

Moving On

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT

Labor & the environmental movement



Photo by Scott Van Orsdel

Disarmament in Colorado
Burning questions & the women's movement
Black power—its past and promise

Moving On

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT

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Letters

Gays and elections

What does the gay movement need? Given the conditions with which we are faced—the attack from the right-wing, as seen in the gay rights referenda, court cases on lesbian mothers and gay teachers, as well as the attacks on ERA, abortion and so on—we must work to build a mass, unified, activist gay movement. We need a movement that takes the offensive both in involving gay people and in reaching out to non-gays.

That's the conclusion (in sum) that Nancy Wechsler draws in her article in June MOVING ON ("Out of the Closets and into a Trap"), and one with which I wholeheartedly agree. It's particularly important in view of the defeat of gay rights laws around the country.

How can we move in that direction? We can do this through educational forums, cultural events, mass struggles, leafletting, petitioning, public speaking, demonstrations, making alliances with other groups and through electoral politics, to name a few.

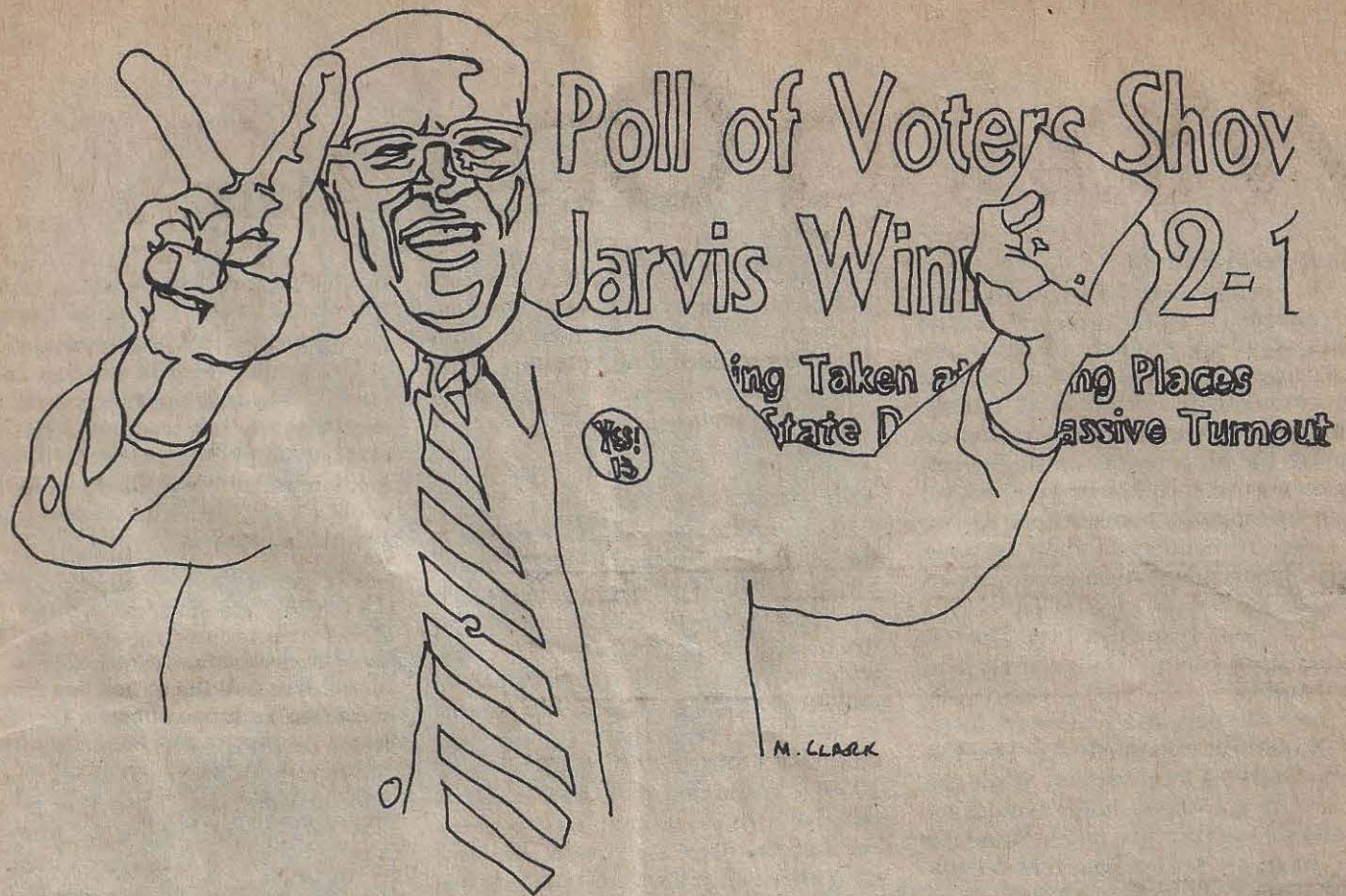
It appears that it is only on this last point (electoral politics) that Wechsler and I disagree. But there we have some major disagreements. Wechsler is particularly opposed to any involvement with the Democratic Party.

She states: "What happened to Noble will happen to anyone who runs as a Democrat for public office, no matter what their intentions. There are tremendous pressures to conform on City Councils and State Legislatures—to play by the established rules, not rock the boat, not be too outrageous or 'disruptive'. All Democrats are tied to the national Democratic Party structure—the party of Carter, Kennedy, Texas oil millionaire Robert Strauss, and the likes of Senator James Eastland (D-Miss.)."

Much of the battle for gay/lesbian rights and liberation, for the foreseeable future, is going to be waged around legislative issues—efforts to pass gay rights laws, maintain them against right-wing attack and test them in the courts. In order to even get to first base—having the legislation considered—means working with elected officials in some way. And that means the Democratic Party.

The same thing is true when it comes to ERA, abortion laws, health legislation and so on. Some of those battles have to be fought in the legislatures and they

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Comment

TAX REVOLT — a question of targets

By Robert Niemann

Forty-four school districts in Ohio declare bankruptcy and ask state permission to close for the year. Toledo voters repeatedly turn down proposals for tax increases to keep their schools open. In Oregon, three school districts close schools. Voters in Eagle Point, Ore., reject five consecutive attempts to raise funds to re-open the schools.

Throughout the country overburdened taxpayers, including large numbers of working people, are in revolt. But in many cases the target of their anger is not the source of the problem: a loophole-ridden tax system that allows some of the largest corporations and wealthiest families to escape paying any taxes at all. Instead, their wrath is directed at

government itself and the services it provides: schools, health care, welfare.

This misdirection of legitimate frustration provides fertile ground for organizing by right wing and racist forces who have always wanted to destroy public services, particularly those used by racial minorities and poor people, and public worker unions. By far the greatest part of the anti-tax rhetoric is not directed against corporate tax evaders, but against "welfare chiselers" and "city payrollers."

Nowhere has the right more dramatically exploited this situation than in California, where over a million people signed petitions to get a drastic, meat-axe property tax cut measure, the Jarvis amendment, on the June ballot. Howard Jarvis, the guiding force behind the

amendment, is a 75-year-old retired businessman and paid official of an apartment-owners association who has been an arch-reactionary gadfly in California politics for years. The success of his initiative petition drive thrust him into the center stage of California politics, and caused reverberations across the country.

Jarvis generally makes no bones about his contempt for "big" government and his desire to destroy or cut back services. But the initiative itself is a cleverly written measure that hides a windfall tax cut for big business and big landlords behind an appeal to cut the taxes of overburdened homeowners. If put into effect without modification or compensation, it would quickly accomplish Jarvis' goal of crippling government services.

Business Windfall

The main feature of the initiative puts a ceiling of 1% on the property tax rate. This would cut property tax revenues, the primary source of funding for local governments, by 60%—or \$7 billion. The sleeper in the measure is that although the property tax on single-family owner-occupied homes is regressive, with low-income homeowners paying a larger percentage of their incomes than high-income homeowners, property taxes on homes account for only a third of property tax revenues. The rest comes from commercial property and apartments.

These business and real estate interests would get two-thirds—or \$4-5 billion—from the total tax cut. While the owner of a \$50,000 home would get around \$1,000 in tax relief, Standard Oil would get \$13 million, IBM \$6 million. ARCO would get a \$3 million tax cut on one building, the ARCO Towers in downtown Los Angeles. The measure offers no tax relief to renters—relying on the “good will” of landlords to pass on tax savings in lower rents to their tenants.

At the same time, the initiative mandates a two-thirds vote of the state legislature to pass any new revenue-producing measures, as well as a two-thirds vote of the electorate for new local taxes. While wiping out of the revenues on which local governments rely to provide services, it attempts to close the door on the possibility of enacting progressive tax reform measures to replace these revenues.

In the past, much of the tax rebellion was of a spontaneous nature. Now, however, it is taking on a more organized character as national conservative organizations enter the fray. Last March Tennessee voters became the first in the nation to approve a constitutional ceiling on state spending. The measure won by almost a two-to-one margin, owing to a sophisticated campaign that included an appeal to Black voters. Similar legislation is currently being pushed in other states.

More drastically, over 20 states have passed resolutions calling for a national constitutional amendment to limit federal taxation and spending. The American Conservative Union has established a tax task force to further such efforts.

Progressive Program

Marx wrote that “the tax struggle is the oldest form of class struggle,” pointing the way for a left response to counter the present reactionary thrust of the tax revolt. The tax system in this country clearly serves ruling class interests, and is only getting worse in this regard. In 1944, the corporations tax accounted for 34% of federal tax revenues, in 1950 it accounted for 25%, in 1975 only 14%. As the economic crisis deepens and the need for government services increases at the same time that the tax base diminishes, corporations continue to try to get the working class to bear a larger share of the burden.

Campaigns for progressive tax reform based on closing the loopholes which allow the large corporations and the rich to escape taxes can co-opt the base of right wing tax efforts and channel the legitimate anger of taxpayers in an anti-capitalist direction. Demands such as ending the capital gains preference which allows as much as half of the profits from the sale of stocks and bonds and other capital assets to escape taxation, or eliminating the investment tax credit in which the taxpayers subsidize corporate investment in new plant equipment and machinery can provide the base for a broad tax reform movement.

In addition, any campaign against excessive taxation of working people needs to focus on the overwhelming percentage of the federal budget that goes to military spending.

