that inflation is affecting the ability of the average family to sustain its quality of life.

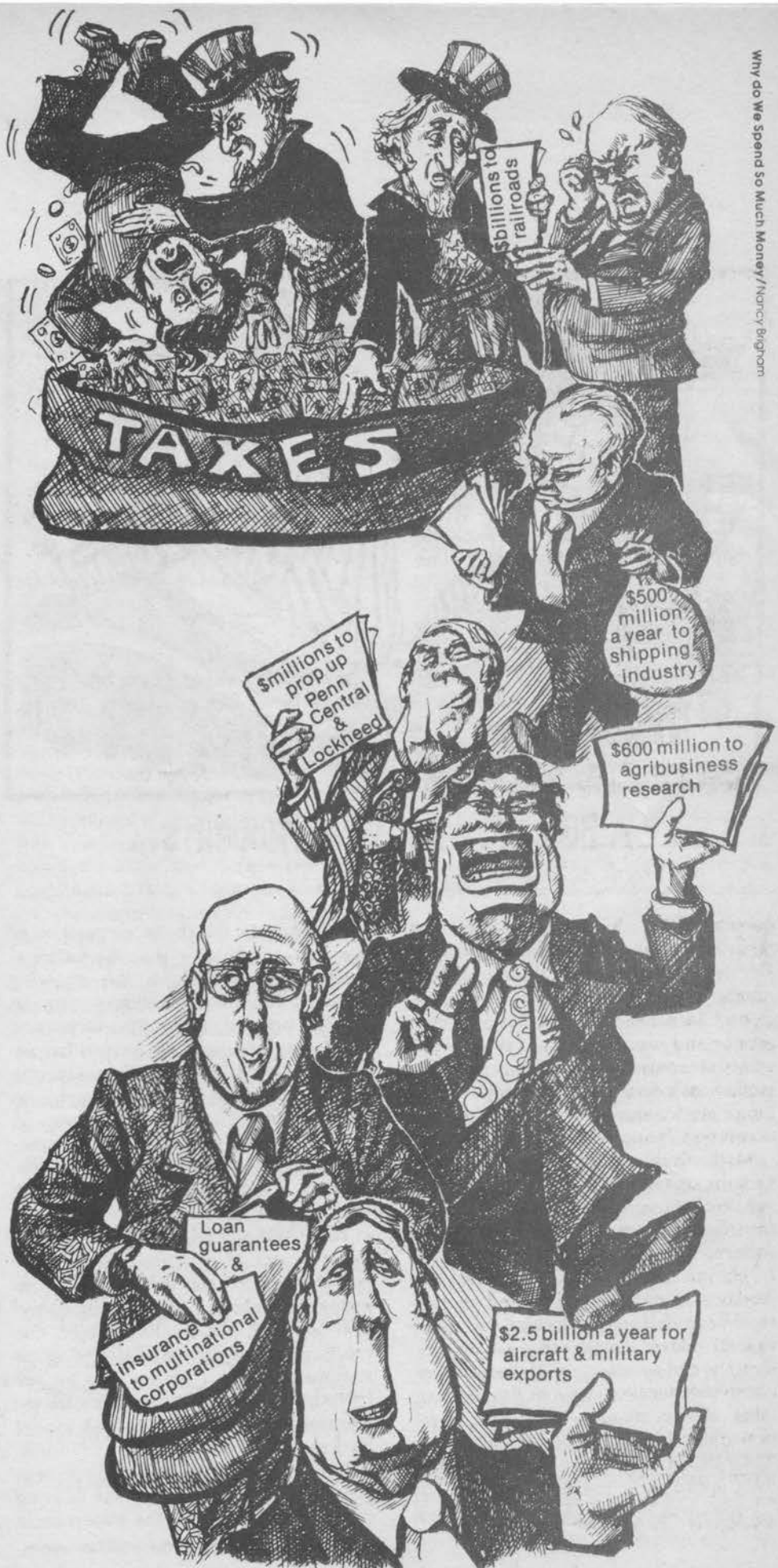
It is clear that the American dream of achieving an ever higher standard of living is no longer real for the majority of working people. Wages may be staying statistically equal to inflation, but they are definitely not gaining.

Politics is not just made of statistics. To say inflation is not a problem flies in the face of people's experience.

### Cart and horse

Are wage increases the cause of inflation? Ackerman says yes, joined by the chorus of corporate America. There is no doubt that wage increases are a part of the inflationary spiral. Wage gains have to come from somewhere, and corporations have a tremendous ability to pass them on in the form of higher prices. But which is the cart and which is the horse; if all workers do is catch up (if they even do that), is it really appropriate to say they "cause" inflation?

Ackerman's approach commits us to the anti-inflationary battle on corporate





## A BUCK FIFTY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS...

terms. As Ackerman himself points out, it is inherently an anti-labor position, legitimizing attacks on the standard of living of working people.

In a larger sense, his stance reflects a static and undialectical approach towards economic reality. He argues that inflation is inherent in capitalism. The implicit assumption is that the only "solution" to inflation is working class insurrection; everything else is merely a holding action. Given the unlikelihood of revolution in the near future, is this the best response to inflation we can offer?

I think not. While Ackerman's basic analysis remains firmly rooted in classical economics, he does hint that there are structural changes that are modifying the old economic patterns. In fact, these structural changes in the domestic and international economies are far more significant than he admits. It is in their direction that we must look for a new approach to the inflation issue.

Ackerman identifies two key structural

developments: the changing position of the U.S. relative to the international economy, reflected in the growing power of Third World nations to demand a better price for natural resources and increasing competition from other industrialized nations; and the increasing concentration of economic power in giant multinational corporations. A third structural change, and probably the most significant in terms of progressive strategy, is the increasing role of government in economic affairs.

The government is involved in virtually every aspect of economic life. Public policy expands and contracts the economy, determining the number and distribution of jobs. It allocates economic costs and economic benefits among the various groups in society. To an unprecedented degree, government action determines what can and what cannot be done in the economy.

To be sure, public policy at present generally acts to preserve the existing economic system. But the government

is not entirely the handmaiden of corporate interests. It occupies an autonomous role and responds to a variety of pressures, including public opinion. As never before, economic issues have become politicized and opened up—at least potentially—to public debate.

A strategic approach towards inflation must take these structural changes, particularly the role of public policy, into account.

This premise underlies the COIN Campaign (Consumers Opposed to Inflation in the Necessities), a joint effort of some 68 organizations to target the structural and corporate sources of inflation. Its members include the AFL-CIO, the UAW, the International Association of Machinists, other international unions, the Nader organizations, mass based citizen organizations like ACORN and the California Citizen Action League, DSOC, the National Urban League, and many of the major consumer, senior citizen, religious, women's and environmental organizations.

### Four necessities

Adopting the analysis of the National Center for Economic Alternatives, COIN has focused on inflation in four "basic necessities"—energy, health care, food and housing. Inflation, of course, is a problem in more than these four sectors, but there are compelling reasons for focusing primary attention on them:

- They are necessities, items that the average household cannot do without. While other items are also necessary to a household's well-being—Ackerman mentions clothing and transportation—these four items are central.

- They represent a large share of the household budget. There is dispute about exactly how much of the average household's budget goes into these four sectors—Ackerman says 55 percent for the bottom 80 percent of the population, while Leslie Nulty, a consultant for the Exploratory Project for Economic Alternatives, has calculated the same figure at 67 percent, and the Consumer Price Index for all urban dwellers puts the figure at 61.5 percent. But there is no

question that a substantial share of the average family's budget goes into the basic necessity sectors. The lower on the income ladder, the greater the share that goes for necessities.

- Inflation in each of these areas is regularly measured and widely reported through the monthly, quarterly and yearly releases of the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The CPI was not designed to measure strictly necessity spending, and so there are some methodological problems with using the CPI data, but these are far less significant than Ackerman suggests. This is particularly true if the orientation is not just to the very poor, but to working people as a whole. The CPI measures changes in the cost of goods for average households. It excludes from consideration clearly luxury purchases. Better measures could be designed, but there is little to indicate that the results would be substantially different.

- Prices in the basic necessity sectors are rising faster than they are in other sectors of the economy—very dramatically so. In 1978, for instance, prices in the four sectors rose 10.8 percent, compared to 6.5 percent for all other items measured by the CPI. In the first three months of this year, prices in the necessity sectors went up 17.0 percent, compared with 6.4 percent for all other items. Measures to limit inflation in the four necessity sectors then would have a significant impact on overall inflation and would have an even greater impact on household budgets. Conversely, unless these leading sectors are dealt with, there is no hope for improvement in the overall inflation picture.

- The four basic necessity sectors are key ones in the economy. Inflation in these sectors raises fundamental questions about power, performance and the distribution of costs and benefits in our society.

### Specific steps

Something can be done about inflation in each of these sectors. It won't be easy, but there are specific steps that can be taken. Space does not permit a

detailed examination of each of the four areas; a few general and very oversimplified comments will have to suffice.

**ENERGY:** The problem is one of a limited supply controlled by an international cartel and a small collection of multinational corporations. Government policy in this highly regulated business sector has capitulated to the interests of the energy corporations. New government policies—especially strict price and marketing controls—are required to keep prices down while alternative sources and conservation measures are developed.

Divestitures, a public corporation to import oil, or a public takeover of the energy industry must also be considered. Public development of renewable sources is essential and energy efficient modes of transportation—railroads and mass transit—need to be developed.

**HEALTH CARE:** The problem lies in the structure of the health care system, based on fee-for-service and third party payments. Strict cost control provisions combined with the creation of a viable health insurance or health service system are required. HMO's can be encouraged. Provisions to keep down the costs of equipment, drugs and other key items can be fought for.