On the local level, one of the main sources of increasing property taxes and rents is the escalating prices of homes and apartment buildings brought on by real estate speculation. Anti-speculation provisions are part of rent control campaigns being waged throughout

California, and confiscatory taxes on speculation profits can be an important part of progressive tax proposals.

The groundswell of support for the Jarvis-Gann amendment suggests, however, that any left program to deal with taxation must offer some form of immediate relief to working people themselves. Closing loopholes on the big evaders may increase revenues, but it is too circuitous a route for getting those extra dollars in the average person's pocket.

In the short run, the fate of vital public services and the gains won through unionization by workers in the public sector depends on our ability to forge and fight for a progressive tax program.

In the longer run the issue of taxation may be a central one on the American political scene (as it has been historically). The right will clearly seek to use it as a key element in shifting its base toward economic issues and pushing for a regressive restructuring of many present policies.

The left clearly needs to develop its own program and perspective—one that seeks to shift the burden of taxation from working and poor people to the wealthy and corporations. We need a program as well that begins to confront the issues of big government that underlie much of the present dissatisfaction and that can point toward a future in which human services will be of high quality and easily available and government will genuinely be “of, by and for the people.”

Robert Niemann is a member of NAM in Los Angeles and the chair of NAM's Urban Crisis Commission.



Getting Together

by Gene Vanderport

How can we best democratize the labor movement and make it more responsive? How can racial, sexual, and skill divisions be overcome? Most importantly, how can working people's power become central to the concerns of the labor movement?

Some of the experiences of the United Labor Coalition (U.L.C.) of Vermilion County in Danville, Illinois, a small industrial city, may help to shed light on these questions.

- Fire Fighters were locked in a life/death strike against the City Council. The U.L.C. provided up to 240 roving pickets at a time, spreading the word about the City's union-busting tactics across the community. At one point the Coalition had recruited 40 volunteers to occupy City Hall in case of the dismissal or jailing of the Fire Fighters. Second and third shift police officers voted to disobey any order to eject the Coalition volunteers. The strike ended with the first contract in the history of Danville Fire Fighters.

- The virtually all-woman Firemen and Oilers local at a small factory was

on strike for the first time. Conditions at the factory were deplorable. Even worse was the response of the inept union business representative (who lived two states away). The Labor Coalition helped the workers organize their strike and expose the rep. as well. U.L.C. members from affiliated unions stood picket duty while the workers received strike training from U.L.C. officers.

- Despite the fact that Danville has reportedly the largest Ku Klux Klan chapter in Illinois, the Labor Coalition organized anti-Klan education. Leaflets detailing the Klan's anti-working class stands were distributed to all major Danville worksites where Klan organizing was known to exist. A U.L.C. representative confronted the City Council with anonymous "hate" mail received by local residents in an attempt to force the issue into the public eye. To date the growth of the Klan appears to have been halted.

- During the United Mine Workers long strike, the Coalition brought 20 unions together in an impressive show of support. One action was the picketing of a speech by James J. Kilpatrick, the notoriously anti-labor columnist who

Labor stirs on the prairie

happened to be in Danville at the time. An informational leaflet attempted to provide the mineworkers side of the story—which the local newspaper monopoly had not done.

- The U.L.C. has taken its own political stands outside partisan politics. For instance, it was Coalition organizing at the precinct level that helped elect black pro-labor candidates to the Danville School Board. Coalition members have tried to “monitor” these candidates and others who claim to be pro-labor.

Successes such as these—even in a small city like Danville—merit attention and analysis; hopefully they can contribute to the strengthening of a strategic approach to labor.

The emergence of the Coalition was due in no small part to the conditions that characterize the Vermilion County area. Danville is one of the most intensively industrialized cities in Illinois. The city has a population of fewer than 50,000, but is surrounded by a number of nearby working-class and rural communities amounting to another 100,000 people. Despite the recent influx of middle-level professional, technical, and managerial types, class distinctions are unusually apparent in Danville (for instance, the rich live in one section of town only). A fifth of the city is black and there is a small but growing Chicano population (most of whom are recently “settled-out” migrant workers). An exceptionally high percentage of Danville area women work.

Danville is the home of a number of large industries. For example, the General Motors' Central Foundry employs 2,500 workers and produces one-third of the nation's iron castings. Alongside the large factories with their skilled, better paid workers are the dozens of small shops, many of which are runaways from larger cities. Danville also has the second largest trucking firm in the Midwest, a good-sized V.A. Hospital, and a grain company.

The area has a long history of labor militancy. Danville is one of the most

unionized cities in downstate Illinois. Much of the population is descended from immigrant families one or two generations past who came to the area during the often violent mine-organizing period, spanning the years 1900 to 1940. Besides the craft-dominated Vermilion County Federation of Labor there are large Teamster, NEA, and UAW locals in the area. Danville unions are often known in their respective national organizations for their aggressiveness.

New Beginning

Despite these traditions, however, by 1970 the Danville labor movement had settled down to an unhealthy stagnation. Growth of the community had come to a near standstill, as had the major unions. The UAW and Teamsters were sleeping giants. The AFL-CIO locals had been dormant except at contract time. Rarely did unions work together to address common problems or support one another.

But restlessness began to appear as conditions worsened. A multitude of factors converged:

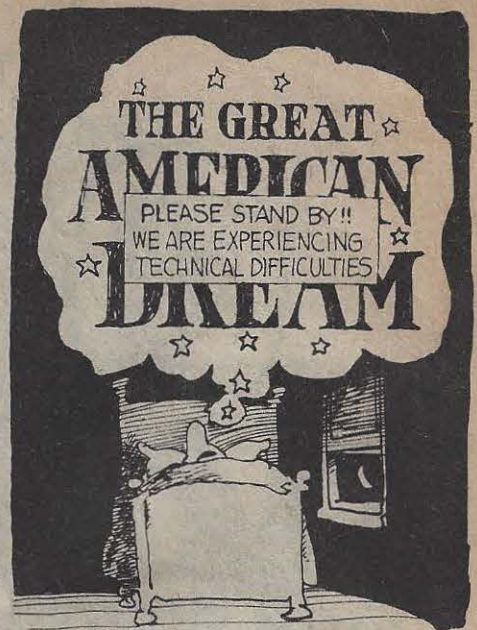
- The overall economic downturn with its unusual combination of inflation and unemployment (Danville has had one of the state's highest rates in both categories).

- The step-up in right-wing supported union busting and takeaway strategies used as contracts came up for negotiation in the early 1970s.

- The rise in local tax rates and a marked deterioration of government services including education. Combined with this were the fiscal crisis pressures placed on public workers.

- Even greater burdens on minorities and the high percentage of women in the area heading households and working.

- A sudden rise in frustrations following the great expectations of the of the '60s. Worker alienation, especially among the young, was clearly visible. Absenteeism is still exceptionally high at many workplaces. Vermilion County



has the highest alcoholism rate in Illinois.

In the face of the passivity and disunity of the labor movement, a group of individuals representing the teachers, city workers, V.A. Hospital employees, fire fighters, and even the police began to meet. The organizers of these first meetings in 1973 were well schooled in the direct action tactics and democratic orientations of the protest movements of the late 60s. At the time, they were experimenting with a local variant of the Coalition of American Public Employees, an organization then highly touted.

Despite the uncertain development of the national coalition, in Danville, the Vermilion County Public Employees Coalition (V-PEC) made an immediate impact by achieving a victory for city employees during a residency fight. Picketing and lobbying the City Council was successful in saving several jobs, as well as establishing the rights of city workers to a reasonable amount of freedom on the tricky residency issue.

The successes of V-PEC over the next two stormy years led to the formation of the United Labor Coalition (U.L.C.) in 1975. The U.L.C. absorbed V-PEC and included private sector unions ranging from the UAW and Teamsters to various AFL-CIO locals.

The five years of the coalition experience has been one of constant ebb and flow. Periods of intense activity followed by a lull, and back to intense activity again. What is unique has been the staying power of the Coalition and the ability of its activists to maintain the organization through the quiet

periods by using the opportunity to do internal training, broader political organization, and projects of popular educational value.

Self Concept

Of greatest interest here, is how the people who become involved in the Coalition see their efforts.

The U.L.C.'s basic posture is that labor must not be ashamed of acting as a "special interest group." Labor's interests, after all, are the human needs of the majority class in this society. The purpose of government and production should be to meet those needs before all else.

The Coalition also aims to break out of the narrow view that labor's struggle somehow ends at quitting time. Working people must bring the fight for their interests "home." It is beyond-the-gates that the problems and promise of labor start to become clearer.

In terms of problems, the "enemy" becomes better defined. "Management occupies more than the front office" goes the Coalition line. U.L.C. shows the interconnections among the dominant business people: "They are mobilized all the time. They meet at the Chamber of Commerce, the Country

Club, the United Fund, the Bank directorates, the so-called 'Family-Y' Board, and a few key local churches. They know what to expect from each other, and from us."

The Coalition's "Statement of Purpose" says it is "dedicated to building democracy in all aspects of life fully representative of working people as society's majority and responsive to their needs."

How does the Coalition see such democracy coming into being as the rich prove their inability to manage the community? One hint is the Coalition proposal to have a joint worker-community board operate a to-be-municipalized water company. As one union vice-president, active in the Coalition, said, "Management has no divine right to rule."

There is a strong awareness that a high degree of unity is needed to effectively mobilize labor. The U.L.C. defines labor's main weaknesses as the "racial, sexual, national and skill divisions fostered in our ranks." Even short-term gains of working people are short-circuited by these divisions which pit one worker against another.

Therefore, a labor movement worth its salt must make equality central to its concerns. This approach helps the Coalition formulate its programs and demands so that needs are better identified in terms of each person's *right*, not as privileges to be in competition for.

Tactics

The Coalition divides its tactics into five categories: mutual on-the-job support, anti-discrimination work, political action, services, and communication.

The area of greatest activity is mutual support of on-the-job demands. When a union, caucus, organizing committee or aggrieved worker has a justified problem, the Coalition provides whatever support it can. Support for job actions ranges from public relations work to active picket duty and

demonstrations. The Coalition makes every effort to win public opinion over to the workers' side. Then material or moral support can help sustain workers in their particular fight.

The preferences of the individual union in struggle are respected above all else. If workers approach the Coalition with problems related to their union, they are referred back to the union until a satisfactory resolution is made. If an unaffiliated union continually fails to respond to legitimate worker demands, then the Coalition assists the workers in methods of making their own changes in their labor organizations. To date, the U.L.C. has not been charged with interfering in the internal affairs of any union.