**FOOD:** The chaotic international food system, the lack of any government policy to protect the domestic food market, and increasing concentration in key sectors—grain exporting

and meat packing in particular—are fueling prices. The solution requires a profound shift in government policy—encouraging rather than discouraging production, while developing mechanisms to keep family farm income up, stricter controls over corporate agribusiness, and more control over the export market. New production and marketing forms are also needed.

**HOUSING:** The problem of limited supply is compounded by government action to keep interest rates high, exorbitant land prices and land speculation, and a tendency for new construction to be in luxury rather than necessity housing. Governmental action will be required to remove the obstacles to housing growth, high interest rates in particular, and to stimulate and channel new housing to sectors of need.

Contrary to Ackerman's assertion, the COIN approach does not just call for control of prices in the four necessity sectors; it proposes a wide range of actions to get at some of the fundamental causes of inflation in each sector.

Nor does COIN argue that this will solve inflation. But it will make a very significant difference, and in the process it will begin to build the consciousness and the political strength necessary to tackle some of the larger questions that will face us—questions of corporate power and accountability, of the preservation of our communities, of a guaranteed job for everyone who wants one, of the distribution of wealth.

The COIN approach does not preclude more traditional forms of economic struggle like those for wages that keep up with inflation. If anything, by rightly shifting the blame for today's inflation off of the backs of working people, it can buttress those struggles.

None of this will come easy. Confronting the structural reality of the economy will require significant change, politically and economically. It will require a mass political consciousness of the need for change and an organized expression of that consciousness. It will require winning some power.

The inflation battle offers us an in-  
*continued on page nineteen*

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The government is not entirely the handmaiden of corporate interests; it responds to a variety of pressures, including public opinion.

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## The cure may be worse

from page twelve

exactly kept up; and the average two-parent family (still the form in which three-fourths of the population lives) has inched ahead by about 1% a year.

Even for two-parent families, this is far from a rosy picture. It looks especially pale in comparison with the expectations developed in the 20 years of relative prosperity after World War II, a time when real wages were rising for the average individual worker.

But even though the 1970s have fallen short of these earlier expectations, the claim that living standards are falling

simply misses the mark for a majority of the population.

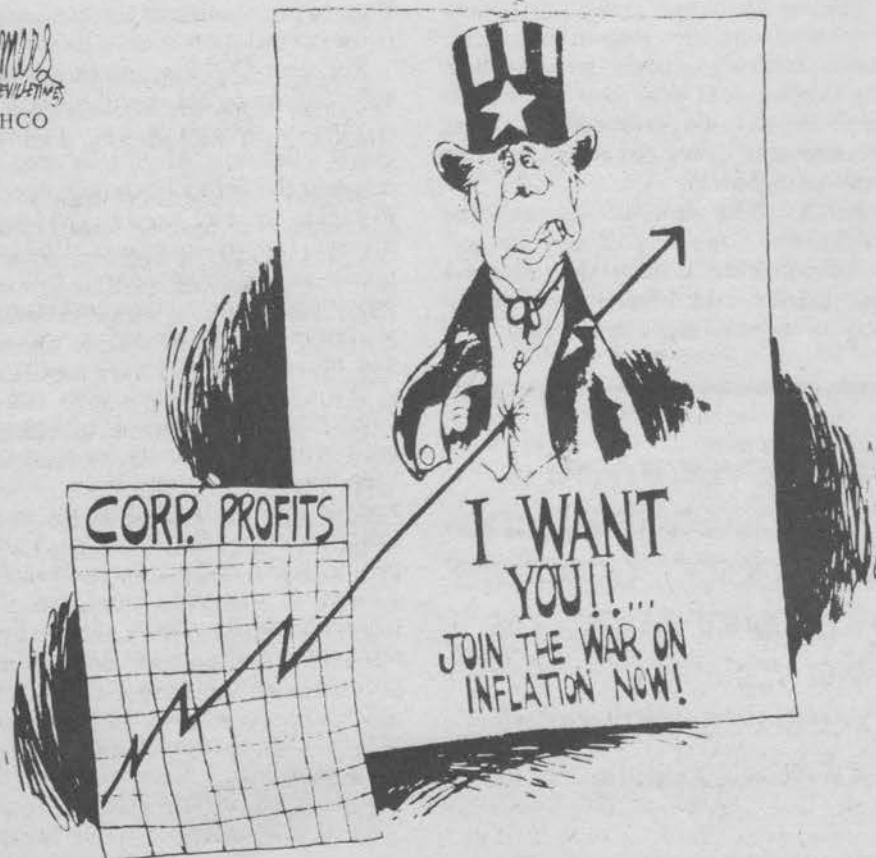
A similarly surprising conclusion can be drawn by shifting from individual and family experience to the position of the working class as a whole. Wages, salaries and benefits as a percentage of gross national product (GNP) stood around 58% in the mid-60s, then climbed rapidly to around 61%-62% in the near-full-employment years of the late 60s. Throughout the 1970s, labor's share of GNP has remained remarkably constant, around 61%.

How can the working class retain the

relative gains of the late 60s in a period of higher unemployment like the 70s? The answer is that even though more people have been unemployed, more people have also been employed. From 1970 to 1978, the number of people with paying jobs rose by 15 million; the percentage of the population with paying jobs rose from 56.1% to 58.6%. Thus *total wages* continued to rise.

How can the working class be holding its own, in view of the often reported, staggering increases in individual companies' profits? Profits fluctuate much more wildly up and down than wages do; when the economy is recovering from a recession, there are dramatic profit increases, but they give way to sudden drops when the next recession starts. The economic crisis of the 70s has been hard on both capital and labor, but judging by labor's share of GNP, in relative terms it's been a standoff.

Summers  
THE FAYETTEVILLE TIMES  
ROTHCO



### Who suffers

Myth Number Two: The poor suffer most from inflation. This is true only in its most general sense; in its more specific form, it simply isn't supported by the evidence. Generally speaking, any price increase is hardest to pay for the people with the lowest incomes and savings. But more specifically, necessities (which poor people buy) aren't, on the average, going up any faster in price than luxuries (which rich people buy).

The leading advocate of the more specific, and incorrect, argument is a group called Consumers Opposed to Inflation in the Necessities. According to COIN, the "four necessities"—food, housing, healthcare and energy—account for 70% of the budget of 80% of the population, and they are going up faster in price than luxuries. The conclusion is that, for most people, it doesn't matter if inflation is controlled in general, just as long as it is controlled in the four necessities.

Appealing as it sounds, the COIN theory is full of problems. First, their calculation that the four necessities account for 70% of most people's budgets cannot be relied on. The government



survey from which the conclusion is drawn simply\* includes inconclusive figures for total income and spending. The study that originated the COIN argument, however, used these inconclusive figures and added some errors of its own, arriving at the questionable conclusion that the poorest 10th spends 250% of its income on the four necessities.

More reliable figures suggest that the four necessities amount to 63% for poorest 10th and 55% for the bottom 80%, the group which COIN focuses on.

COIN often talks as if everything outside the four necessities consisted of diamond rings and trips to the Bahamas. But in fact, about half of all consumer spending beyond these necessities goes to clothing and transportation (the latter almost entirely the cost of buying and maintaining cars).

Another problem with COIN's attempted dividing line between necessities and luxuries is that a broad category of consumer spending, such as housing or clothing, can't simply be put on one side of the line or the other. Minimal levels of housing and clothing are necessities, while higher levels are common forms of luxury spending by upper-income groups.

And on an examination of subcategories within the "four necessities," the pattern of faster inflation on necessities than on luxuries breaks down entirely. Surely restaurant meals contain a larger proportion of luxury spending than food eaten at home; but prices have been rising faster on restaurant meals. Similarly, home ownership costs must contain a larger fraction of luxury than rents; yet home ownership costs have been rising dramatically faster than rents over the last decade.

In an attempt to summarize the impact of differing rates of inflation on different goods and services, I calculated the average price increase from 1967 to 1978 experienced by people in each tenth of the population. The calculation can best be explained by a simplified example: suppose that the poor spend 2/3 of their money on food and 1/3 on clothing, while the rich spend 1/2 on



FIRST, YOU STOLE THOSE EDSELS... THEN YOU FORGED THOSE WORTHLESS HOWARD HUGHES WILLS... AND NOW, YOU'RE COUNTERFEITING THESE CRUMMY AMERICAN DOLLARS... YOU'RE A LOSER, AL.

food and 1/2 on clothing. Then the price rise experienced by the poor is 2/3 of the price increase for food plus 1/3 of the increase for clothing, while the inflation experienced by the rich is 1/2 the food price increase plus 1/2 the clothing increase.

Actually I used 30 categories of spending for each of the 10 income levels. The result was astonishing uniformity: over the 11 years from 1967 to 1978, each tenth of the population experienced a price increase of between 93.4% and 95.0%. (Preliminary calculations for 1975 to 1978 suggest the same kind of pattern.)

An explanation of inflation, therefore, cannot be confined to any four items or any one income level.

### Wage gains

Myth Number Three: Wage gains do not contribute to inflation. This myth is perpetuated in the attempt to prove a far more reasonable conclusion: workers are not to blame for inflation; and inflation should not be solved at the expense of wage gains. But its easy to hold that

conclusion—which is simply a matter of stating where our loyalties lie—with-out the myth that usually goes along with it.

Inflation reflects the struggle over the distribution of income; faster inflation means that the struggle is becoming more intense, and that no group is dominant enough to impose its preferred distribution on all the others. The working class, one of the major participants in this struggle, wins partial victories in the form of wage increases, but is not strong enough to prevent business from passing them on in price hikes.