The U.L.C. also helps unions in specific legislative efforts. In any of these cases the Coalition procedure is to break down its contact lists, call supporters from the various affiliates, and inform people of the proposed actions to be taken.

Anti-discrimination work goes on at two levels. One level is the active pursuit of real affirmative action programs for each workplace and the government. The U.L.C., for example, negotiated an Affirmative Action Plan for the City of Danville in conjunction with the local chapter of the NAACP. It also gave support to the besieged Human Relations Commission (which happened to be chaired by a Coalition supporter). In addition, the Coalition has conducted educationals around strong Equal Opportunity approaches and advocated passage of the ERA, child care, and other measures aimed at alleviating sexism.

The other level of support for equality is assistance in the self-organization of minority and women workers. The Coalition has kept on-going liason with black community groups such as the Concerned Citizens of Danville and the local chapter of the NAACP. The leadership of black workers is encouraged. Also, the U.L.C. has backed unionization efforts of women and com-

A labor movement worth its salt must make equality central to its concerns.

munity oriented organizing as well.

The U.L.C. provides a means to offset potentially divisive confrontations within the labor movement over issues of so-called reverse discrimination. It takes the position that reverse discrimination is largely a smokescreen and in near-explosive situations has attempted to explain the importance of affirmative action in a way that defuses the usually hostile opposition. These efforts have been particularly important during attempts to desegregate city government services.

The Coalition's political action program stresses the independent role of labor. This operates at two levels as well. One focus is to mobilize union

or community support as pressure on supposedly pro-labor candidates. Key working class precincts are targeted and non-partisan efforts are made to identify issues and select candidates. The U.L.C. has run its own candidates, but so far the most effective tactic has been alliance with other forces in the community—particularly the black community.

The Coalition also uses its political contacts in the community for issue-oriented struggles in alliance with other community groups. For instance, the U.L.C. worked with the Vermilion County Landowners, a small farmers' organization, to expose the tax rip-off perpetuated by major Danville indus-

tries through the County government.

The U.L.C. provides a variety of services to workers in the area. These services include legal referrals, workers' compensation assistance, organizing the unorganized, leadership training, and fair practice complaint processing. The Coalition has also organized film showings such as *Union Maids* and speakers are regularly planned for educational purposes.

The final area of activity is communications. The Coalition publishes a newspaper—*Together*—successor to a newsletter. Workplace distribution, emphasized in the past, is being augmented to include neighborhood delivery as well.

To carry out all these activities requires an organization that is democratic and effective with a flexible approach. Membership in the U.L.C. is open to unions, caucuses in unaffiliated unions, organizing committees, or other organizations authentically representative of working people subject to Coalition delegates' approval. There have been some two dozens unions and groups involved at various times in Coalition activities. Thirteen unions are dues paying affiliates. Together the affiliates account for more than 10,000 workers in the Vermilion County area. Agreement with the U.L.C. statement of purpose is a necessary prerequisite for affiliation.

I have not detailed the problems confronted by the U.L.C. (many are obvious) because my intent was to show the promise represented by this unique organization. The Coalition is not the model for a new CIO. Nor does it answer all the questions of labor strategy. But it does provide an area in which answers may develop. And the core of workers being developed by the U.L.C. is the leadership of the future labor movement in this area. The success of the U.L.C. will be best demonstrated then.

Gene Vanderport is a member of the United Labor Coalition in Danville, Illinois.

Black power

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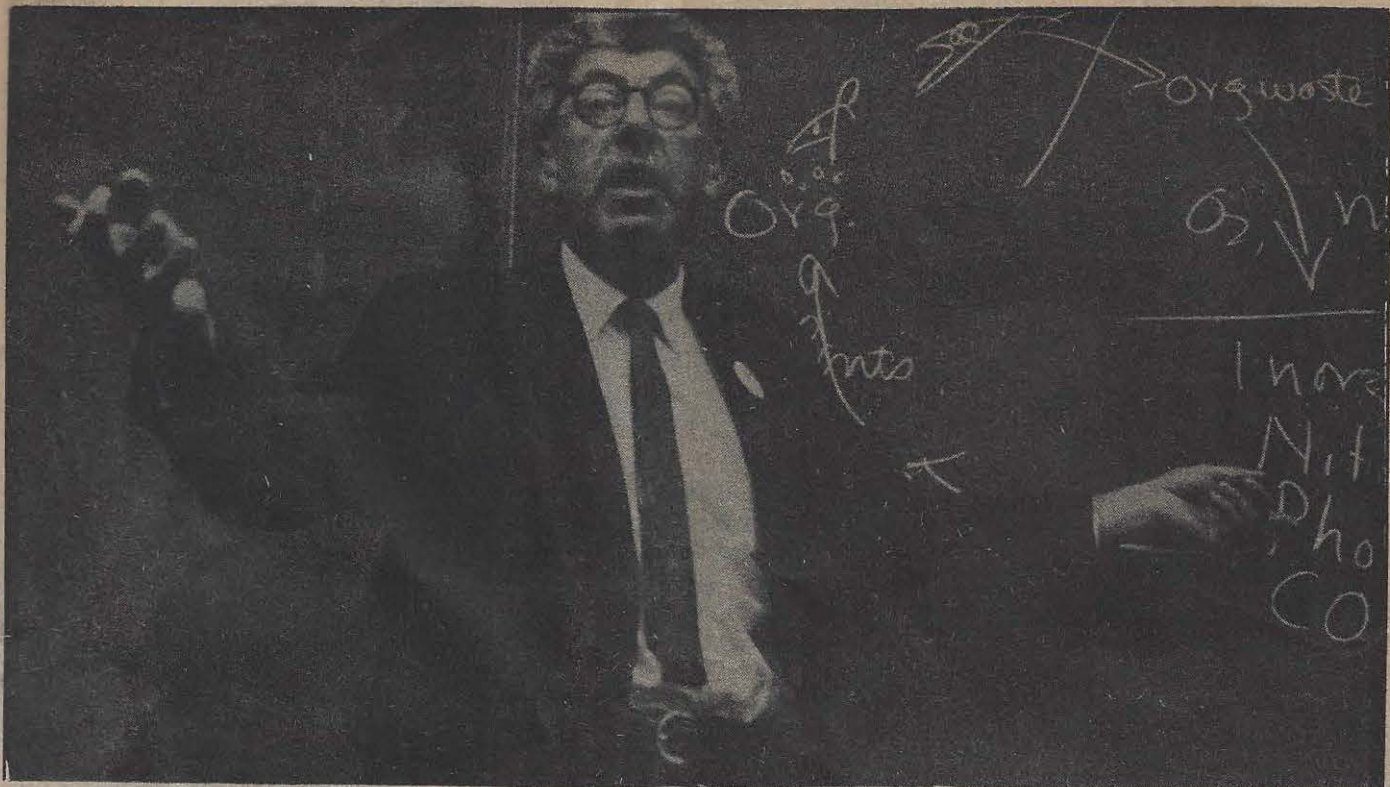
within an independent black pre-party formation like the Assembly, came to an untimely end.

Where are we today? Jesse Jackson has recently moved full circle back into the pre-Roosevelt era of the Great Depression by endorsing the Republican party as a viable vehicle for black people's liberation. Speaking before the Republican National Committee, Jackson declared recently that "Black people need the Republican Party to compete for us so that we have real alternatives for meeting our needs." Jackson evidently believes that "blacks must pursue a strategy that prohibits one party from taking us for granted." In this vein, two black Republicans, John McNeill and Bob Wright of Columbus, Ga., are advising white Republicans how to better market themselves for potential black voters.

And what of the legacy of Black Power? In 1976, nine senators and 45 representatives received 80 percent of the black vote—all are white and all are Democrats. Black political independence, a key element of Black Power as argued by Charles V. Hamilton and Carmichael, has almost disappeared completely.

In theory, the majority of black people would heartily endorse a basic change in the status of black politics. But such a change, the promise of real Black Power, can only occur when Black people begin building an independent, anti-capitalist program for social, cultural and economic transformation. Black Power must connote a concrete, practical program: it could mean both the use of the electoral political system and the continuation of mass mobilization, community-oriented politics. A new Black Power would mean an anti-capitalist economic agenda, promoting the development of community cooperatives, pressing for the community control of educational institutions, public control of utilities and struggles toward black workers' control within the workplace. A new Black Power must be a broadly based alliance of black working people, the unemployed and the petty bourgeoisie toward an anti-capitalist agenda. Only an independent, black political party can bring about substantial economic and social transformation that will benefit the masses of our people. This party and this agenda would be the real expression of Black Power.

Manning Marable is active in political organizing in Alabama and chairs the Department of Political Science at Tuskegee Institute.



Leading environmentalist, Barry Commoner, joins with other environmentalists and labor activists to forge a coalition that will fight for jobs and for the environment.

The bottom line is jobs— labor and the environmental movement

By Jim Kendall

Labor harbors a deep suspicion about environmentalists. (These people are your basic bird watchers, you know? Most of them never worked a day in their life.)

Environmentalists harbor a deep suspicion about workers. (They just don't appreciate the fragility of the environment. All they care about is TV, football and beer.)

These mutual suspicions, fostered by their isolation from each other, have helped produce some dramatic results lately.

Last year, California loggers hauled a huge redwood peanut to Washington to protest plans to expand the Redwood National Park.

Three thousand construction workers marched through Manchester, N.H. to show their support for the Seabrook nuclear power plant.

In all parts of the country nuclear power plants and dams are being constructed with the official blessing of organized labor and the fervent opposition of environmentalists.

At the center of the battle is the issue of jobs. When forced to choose between work and unemployment, no matter what the job or how dangerous, most working people would rather work. Environmentalists oppose government and corporate projects, but rarely have the capital or the vision to create new jobs. The only answer that many environmentalists have had for fears of unemployment—carefully nurtured by corporate America—is that no one can work on a dying planet.