So in that sense, wage gains do contribute to inflation. Such an analysis does *not* mean that wages are too high, or that it is necessary or desirable to follow the usual government policy of controlling inflation at labor's expense. It just means that wages are an important cost to businesses, and businesses always want to pass their costs on in price increases.

Here again, COIN is a leading advocate of the wrong view of inflation.



GORRELL - NEWS-PRESS, FT. MYERS, FLA.

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Elaborating the four necessities theory, COIN argues that in each of the four necessities there is a specific form of monopoly power driving up prices faster than wages.

This argument is undeniably true for energy, and probably for health care as well. Food and housing, however, are two of the least monopolized industries in the economy. Although there are some big companies involved, their shares of the market are quite small by comparison with those found in, say, steel, petroleum or other monopolized industries. Other factors must be sought to explain inflation in these areas.

The cost of new housing involves the special case of the skyrocketing price of land. Inflation in food reflects the rise in agricultural exports in recent years, and the rapidly rising costs of farm inputs such as machinery.

The question of input costs is a devastating one for the COIN approach to inflation, or any other proposal to "solve" the problem by controlling prices in just a few industries. What will

be done when the controlled industries face rising costs? If the food industry can pass on the price of farm machinery then the price of food isn't really being controlled.

In other words, price controls on a few key industries like the "four necessities" are either ineffectual because they ignore input costs, or else must be extended to cover the whole economy.

Examining the industries which produce inputs to the four necessities also points up the gaping omission in the common comparison between, say, food prices and farmworkers' wages. It is true that farmworkers' wages account for a small, and probably declining, portion of food costs. But this doesn't prove that the rest is profit and waste. How much of food costs goes to the total wages paid to farmworkers, farm machinery production workers, food processing workers, teamsters who transport food, and food store retail clerks?

Capitalism does cause inflation. But it hasn't done it by raising prices faster than wages, at least not in the 1970s.

In part it causes inflation by adding socially unnecessary costs: excess processing and packaging in food, for instance, or excess high-technology apparatus rather than basic preventive care in medicine. (Such costs are in substantial part wage costs—real, live workers make those plastic packages and exotic medical instruments—even though they are socially unnecessary.)

### Tradeoff

Myth Number Four: The tradeoff between unemployment and inflation doesn't work any more. It used to be part of conventional economic wisdom that there was such a tradeoff.

Today, as government policy seems increasingly incompetent to regulate the economy, it has become popular to say that the tradeoff no longer works. Stagflation—simultaneous unemployment and inflation—has become the rule instead. But a hard look at the evidence reveals that the unemployments-inflation tradeoff is still alive and well, particularly in Washington, D.C.

The best recent proof that the tradeoff still lives is due to none other than Gerald Ford. Setting out to control inflation, he performed a simple experiment: let's see what happens if we throw several million people out of work and cause the worst recession since the 1930s. The official unemployment rate hit 9% in early 1975, and sure enough, the rate of inflation slowed from 14% at one point in 1974 to under 4% for the last three months of 1976.

Although it worked in a way, at least three drawbacks to this technique of controlling inflation should be noted. First, the terms of the tradeoff seem to be getting worse; more and more people's jobs have to be "traded" each time to bring down the rate of inflation. Second, it works with a substantial time lag; in the Ford recession, the low point of inflation was about 18 months later than the worst point of unemployment. Third, it is a very temporary solution; as employment started to pick up after 1975, so did inflation.

Still, in Washington it appears to be

the only trick known. Wage controls are politically unacceptable and other forms of price control have proved ineffective; at the same time, the government has done nothing but the same old thing. Serious anti-inflation policies have been tried by Democrats and Republicans and have resulted in an anti-employment policy.

Throw enough people into the labor market, put the fear of unemployment on everyone, reduce consumption enough, and then stir it up. It's a recipe that's a labor stopper.

### Working poorly

It is working increasingly poorly because wages are falling in real terms because of inflation (they are being eroded by inflation which is political control). Among the causes of inflation are the

*The U.S. loss of gold* contributes to inflation. First, the growing independence of the dollar has led to rising inflation dramatically. Exclusively, in order to raise the dollar value of manufactured goods, the government allows price controls on manufactured exports.

*The growth of government* throughout the country has given the government a greater ability to raise prices. Price decreases with the government's intervention. *Government full-scale anti-competition* monopoly power is the principal anti-competitive element in the system of competition in capitalism. (The funds available from the government suggest that prices will fall rapidly then as now; that they also fell rapidly during frequent, severe depressions.)

It is these structural factors that create the ever more inflationary environment in which the struggle between capital and labor takes place. Even if the government is unable or unwilling to act, the

unny?

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Warren Zevon (MO., May, 1979).  
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than I care to recall. So there-  
fore I understand the lyrics that Elaine  
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by Near's song "Fight  
Under's cartoons on  
ing to be Tall and Blonde.

**Mary Anne Joyce**  
Chicago, IL

For including Ron  
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own needs. Bravo to  
ressing that!

**Valerie Maxwell**  
Mexico

# NAM News & Views

The last year has seen a marked growth in "pro-choice" activity. On March 31st thousands of women and men demonstrated for abortion rights and against sterilization abuse in at least fifteen cities in conjunction with demonstrations throughout Latin America and Europe. And increasingly right-to-life public activity is being met with pro-choice demonstrations. This presence is crucial in breaking through the wall of fear that the anti-choice forces have created around questions of abortion and sexuality.

The past year has also witnessed a qualitative leap in unity among reproductive rights and pro-choice forces. The formation of the Reproductive Rights National Network (RRNN), in which NAM participated, was important in giving national visibility and coherence to a politics that could fight for the totality of reproductive freedoms—including abortion, freedom from sterilization, freedom of sexual preference, a safe workplace and environment, quality health and child care, and safe, effective birth control, among others. The formation hopes to change the terrain of the debate, pointing out that those who really care about life are the pro-choice forces who are committed to fighting for the conditions that make life possible.

The twenty-five groups who've already joined the formation also hope to be able to expand the organized movement to include in greater numbers those women who are the consistent victims of the new right attack—Third World and working women.

When abortion was illegal, Third World women suffered the greatest number of deaths due to backstreet abortions. Along with poor white women they have also been the primary victims of forced sterilizations. And, as we learned from the American Cyanimide case, it is women workers who are forced to choose between child-bearing or working at less-highly paid jobs.

Yet this will be no easy task. For pro-choice sentiment is still minority sentiment in Third World communities. In part, this is due to the propoganda of the New Right that accuses pro-choice forces of being murderers. And in part it is due to spokespersons such as Jesse Jackson or Dick Gregory accusing the women's movement and pro-choice movement of counseling genocide and of being "anti-family"

But this situation is also based on a real fear of population control policies that have been pursued by some of the single-issue pro-abortion forces. And it feeds on feeling among many Third World and poor women that the "feminist" movement cares little for their problems or needs.

Part of changing that view of the movement has been the creation of a network (RRNN) that speaks of and fights for the questions of reproductive rights as well as for abortions.

In the next month there are opportunities to both make the pro-choice movement more visible and challenge the racist/anti-woman politic of the anti-abortion forces. Right



Marilyn Katz is Political Secretary of NAM.

## Left turn

now there is a campaign going on to defeat the Hyde Amendment to the Labor-HEW appropriations bill—an amendment that has for the last two years denied the use of Medicaid funds for abortion—thus depriving many Third World, young, and poor women the right to control their reproductive lives.

This insidious legislation has been a rallying point for the right-to-lifers and their most consistent victory. Last year RRNN collected 10,000 signatures in opposition to Hyde. This year it is hoped that the number will be at least trebled.

Also in the works is the Abortion Rights Action Week, co-sponsored by RRNN and abortion rights groups around abortion rights, an end to sterilization abuse, and support for other reproductive freedoms.

On Saturday, October 28th there will be large demonstrations in a number of cities. While these activities are essential to publicly indicate the support for abortion and other reproductive rights, something else must be done—outreach to new forces.

This is an opportunity to unite with labor groups to hold meetings on reproductive rights and the workplace—talking about both reproductive hazards and about abortion as essential for assuring a women's right to work. To work with community and Third World groups to sponsor speak outs on abortion and sterilization abuse and their integral connections. To pull together welfare groups to oppose the restrictions placed on the health care of those receiving Medicaid.

Reproductive Rights is both one of the strongest and one of the weakest links of the New Right program. Strongest because it plays on age old reactionary feelings about women and on new fears about the destruction of the family and the deterioration of life under capitalism. Weakest because it has the potential of unifying in opposition the incredibly strong forces of women and Third World peoples who have no stake in the programs and direction of the New Right.

# All the news...

## MOVING AND SHAKING

•NAM chapters in Los Angeles, Washington and Chicago took part in nationwide demonstrations on June 2 demanding the overturning of the Weber case. Weber is a white male steelworker who won a suit against his employer and union for "reverse discrimination" when minorities and women were promoted faster than he was under affirmative action . . . **Southside Chicago** NAM members helped organize a rally of 2,500 and were among 25 arrested at a sit-in at the University of Chicago May 22. They were protesting the university's decision to give the Albert Pick Award for Peace to Robert Mc Namara, major architect of the U.S. Vietnam war strategy and current head of the World Bank. . . . **Frank Krasnowsky**, **Seattle** NAM member, won a seat on United Steel Workers' Local 1208's Executive Committee. Krasnowsky chaired the union safety committee last year. . . . "Has the California gas crunch been caused by a real oil shortage? NO!" says a flyer put out by **Los Angeles** NAM. The chapters there have leafletted gas lines and neighborhoods and are forming a People's Energy Network to fight for public control of the energy industry. . . . **Blazing Star** NAM joined many other Chicago groups in a demonstration protesting police harassment of the gay community June 5. The march and rally drew over 2,000 people. . . . "Don't Dump on Us or We'll Dump on You," was the slogan of a demonstration in Buffalo, NY June 3. The rally of 1200 people was sponsored by CANCER (Coalition Against Nuclear Contamination and Economic Recklessness) of which **Buffalo** NAM is a member. The protest targeted a nuclear dump near Buffalo. . . . **Pittsburgh** NAM helped organize a demonstration in Shippingport, Pennsylvania protesting the construction of a new nuclear plant there.