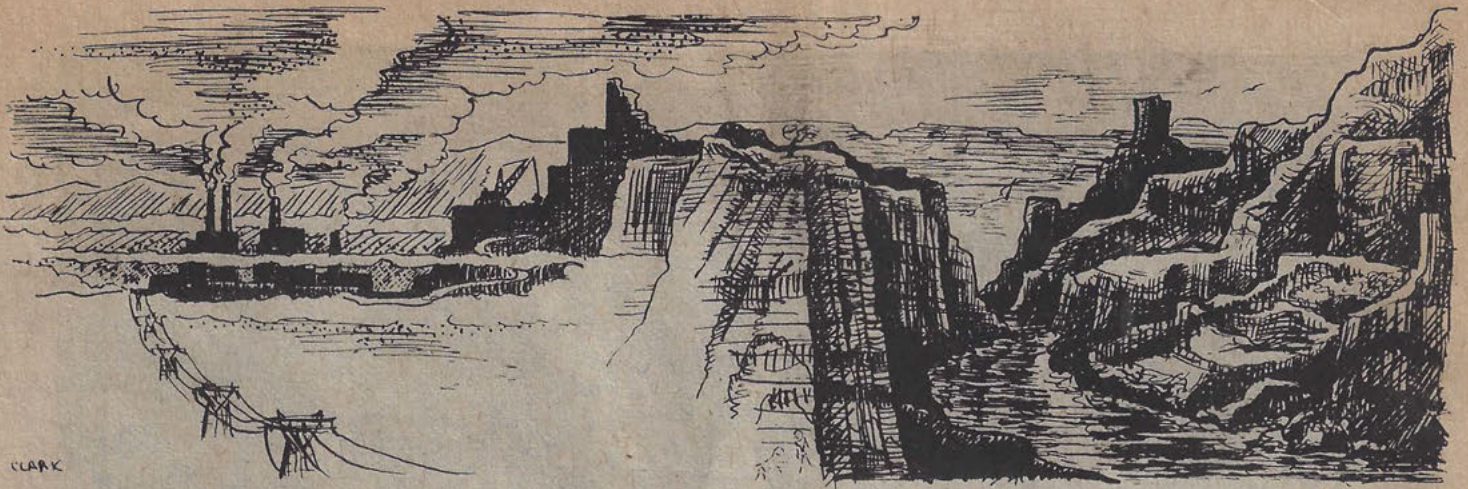
Yet in spite of these differences, labor and environmentalists are coming together more and more frequently to begin to talk about these issues. In the past year there have been at least 15 local conferences—from Columbia, S.C., to San Francisco—exploring ques-

tions of the environment and labor's concerns.

Eleven of those conferences were initiated by the Washington-based Urban Environment Conference with a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. Since it was formed in 1971 UEC has worked to bring together environmentalists, unionists and minority groups to work on issues of mutual interest.

The prototype of such conferences was held in May 1976 at the United Auto Workers Family Education Center on Black Lake in Michigan. It was sponsored by nearly 50 national organizations and more than 60 regional, state and local groups and attended by 300 union officials, ecology activists and community leaders representing 140 groups.

Among the speakers were then UAW President Leonard Woodcock; Gerald Wilkinson, executive director of the National Indian Youth Council; Gale



Cincotta, chairperson of National Peoples Action; David R. Brower, president of Friends of the Earth and environmentalist Barry Commoner.

"Contrary to what corporate America and the Ford Administration would have the public believe," Woodcock told the Black Lake conference in his keynote address, "there is today more than ever before a common cause between union members and environmentalists—between workers, poor people, minorities and those seeking to protect our natural resources."

In fact Washington environmentalists have been making common cause with labor on several issues over the past few years—supporting the Clean Air Act amendments, Toxic Substances Control Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1975 and greater funding for the Occupational Health and Safety Administration.

While no formal coalition emerged from the Black Lake conference, as some participants had hoped, ties between trade unionists and environmentalists were strengthened and the conference idea was taken to the local level by the Urban Environment Conference and other activists.

Corporate Blackmail

Both unionists and environmentalists come to such conferences deeply concerned about environmental blackmail—the most powerful wedge the corporations have to separate the two groups.

"The idea that businesses will be driven to bankruptcy and massive numbers of jobs will be lost if strict safety and environmental standards are adopted is the same tired line that has been brought up again and again by companies down through the years,"

Woodcock said at Black Lake. "They tried that argument when child labor was eliminated, when the minimum wage was introduced, when Social Security and Unemployment Insurance were developed."

"Job blackmail is the very same tactic that corporate America uses to whip American workers into line in matters like defense spending, energy policies, foreign trade and union organizing," William Winpisinger, president of the 950,000 member International Association of Machinists, said in St. Louis at the May 1978 conference on jobs and a clean environment.

"I believe that the law of diminishing returns is taking hold. American workers and trade unionists in particular, are getting damn sick and tired of being threatened with the loss of their jobs every time they take a move to make the workplace a little more safe or more secure and every time they move to make the environment a little more safe and secure.

"In a free society it is my view that job blackmail represents nothing more than the chains of economic bondage just as realistically as they have been exercised in any other way," Winpisinger said.

"If we had a full employment economy in American today, corporate polluters would have a far more difficult time with environmental blackmail," Woodcock noted. "The Union Carbides, Allied Chemicals, the U.S. Steels and General Motors would be far less successful in selling the myth that workers must sacrifice their jobs if we are to have a clean environment."

In response to environmentalist concern about full employment and labor organization, a national group called "Environmentalists for Full Employ-

ment" was founded in 1975. In its short history it has done much to stimulate environmental awareness of support for full employment and labor law reform, ideas much discussed at the recent conferences: Similar concerns have spurred discussion among Missouri environmentalists about building opposition to Right-to-Work legislation.

Communication

The simple matter of keeping well informed about each other's activities and programs can also help diffuse the threat of job blackmail. "If we can get together with labor ahead of time and work out ways to protect jobs, then we can assure that any actions taken (by environmentalists) will not threaten the jobs of any American working people," said David Wilson, president of the Coalition for the Environment, an organizer of the St. Louis conference.

Like the Black Lake conference, local conferences have gone beyond the traditional domain of the environmentalist—the natural environment—to consider the workplace environment and the urban environment.

"At the very source of every pollutant or poison," Winpisinger said, "there are working men and women who are exposed long before anybody else." Last year there were 100,000 deaths from job-related causes, 400,000 cases of job-related diseases and 6 million occupational injuries. The death rate of coal miners from disease alone is five times the rate of the general public and a coke oven worker is 10 times more likely to develop cancer than a member of the general public, he pointed out.

"One out of every seven workers is facing the final solution (death) in cor-



porate America's workplaces today," Winpisinger said.

"Workers need allies in the political fight to set better standards for workplace contaminants," Woodcock said. "We need the political muscle of the environmental movement to help us counteract corporate efforts to weaken occupational health and safety legislation and regulations."

One of the conferences in the Urban Environment Conference series was concerned exclusively with the health problems of women workers. That conference, sponsored by the Chicago Area Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (CACOSH) in October 1977, grew out of "concern over several cases of job-related discrimination," according to CACOSH spokesperson, Dave Simmons.

"It seems that much of the clamor over women working in high-risk occupations is often little more than a smoke screen to conceal industry's reluctance to place a priority on people rather than profits," according to Sylvia Krekel, occupational safety and health specialist for the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union. "From the workers' viewpoint, the solution is simple and unequivocal. It is based on the law as well as on some basic moral principles. Clearly, the workplace should be made safe for *all* workers regardless of sex, age or reproductive capacity."

The CACOSH conference drew support from the District 31 Steelworkers Women's Caucus, Women Employed and the Coalition of Labor Union Women. A subsequent conference, sponsored by the Philadelphia Area Project on Occupational Safety and Health in March 1978, had the support of CLUW, YWCA and the Women's Law Project. Among the speakers at the con-

ference were Krekel and Dr. Jeanne Stellman, another leader in the field of women's occupational health. Another conference on women's health on the job took place in June at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J.

Common Concerns

In addition to the immediate drastic impact that environmental factors have on the health and safety of workers, there are also less striking but equally important repercussions for other aspects of their lives. Take, for instance, the question of survival of our cities. Both labor and environmentalists have a vital stake in the cities because not only are the cities where the people are, but they're where the jobs and pollution are as well. Labor and environmentalists at the St. Louis conference agreed that reconstruction of the cities and improved mass transit are in their mutual interest.

Other areas of common interest at the conferences included work on utility rates and on job-producing forms of energy. The environmentalists pushed non-polluting, renewable solar energy sources, pointing out that solar energy often means more jobs and cheaper cost to the consumer than conventional sources of energy.

Underlying this tentative unity on issues was a realization at most of the conferences that labor and environmentalists usually confront the same enemies, who Winpisinger called "our corporate employers."

"It is time that we recognize that our energy is one and the same and they all suffer from a monolithic mind-set where jobs and the environment are concerned," Winpisinger said. "Together all of us have to very soberly realize that an economic system that cannot

or will not provide full employment, obviously is incapable of cleaning up the workplace, the marketplace or the whole wide national environment we call our country."

Just as the past year's round of local conferences on Jobs and the Environment had many issues in common, they had many similar organizational strengths and weaknesses.

"In general most of the work seems to be initiating from the environmentalists," UEC coordinator Coling said. "The unions are by their institutional nature, not conference organizers, whereas environmental groups and some minority organizations in big cities, like to organize conferences and write grants."

One exception was the November 1977 conference sponsored by the Northern Ohio Lung Association in Cleveland. Coling said that the conference was partly initiated by the United Mine Workers union. In all the conferences however, environmentalists put together planning committees that included official labor representatives.

The North Carolina AFL-CIO was represented on the planning board of the October 1977 Jobs and Environment conference in Durham, N.C., for example, and the St. Louis conference was sponsored by Districts 9 and 837 of the International Association of Machinists, Region 5 of the United Auto Workers and the St. Louis Joint Board of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union.

Most of the conferences were small. The North Carolina conference drew 75; the St. Louis conference 200; the Chicago conference 200 and the Philadelphia conference 225.

While the conferences did not make a particular effort to attract the rank and file, activists in both trade unions

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By Dave Anderson

Located on a wind-swept semi-arid plateau only 16 miles from Denver, the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Facility has been a source of considerable controversy lately. On April 29, over 6,000 people from around the nation and the world peacefully demonstrated at the plant, calling for its closure, for measures to guarantee job security for the plant workers, and for an end to the nuclear arms race. Organized by peace activists and environmentalists, the action was endorsed by Archbishop James V. Casey in an open letter to some 290,000 Denver-area Catholics.

Following the April 29 demonstration, some 160 people occupied railroad tracks on which plutonium—a radioactive substance so dangerous that as little as one millionth of an ounce can cause cancer—is carried in and out of the plant. Plutonium “triggers” for all of America’s nuclear bombs are manufactured at Rocky Flats.

The planners of the demonstration had originally intended for the occupation to be symbolic and short-lived. However, a few dozen decided to stay on, calling themselves the Rocky Flats Truth Force. The tracks have been occupied almost continuously ever since.

Although these actions are the first nationally-coordinated protests against Rocky Flats, there’s been much local activity for many years. Margaret Puls, a local environmentalist/peace activist remembers a leafletting at the plant in 1970.

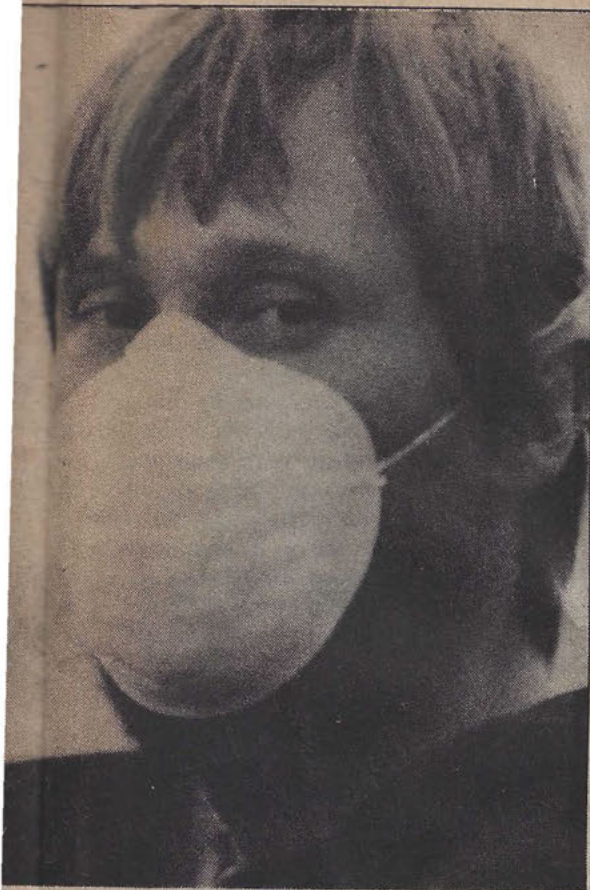
“There weren’t many of us—20 or so people. Some workers tried to run us over but many of them stopped, took our literature and were very friendly.

“That year, a lot of people in the anti-war movement in Boulder wanted to organize around Rocky Flats. It was discussed at many meetings. But it never got off the ground because so many things were happening—the escalation of the war, Kent State and so forth.”



Disarmament—a rocky road for a Colorado town





Boulder NAM

Judy Danielson of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in Denver remembers "collecting dirt samples from the residential neighborhoods near Rocky Flats in 1972, putting the samples in suitcases and taking them to political rallies where we confronted the candidates. We asked them to send the samples to a lab for tests and forced them to take a position."

In 1974, peace activists such as Danielson, environmentalists, scientists, medical people and other concerned citizens formed the Rocky Flats Action Group (RFAG). The organization sponsored seminars with experts speaking on genetics, low level radiation and other subjects. There were leaflettings, small demonstrations and vigils. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been commemorated and helium-filled balloons released downwind of the plant to demonstrate the health hazards to the public. People receiving the balloons have been asked to return the attached tags. The tags have come back from as far away as Kansas, Missouri, Illinois and Indiana.

Special Investigation

Danielson said the group has also been "working with" politicians such as Gov. Richard Lamm and Congressman Tim Wirth who ended up appointing a special investigative task force on the plant. The body, which included a RFAG member, recommended that Rocky Flats be phased out of operation.

It revealed that 200 fires had occurred at the plant and also suggested that the nearby city of Broomfield be given a new water supply since the present one is contaminated with radioactive tritium leaked from Rocky Flats.

"We have used this document (the task force report) to push government officials further and further," Danielson said. Shortly before the April 29 action, Gov. Lamm said the question is not *if* Rocky Flats will be closed, but *when* it will be closed. Dr. Anthony Robbins, executive director of the Col-

orado Department of Health has asked that the plant end its work with plutonium because of a potential threat to public health. Dr. Carl Johnson, the director of health for Jefferson County—in which Rocky Flats is located—has reported a higher than expected incidence of leukemia and birth defects among residents living near the plant.

However, as Danielson points out, the state has no jurisdiction over Rocky Flats since the plant is a federal facility. So, two years ago, she and other activists began discussing the possibility of a national action. The RFAG and three national organizations, the AFSC, the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), and the Mobilization for Survival did the planning.

"We had the April 29 action planned to the very smallest detail," Loren Weinberg, AFSC staffer, said. Months before the rally, the organizers met with officials of Rockwell International (the company that runs the plant for the U.S. Department of Energy), law enforcement agencies and the plant's Steelworkers' local.

Shortly before the demonstration, the Rocky Flats National Action organization did a mailing to plant employees explaining what they were up to. The letter read in part:

"We believe that money now being spent on arms could be better spent on programs to meet human needs, and that workers at Rocky Flats could be alternatively employed, at the same wage and benefit levels, on these human needs programs.

"We support legislation in Congress to set up a Defense Economic Adjustment Council (and local conversion committees in each defense-related plant) which would be funded to work out plans for converting to civilian industry, paying workers salaries and benefits when a plant closes, and financing the conversion of the plant inventory and labor force to peace time use. The federal government now has no such programs.

y road
/n



Boulder NAM

"We know that conversion legislation and funding bills will not be passed in Congress without a great deal of education to alert citizens to possibilities and without a shift in public opinion and pressure on Congress. But protecting our community financially is of great importance to us and we plan to work seriously on these issues."

The group furnished a phone number and there were some angry calls from Rocky Flats workers. Danielson acknowledges that winning the employees over

As many employees drive to work each day, they see a ragtag band of demonstrators camped on the railroad tracks.

will be a long process. "Conversion is a very new idea," she says. "It always is very frightening to lose your job." In addition, Weinberg claims this is "a difficult workforce to reach. They're highly socialized. People are screened before getting in there and Rockwell has a strong internal education program. They're highly paid and many have worked there for a long time."

Camping Out

Meanwhile, as many of the employees drive to work each day, they can see a small ragtag band of demonstrators camped on the railroad tracks. For over a month, the Rocky Flats Truth Force has endured rain, snow, sleet, bitter winds and cold temperatures to make their point. They intend to "stay indefinitely....until the plant is converted," according to spokesman Evan Freirich.

As of May 30, there had been five big arrests. "Seventy-five individuals have been arrested. Some of us were arrested two or three times," Freirich said. "Roughly half are from out of state. Two-thirds are from Boulder. Very few are students. Most are workers and church people in their 20's and 30's."

The Truth Force has its headquarters in Boulder in a house loaned by a local Catholic church. A spiritual tone pervades the group which has ecumenical services on the track every Sunday. Members seem to be motivated primarily if not wholly by individual moral commitments. Some insist they are "apolitical."

A principal figure in the group is Daniel Ellsberg, who conveys a sense of great urgency about nukes when he speaks about his experiences as a Pentagon analyst and nuclear strategist. He feels the arms race is out of control and that the proposed neutron bomb is "most likely to be the first nuclear weapon used since Nagasaki."

Martin Spector, a Boulder dentist, is concerned about how the plant is affecting his children's health. He also knows two widows of Rocky Flats workers who died of cancer. Jacqueline Dickey of Des Moines, Iowa, believes that Rocky Flats represents "a threatening, bullying attitude" all too prevalent in American life. She works at a Catholic Worker House where "every day we take in battered women. Our society can't solve conflicts creatively."

Marion Doub, a 17-year-old Boulder High School student, feels people can't isolate themselves from each other. "We're going to have to learn to trust each other. Otherwise, we'll all blow up." She is recruiting people to commit civil disobedience on the tracks. She first talked her mother into getting arrested with her. Now she's started the Boulder Youth Alliance (BYA) which is doing support work for the Truth Force. Some 45 people, high school students and a few parents, attended a recent meeting where they received the Truth Force's non-violence training. In the fall, the

BYA will "spread out into kid power and deal with the injustices being done in the school system," she says.

The Truth Force's decisions are made by "a process of consensus" which consists of a long meeting with everyone gathered in a circle taking turns saying what she or he feels. "It's longer than the 'debate it and vote on it' approach but people are more satisfied," Boulder plasterer Henry Raiborn says. "Everyone has an opportunity to speak and listen."

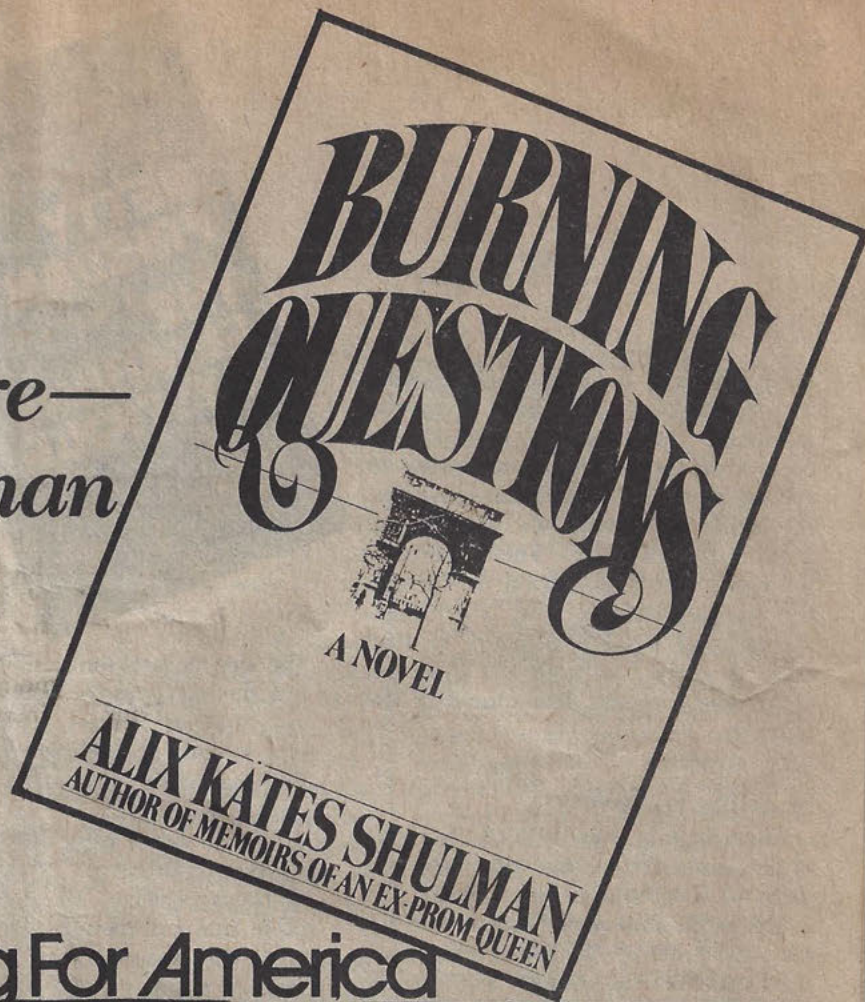
The Truth Force has received much support from anti-nukers, such as friendly visits and hugs, food, water, tents and sleeping bags. But there is some apprehension about where the Truth Force and the anti-nuke movement in general is headed. Judy Hurley, of the Boulder chapter of the Mobilization for Survival, is bothered by the notion that "the power of the spirit can prevail over everything... There's no down-to-earth analysis. Many people don't have a sense of history of a political theory or an economic analysis."