## New Chapter

•NAM's newest chapter is located in Corvallis, OR. The members are campus activists who have worked against nuclear power and the reinstatement of the draft.

## Resources

•**San Francisco** NAM has just published an excellent anthology, *Where Has All The Housing Gone?* Though the book focuses on California and San Francisco's housing crises, the issues translate into most other urban areas. Sections include Economics of Housing, Gentrification and Displacement, the Highrise Boom, Organizing, and Towards the Socialist City. \$2.00 from San Francisco NAM, c/o Schoch, 2566 Bryant St., San Francisco, CA 94110. . . . **Santa Cruz** NAM has prepared a brochure on affirmative action and the Weber case. Intended for people who are not yet convinced of the need for affirmative action, the pamphlet can be ordered in quantity for 3¢ per copy plus \$1.00 handling from Santa Cruz NAM, c/o Rotkin, 123 Liberty, Santa Cruz, CA 95060.

## Back to School

•NAM will hold two leadership training schools in Milwaukee, WI August 4-8. One school will stress political discussion and all-round leadership development for chapter leaders. The other is for NAM labor activists, and will focus on in-depth discussion of experiences and strategy. NAM held a weekend school for socialist community organizers in Chicago June 8-10. Attended by 35 organizers from various U.S. cities, the school focused on problems socialists face in being part of larger community organizations and the his-

tory, development and strategy of the present community organizing movement.

## Travel

•NAM traveller **Jacquie Brown** recently returned from a trip through the South, which included visits to Atlanta, Chapel Hill, Jackson, Mobile and Lexington, Kentucky. She met with activists involved in the women's movement, anti-nuke organizing, community action and anti-repression work. She gave several talks on NAM to interested people. If you are a NAM friend or at-large member who would like to get a chapter started in your city, you can contact the National Office to arrange for **Brown** to visit your area.

## NIC Meeting

•The most recent meeting of NAM's National Interim Committee included major discussions of the movement against nuclear power and the attempts to reinstate the draft. The NIC passed a resolution commending chapters for their active response to Three Mile Island through participation in local and national anti-nuke demonstrations. It stressed the importance of strengthening such work. The NIC also decided to publish a study guide to explore some of the major questions confronting the anti-nuke movement, such as the role of technology. . . . In other areas, NAM's work around reproductive rights—particularly the current campaign against the Hyde amendment—was reaffirmed, and it was agreed to place a greater emphasis on stimulating local chapter work. . . . The NIC also finalized Convention plans and developed a proposal for strengthening NAM's national structure.

## NAM in Brief

The New American Movement combines a Marxist analysis with careful attention to the current realities of American politics. It combines a deep commitment to its socialist principles with a tactical flexibility in its political approach. It combines a focus on the development of theory appropriate to our times with an activist orientation that stresses involvement in the crucial issues of the day. And it combines a vision of a socialist future based on democracy and human freedom with efforts to project

in our work elements of that future.

NAM has over 35 chapters involved in organizing for labor union democracy, against nuclear power, for abortion rights, against violence against women, for affirmative action, against apartheid in South Africa, and much more. Chapters also organize cultural and educational events that attempt to present a new and challenging socialist perspective on our world.

All of this work is informed and united by certain basic political ideas:

- NAM is committed to working toward a socialist society in which material resources and the decision-making process are democratically controlled by all people.
- We are committed to a socialism that has equality and respect for all people at its core—one that carefully balances the need for collective planning, ownership, and decision-making with a high regard for individual rights and freedom.
- The development of a movement for socialism in America will require the growth of socialist consciousness within

the working class—all those who have to sell their labor power (even if they are not directly paid) in order to survive. For it is only a broad-based movement representative of the diversity of the American people that can fundamentally challenge the power of capital.

•American capitalism is a powerful and entrenched system. Yet it is also rife with contradictions. Organization is key to changing power relationships and exposing these contradictions. We are committed to the development of a socialist party that can carry out these tasks, as well as to the growth of the most strong and progressive possible popular organizations.

•Democracy is central to the process of building a movement for socialism. Only as working people become active, organized and begin to take control over their lives can a new society take shape.