The beginnings of such an analysis will have to include an understanding of the role weapons facilities such as the one at Rocky Flats play in both the U.S. economy and its maintenance of world power. Plans for conversion that maintain present wages and benefits for the workers involved will have to become more central in no nukes struggles. And there must be a strategy for converting the exemplary action of a few people blocking the railroad tracks into a real mass movement.

Rocky Flats and other anti-nuclear weapons and power demonstrations this spring provided a breath of fresh air, with their high spirit and strong assertion that nukes of all kinds must go. The struggle will be a long one, but the enthusiasm of these actions has thrown much-needed light on a problem whose true dimensions and dangers are only beginning to be told.

Dave Anderson is a member of Boulder NAM and a free-lance writer.

The way we were—
Alix Kates Shulman
asks some—



Looking For America

BURNING QUESTIONS
by Alix Kates Schulman
Knopf, \$8.95

by Roberta Lynch

Alix Kates Shulman is a brave woman. Or at least she has written a brave book. She has gone and published a commercial novel that will bring the ever-ready sneer to the lips of the sophisticated and mainly male world of literary criticism. She has dared to be enthusiastic, engaged, occasionally enraged, and—perhaps most shocking of all—an upfront feminist.

At a time when nearly all favorable reviews of novels by women include such backhanded praise as “not just another feminist tract” (where, oh where are all those “other” feminist tracts?), it takes a certain amount of chutzpah to come out in favor of such things as consciousness raising, position-paper writing, and even “revolution.” Yet Zane IndiAnna, the heroine of *Burning Questions*, does just that. And she does it with a nice measure of judicious self-awareness to lighten her political zeal.

Zane’s story, a novel within the novel, is entitled “My Life as a Rebel.” And so it is. Even as a teenager tucked away in a small town in the Midwest, she yearns to be part of the passions of her time (although at that time she wasn’t even sure there were any). And when she goes off to New York in the fifties, she is quickly immersed first in the “beatnik” circles of Greenwich village and later in the amorphous “movement” of the sixties. But Zane remains peripheral—at least in her own mind—to all of these. Initially an impressionable and directionless young woman. Then a harried wife and mother.

It is only with the emergence of the women’s liberation movement that Zane finds a home for her longings. Without needing credentials to prove either her worth or her oppression, she senses almost immediately that she belongs. The women’s movement is not an adjunct to her life; it quickly becomes the focus of her life. And her rebellious instincts—long pent up or offered only occasional and inadequate outlets—find a meaning and a context.

In describing Zane’s involvement, especially in the early days of women’s liberation, Shulman communicates with

wonderful energy and something approaching sheer joy the experience of becoming politicized. In an intellectual world and a decade in which commitment is often considered an embarrassment—something to be stuffed in the closet when company comes or passed off as youthful folly—I suspect that it is a measure of Shulman’s own vision that she is willing to go out on this particular limb.

Here is Zane describing the intense pride of completing her first project—a women’s history program:

When the next wave came (and they would keep coming, as they always had, as long as women lived...) they'd find us there...on the library shelves...a testament to our spirit. The world could drown in bigotry; still every woman in this room knew each others voices, knew them and respected them; that could never be undone...Identifying ourselves only as a group, we remained individually anonymous; but we had made a difference to the world and we were known to each other.

Of course it wasn’t all like that. And

Zane knows it. But those feelings were there and we all felt them at special moments: the closeness with sisters/comrades; the sense of connection to something much larger than ourselves; the belief that what we were doing mattered to history. They are rare moments, but they sustain us through the hassles, defeats, and discouragements. And what a pleasure to find them described without the cynicism of hindsight or the detachment of the outsider.

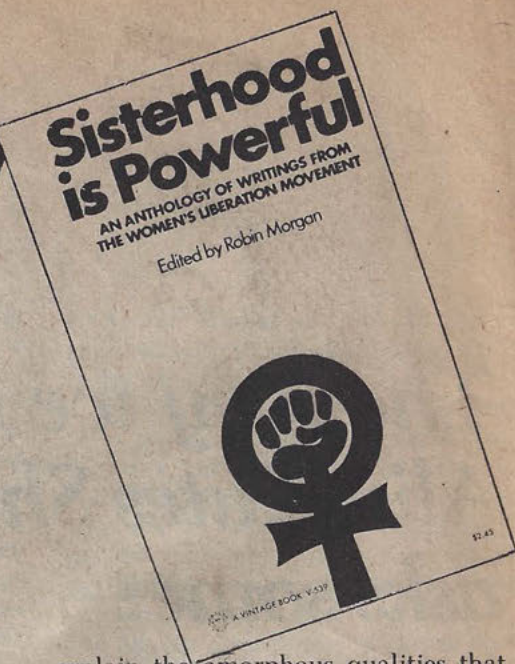
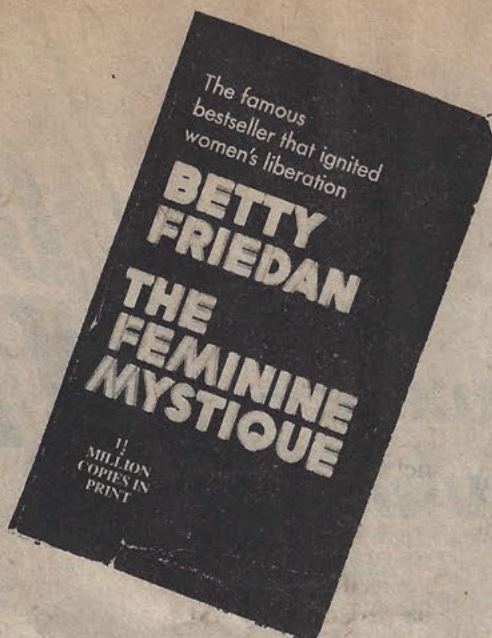
Startling Discovery

Zane, in fact, has little of the cynic about her. At the same time, she has little of the fanatic. She can see the faults in the movement and in her sisters—and in herself. She can even see the absurdity at times. But mostly she views the movement with the air of someone who has just made a startling and historic discovery—a discovery that is validated in the lives of millions of women, but that still requires observation, testing, and development—as much as it also requires involvement.

Zane's description of the first public action of women's liberation, the Miss America protest, exemplifies this spirit. She does not go to Atlantic City in a mood of rage or to outrage. She knows that "it was too soon to expect many people to understand us, much less support us." And she captures both the threat and the potential of the movement in a brief episode in which a taunting male bystander tosses his ice cream cone into her face and his wife quietly but forcefully offers her some tissues with which to clean it up.

That was the beginning, and Zane's life—and the lives of millions of others—will never be the same. But Shulman doesn't stop there. She takes her story as far as it can go—all the way into the disappointments and disillusionments of the seventies.

And again she challenges the conventional wisdom. Because Zane manages to carry her optimism and commitment through this difficult decade.



She sees the problems and the setbacks, but she also sees the accomplishments and the possibilities. Zane's epilogue is a cogent cataloguing of the changes the women's liberation movement wrought.

"Some things were different because we passed this way," she writes. Most of them positive, all of them incomplete, many of them contradictory. But what she says of the refuge houses for women might be said of it all: "Half-way, but better than no way."

I wish that I could end this review here and simply urge you to buy this book (or eagerly await the cheaper paperback version). I wish that I could just sneer at those sneering reviewers and let it go at that. But I can't. Because the truth is that I don't feel unqualified enthusiasm for **Burning Questions**.

I didn't like Shulman's last book **Memoirs of an Ex-Prom Queen** either, but I was more willing to shrug that off as personal idiosyncrasy since it was so universally popular. This book matters more to me because it is about something that matters a great deal to me—the women's movement, the left, revolution.

It's a little like if you go to a PTA meeting and there's somebody there who's behavior you don't like, you can pass it off with a tolerant smile; but if this same person should begin turning up at your Women's Health Group you become a lot less tolerant.

And my feelings about this book come down to almost this same level. I just didn't like Zane very much. And, by inference, I don't like Shulman's sensibility very much (that's as good a word as any I can come up with to

explain the amorphous qualities that make up a writer's impact).

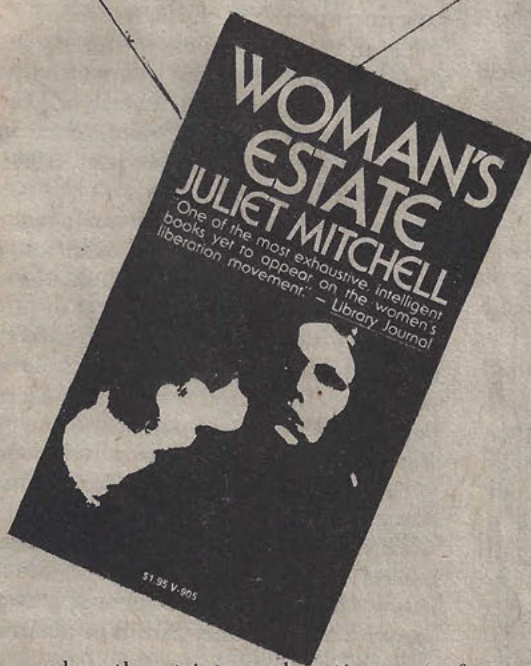
Limitations

To begin there is Zane's intense self-centeredness. I know that if you're supposedly writing a book about yourself, you have to devote a fair amount of it to describing your own thoughts and emotions. But to pull this off you either have to be a much more interesting and appealing character than Zane or you have to people your story with interesting friends, lovers, etc., with whom you interact.

This book does neither. At times Zane borders on the boring. As in a whole chapter devoted to an over-dinner argument over women's liberation with a male acquaintance whose even minimal appeal to Zane is a total mystery.

Worse, Zane's friends and lovers are always shadowy figures—even when she likes them—bestowed with only the barest outlines of personalities. She justifies such self-absorption on the grounds that she is writing a "political autobiography" and so will not dwell on the details of her personal life, but the end result is simply to reinforce the image of feminists as people largely devoid of personal warmth or personal life.

Secondly, by portraying herself as a long-time rebel in search of a cause, Zane minimizes the movements that she participates in. I have no doubt that many people marched, chanted, and even went to jail largely in search of adventure or self-validation. But there were also thousands—maybe hundreds of thousands—who were not seeking public lives, but found them-



selves thrust into such actions out of a deep distress at the injustice of their own lives or the lives of those around them. Much of Zane's stance tends to reinforce the media myths about why people participate in movements.

In addition, Zane's inclination to feel exhilarated by political activity, by rebellion, by the style and insights of

the women's movement makes her somewhat insensitive to the fact that so many women were not thrilled but threatened by some of the positions and tactics of the movement. And her immediate sense that she belonged—and was warmly welcomed—into the movement leads Zane to minimize the fact that so many women were frozen out because they did not completely conform in their lifestyle or their ideas.

Finally, there is Zane's tone throughout the book. I almost don't know how to describe it. It is a kind of irony that I prejudicially associate with New York. There is something not quite serious about the way that she approaches everything. In the end, it is this tone that bothers me the most because it undermines so much of what is positive about the book.

It is a tone that makes this novel interesting and appealing, but lacking in depth or impact.

Shulman is brave for the risks that she takes—in even daring to acknowledge that there are answers to be found in political thought and action. But somehow she fails to “burn.” For all of Zane's talk of passion and engagement, *Burning Questions* is a dry book.

Now that I've made my complaints, I can go ahead and urge you to buy it and read it. There are few other books around today that take our part so clearly or so emphatically—and god knows we need that. And like so much of what we have done in the women's movement (or the left), this book must be seen as part of a process, as a door that is opened that will allow other doors to be unlocked. We need many more books that are as brave as this one—that can build on its strengths and overcome its weaknesses. *Burning Questions* is not the book that I would have hoped for to convey the meaning and impact of the women's movement, but it's not a bad beginning.

Roberta Lynch is a member of NAM's National Interim Committee and of the Chicago Northside chapter.

Letters

from page 2

may require working for candidates of the Democratic Party. ERA in Illinois is probably the best example of this.

Wechsler goes on to say: “What message does that [working for Democrats] give people?... It says that all people have to do is elect reform Democrats or Democrats that are good on one issue (and bad on many others) and everything will be better.”

I think people are a lot more cynical about all politicians than Wechsler suggests. Most people I've talked to who are working for gay rights or ERA don't believe that any one candidate is going to change the world—but they can make some difference around a particular set of issues. Working in a given electoral campaign, working for a Democratic candidate is a tactical issue. In a particular situation it may be the best way to begin to mobilize people. To suggest that it is always wrong (as Wechsler does) means missing chances for doing mass work, means being out of touch with where people are at. To write off the Democratic Party as a bunch of Robert Strausses and James Eastlands is to be blind to the activities of people like Bella Abzug or Ronald Dellums.

Finally, a word about Elaine Noble. People I've talked to from Boston's gay community (generally progressive, though not socialist) have a much different view of her than Wechsler suggests. Wechsler says, “She has lost favor with almost everyone left of center.” That's not what I've heard.

But I don't think Noble is really the issue. The question is what can/should be expected from gay elected officials. One person cannot perform miracles. We can/should be critical of a legislator's record, but we shouldn't be out looking for martyrs. The movement (gay or left) is in such shape that people in those positions tend to be very isolated.

I think the bottom line in terms of gay officials is that it's important now for there to be visible gay people. Unless gay people are open and vocal, we're very easy to ignore. Public office represents one such forum for gay people, even with the clear limitations inherent in it.

Electoral politics can do two things for the gay movement: it can give us a foothold on getting some concrete gains in the area of gay rights, and it can give us a

continued on page 21.



LNS Graphics

Black power— its past and its promise

By Manning Marable

It began dramatically on a hot afternoon in the middle of Mississippi, almost 12 years ago. Marching from town to dusty town, the young civil rights workers were tired of the beatings they had received and the arrests. The leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Stokely Carmichael, began chanting "Black Power" to his frustrated and exhausted comrades.

Television newsmen, bored with the march and anxious to send a good story back to their New York offices, seized the slogan and projected it across the nation. The cry of "Black Power" became a household word throughout Black America in a matter of weeks, and a new stage of the Movement had

begun.

The phrase itself was not so unusual. Richard Wright, the famous black novelist, had used these words as the title of a lengthy essay published about a decade before. Adam Clayton Powell used the term first in a Chicago rally in 1965, and described it in greater detail in his Howard University commencement address in May, 1966.

But Carmichael, along with the student radical wing of CORE and SNCC, elevated Black Power to a nascent political philosophy. The old battle cries of "Freedom Now" and "We Shall Overcome" had stressed gradualism, integration and moderation. Black Power meant an end to the dominance of the NAACP—Urban League style moderates over the direction of the Movement. A

dynamic form of black nationalist-separatism combined with revolutionary-sounding language formed the basis for the new wave.

Black political scientist Chuck Stone has written that the "Gold Dust Twins of negro spokespersonship," Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young, were eager to denounce the Black Power concept. And former socialist turned conservative Bayard Rustin called Black Power an ideological dead end and "reverse racism." But after years of freedom rides and voter registration campaigns, the basic economic and political conditions that faced the masses of Black people had scarcely improved in relationship to the dominant white state and society. The integrationist "Gold Dust" twins discovered, to their shock and great dismay, that Black Power was more than a slogan: it was the beginning of a new level of political awareness and militancy.

Black Power first came out of the streets and into the Establishment when Representative Powell convened the Black Power Planning Conference in Washington, D.C., in September, 1966. The First National Black Power Conference, held in Newark during the summer of 1967, attracted over 1,000 representatives from 228 organizations. Hastily, other liberal and leftist organizations attempted to corner the Black Power market. The Socialist Scholars' Conference organized a session on Black Power in 1967. Newspaper and television journalists eagerly offered guest appearances and interviews for willing Black Power advocates and spokesmen.

Throughout this crucial and initial period, no single definition of Black Power emerged. From the black professor with a beard and dashiki to the disgruntled veterans of sit-ins, all had varying definitions for what they called Black Power.

Differing Definitions

Some Black Power proponents, including CORE's Roy Innis, understood the term to be, at least initially, a form of cultural and psychological warfare.

The Long View



Angela Davis

"Until black children stop saying, 'You're blacker than me and so is your mama,'" stated Innis, Black Power was essential. Some black nationalist scholars, such as Yosef Ben-Jochannan, were convinced that "it is that power which black peoples had in Africa before the invasion and domination of Africa by the Europeans under the guise of 'taking Christianity to the heathen Africans.'"

Martin Luther King, Jr., the single major black civil rights leader who did not engage in self-defacing rhetorical battles with Black Power forces, believed that the slogan was simply a reaction to the well-established tradition of American white racism. Martin insisted that Black Power "was really a cry of disappointment...hurt and despair."

Julian Bond, on the other hand, ignored the black nationalist implications within the term, and insisted that the civil rights movement had actually been pro-Black Power from its inception. "Black Power must be seen as a natural extension of the work of the civil rights movement over the past few years," he wrote. "From the courtroom to the streets in favor of integrated public facilities; from the ballot box to the meat of politics, the organization of voters into self-interest units."

By 1967 and 1968 Black Power had become the basic tenet for any dialogue within black electoral and community politics. Addressing the National Urban League conference in August, 1967, Sen-

ator Edward W. Brooke, a Republican, surprised his audience by embracing Black Power. Guardedly, Brooke claimed that he favored Black Power if it meant "the ability to change conditions so that opportunities are opened" for poor blacks. CORE leader Floyd McKissick amended this definition of Black Power by emphasizing its capitalist economic meanings. "The doctrine of Black Power is this new thrust which seeks to achieve economic power and to develop political movements," he insisted.

Sensing the political drift within the black community, white bourgeois politicians quickly mapped strategies to deal with Black Power. Interestingly, the Republicans accepted and even promoted the concept of Black Power (or at least their own brand of it) far more eagerly than did the Democrats. Richard M. Nixon, then candidate for the Republican Presidential nomination, announced that he was an advocate and admirer of Black Power. In April, 1968, Nixon declared in a public address that "what most of the [black] militants are asking is not separation, but to be included in—not as supplicants, but as owners, as entrepreneurs—to have a share of the wealth and a piece of the action." Nixon expressed the belief that Black Power really meant "an expansion of black



Fred Hampton



Eldridge Cleaver

ownership, of black capital."

This speech and others like it received mixed reviews in the black press. Many black and liberal intellectuals, however, found Nixon's remarks quite acceptable. In the *Liberator*, Daniel Watts wrote that "today, as Roy Innis of CORE has attested to, only Richard Nixon is...hospitable to Black Power."

Only Harold Cruse recognized at a theoretical level that the sudden popularity of the Black Power concept obscured the deeper problems within the contextual framework of black liberation. "The ambiguity, the lingering vagueness over the exact definition of Black Power is rooted in an exceedingly faulty and unscientific interpretation of Negro historical trends in the United States," Cruse argued in *Rebellion or Revolution* in 1968.

Because black activists had no understanding of historical materialism, scant knowledge of black history and a mechanistic notion of the process of social change, Black Power could not represent a fundamental break from past political contradictions and mistakes. "The result is the black American as part of an ethnic group has no definitive social theory relative to his status, presence, or impact on American society."

At Morehouse College in Atlanta, Ga., in April, 1970, Stokely Carmichael unknowingly delivered the eulogy for Black Power.

"Our politicians today have a great deal of power," Carmichael observed, noting the large number of black elected officials who recently obtained office. "The fact is that they have derived this power from the masses of our people. Especially since the slogan Black Power became popular."