•NAM sees the struggle for the liberation of women as integral to a socialist movement. We value the contributions of the women's movement in showing how revolutionary change must deal with all aspects of people's lives. And we defend now, and in the socialism we project, the liberation of gay women and men.

•Racism cripples national life—it denies the humanity of minorities and thwarts the potential of the working class as a whole. NAM is committed to fighting against racism and national oppression in all forms.

•The fate of socialism in the United States is tied to the rest of the world. We support struggles for national liberation and human freedom wherever they occur.

•NAM supports the positive achievements of the existing socialist countries. However, we are also critical of various aspects of their policies, and see no one of them as a model for our own efforts.

## New American Movement National Convention

Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
August 8-12

### Debates:

Labor strategy, electoral politics

### Workshops:

Feminism, culture, anti-racism, Third world liberation struggles, health, gay liberation, community organizing

### Concert:

Kristin Lems and Tim Lear

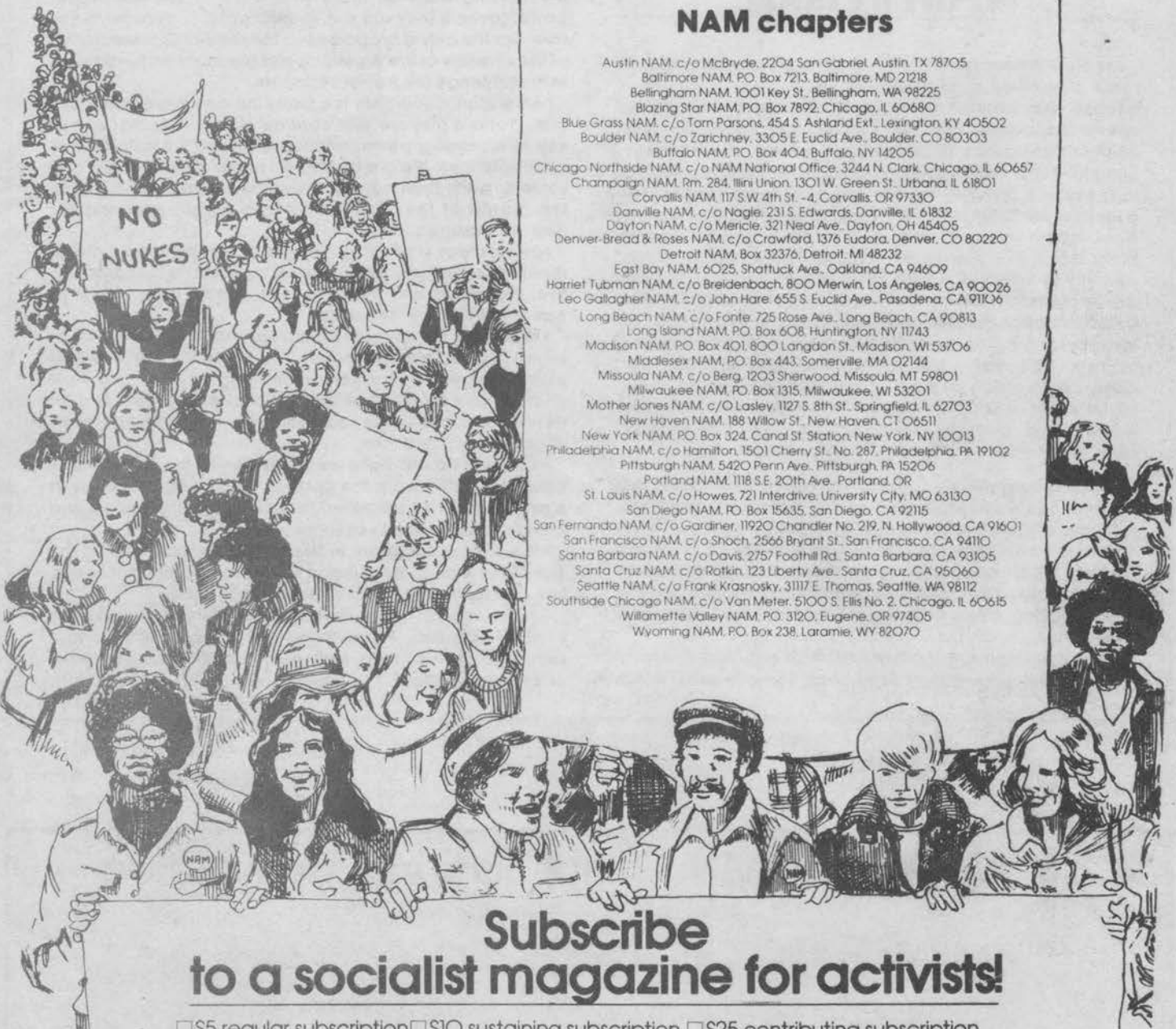
### Film Festival:

Newest releases in political films

and much more...

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drawing by William Johnson