Carmichael was correct. In the wake of the Black Power uprising, Richard Hatcher and Carl Stokes were elected to the posts of mayor in Gary, Ind., and Cleveland, Ohio, respectively. Nine black congressmen were elected in 1968. Nixon was forced to make numerous token concessions to Black Power demands: he appointed a black woman, Elizabeth Koontz, to direct the Women's Bureau of the Labor Department, and named CORE's James Farmer as assistant secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

And Nixon announced his support for "Black Capitalism" by establishing an office of "minority entrepreneurship" inside the Commerce Department. In the period of less than four years the number of black officials had more than doubled.

"All of these politicians began to spring up" with the popularization of Black Power, Stokely Carmichael recognized. "But they combine the concepts of Black Power with the frustrations of the masses and all too frequently they use it to further themselves."

A number of black politicians, out of sincere motives, became convinced that Black Power could become effective only when its advocates were grafted into the state apparatus at local, state and national levels. Hundreds and then thousands of black community activists, veteran desegregationists and black intellectuals ran for elective offices under the slogans "black self-determination," "community control" and, of course, "Black Power."

As Carmichael suggests, within several years Black Power became almost void of any clear ideological content, a method of promoting individuals rather than group mobilization. To Floyd

McKissick, for example, Black Power meant the acquisition of federal government support for Soul City, his model city in North Carolina. McKissick subsequently endorsed Richard Nixon for President in 1972, along with other conservative Black Power proponents.

Differing Directions

As the impetus for the Movement declined drastically during the Nixon presidency, the advocates of Black Power moved in a hundred different directions. Each group or individual sought to redefine Black Power into economic, political and cultural terms, largely in isolation from the direction of other groups and/or individuals. Each self-styled leader fashioned his own program to suit his own constituency.

The reasons for this disintegration were both external and internal. A number of black militants and activists were arrested, murdered or harassed systematically by federal, state and local police forces. Groups like the Black Panther Party and the Republic of New Africa were infiltrated and almost destroyed. The Vietnam War accounted for increased social disruption within black communities as thousands of young men were drafted, killed or wounded in combat. The Nixon Administration and the rising unemployment rates within the ghetto acted as a brake on the subjective political conditions for mass mobilization. More conservative black politicians made their peace with the Establishment, isolating black militants and socialists. Anti-poverty funds ran out; despair and a mood of existential individualism replaced the collective, creative impulses of the sixties.

Many of the most militant Black Powerites, such as Stokely Carmichael, LeRoi Jones (Imamu Baraka), Charles V. Hamilton, Ron Karenga and others, moved toward Pan-Africanism. They initiated a series of grassroots workshops that culminated in the creation of two large organizations—the Congress of African People in 1970 and the National Black Political Assembly in 1972. By 1974

and 1975, however, the militants were divided among themselves on the future direction of black political activism.

Baraka had become the leading Pan-African black nationalist intellectual, a gifted if erratic writer who had developed influential ties with African leaders of state. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus and local black elected officials recognized that Baraka had a militant, national constituency that had to be addressed. Two other Pan-Africanist black nationalists, Owusu Saduki and Ron Karenga, had already begun to gravitate toward a historical materialist analysis of black American conditions. Pan-Africanist organizations like the African Liberation Support Committee and the Congress of Afrikan People became divided between those Pan-Africanists who stressed the centrality of culture or race within the process of black liberation and the Marxist-Leninists, who employed an overly simplistic class model. Baraka suddenly joined the Marxist-Leninists, creating confusion among his own supporters.

Today's Legacy

The debate in 1974-75 within the remnants of the militant wing of the Black Movement helped to destroy the National Black Political Assembly, the African Liberation Support Committee and other black organizations. Black elected officials, clergymen and politicians like Hatcher and Maynard Jackson, were turned off by the shrill rhetoric of "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung thought" and fearful of its repercussions for their images. Centrists, led by Youngstown's Ronald Daniels and other nationalists, sought to minimize if not destroy Baraka's influence within the Assembly. In November, 1975, at a regional Assembly meeting in Dayton, Ohio, Baraka's organizational position was abolished, effectively eliminating him from the group. By 1976, the Assembly had suffered major losses throughout the South and the Mid-Atlantic states. Black Power, as expressed

continued on page 8.

The bottom line is jobs—

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and environmental groups were well represented. "Since there aren't that many women union officers, in terms of attendance, it was overwhelmingly rank and file," Simmons said of the CACOSH conference. In general more environmentalists than labor unionists attended the conferences, though there were exceptions, and in general, the conferences had little minority participation though the North Carolina conference was 25% black, according to Evelyn Smith, co-director of the sponsoring North Carolina Public Interest Research Group, and the Chicago conference was one-third black, according to Simmons.

The results of the conferences seem to range all the way from continuing, limited informal contacts between labor leaders and environmentalists to full-scale coalitions. In North Carolina,

a "Jobs and Environment Coalition" has formed to improve communications between environmentalists and labor and to consider ways these two forces can help each other. Smith of NC-PIRG said one of the actions of the coalition has been working on a full employment rally.

The Chicago CACOSH conference produced an on-going Hospital Workers Task Force, which includes a variety of health activists, according to Simmons. The group evolved out of a conference workshop and kept meeting. Environmentalists and unionists in St. Louis have had one meeting since their conference. They are concentrating on briefing each other about labor and environmental issues and considering joint electoral work on a fall campaign.

Conferences on jobs and the environ-

ment appear likely to continue. The Urban Environment Conference has applied for a renewal of its grant, with a special emphasis on conferences on women in the workplace. A jobs and environment conference is planned for Columbus, Ohio, in October and conferences are on the drawing boards in Kansas City and Honolulu.

Some of those conferences will undoubtedly echo Winpisinger's message to the St. Louis conference: "We've got to join our forces and very simply *rebel* against what we've faced up to now. We'll have to tell our employers and our politicians that we'll no longer be a party to our own destruction and manipulation."

Jim Kendall is a member of the St. Louis NAM and was a discussion group leader at the St. Louis conference on Jobs and a Clean Environment.

Letters

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platform from which to make gay issues more visible. It won't win us our liberation, but for now we need to make full use of every opportunity we have just to keep the fight going.

Christine R. Riddiough
Chicago, IL

Right to defend

In the May issue of MOVING ON, I noticed a letter from a member of the Movement for a New Society which emphasized the role of non-violence in a particular struggle. This letter reminded me of all the energy which I spend in the local anti-nuclear group trying to convince people

that non-violence is all right as a tactic, but not as an ideology.

I wish some people in the anti-nuclear group could have seen a film recently shown here called, "The Battle of Chile—the Struggle of an Unarmed People." I would have asked them what suggestions they would have for the people of Chile.

The experience of Chile is just one example of the principle that, as a rule, people's movements are suppressed by force of arms, if the system becomes threatened enough. Thus, revolutionaries must be prepared to defend themselves. We cannot expect socialism to be brought about through civil disobedience, elections, or any other non-violent means.

Individuals have the right to defend themselves against rape and assault. Working people have the right to collective self-defense against the violence of the capitalist state.

Milton Shiro Takai
Santa Barbara, CA

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NAM News

GAY RIGHTS Pittsburgh NAM members helped organize the Pittsburgh Committee for Human Rights which brought out 800 people in a demonstration against Anita Bryant May 22. Bryant was addressing a Charismatic Conference in Pittsburgh that day. The demonstration was not against her right to speak, but against what she was saying. NAM member Paul Garver, addressing the rally, stressed the need for equal rights for sexual minorities and the importance of standing up and fighting against current anti-gay and other right-wing attacks. Meanwhile, in Austin, Texas on May 7, Austin NAM members were among 1,500 people who greeted Ms. Bryant there with "a message of unmistakable unwelcome." A breakfast festival for human rights was held in a park near the municipal auditorium, where Bryant was speaking. Willamette Valley NAM worked to block the repeal of a gay rights ordinance in Eugene, Oregon. Although the measure was defeated on May 23, "The general mood here is that the fight will be continued," says NAM member Barbara Corrado Pope, who worked on the campaign.

WELLMAN IN SPAIN In 1937 Saul Wellman, now a member of Detroit NAM, went to Spain to fight in the civil war as a member of the International Brigades. This May he returned, invited by the newly legalized Communist Party of Spain to attend their ninth Congress, the first legal convention in 46 years. "It was five days of immersion in the excitement and optimism of Spanish politics still grappling with the difficult transition from Francoism to democracy," says Wellman. He will be speaking publicly about his trip and the PCE's new strategy of "democratic revolutionary Marxism." "The concept of Eurocommunism is strange and unknown to Americans. I speak neither as a partisan nor critic of the PCE, but I think it is important for us to understand the new strategies being developed by the working class in other capitalist nations," says Wellman.

FINGERPRINTS Be careful what you read, or wear gloves when you do. That's what can be concluded from the case of Frank Giese. Giese, long-time political activist and member of Portland NAM, faces a five year jail sentence for conspiracy stemming from the dynamiting of two military recruiting centers in Portland, Oregon in January 1973. The explosions, coming at the end of the "Christmas bombings" of Hanoi and Haiphong in Vietnam, resulted in no casualties. Giese's conviction was based on testimony by two



Photo by Scott Van Osdel

Breakfast festival for Human Rights, held on May 7, 1978, in Austin, Texas.

admitted perjurers. The major evidence against him was his fingerprints found on a book advocating such actions. Giese was forced to read an inflammatory passage from the book during his trial in 1974. An appeals panel in February found that the presence of fingerprints creates the presumption of agreement with the passage in the book, and refused to hear the case. Giese is now appealing to the Ninth Circuit Court. A defense committee has been formed in Portland to raise money to finance the appeal.

NETWORKS NAM has a number of networks for activists in various fields who are interested in a socialist perspective on their work. You don't need to be a member of NAM to join these networks. **Labor Commission:** Mark Mericle, 321 Neal Ave., Dayton OH 54505. **Health Commission:** Rick Kunnes, 19920 Lichfield, Detroit, MI 48232. **Anti-Racism Commission:** Eric Nee, 112 Pine Pl., Apt. 3, Santa Cruz, CA 95060.

NAM LITERATURE The second issue of NAM's **Reproductive Rights Newsletter** has recently been published. It includes articles on right-wing initiatives, reports from local activists around the country, a revised Reproductive Bill of Rights and a legislative update. Also available is the latest issue of **Women Organizing: A Socialist-Feminist Bulletin**, with reports on organizing of clerical workers, violence against women and the citrus boycott. Each publication costs \$1.00 for a single issue and \$3.00 for a subscription.

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