

JUNE/JULY 1980

50 CENTS

# Moving On

MAGAZINE OF THE NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT



## WOMEN UNDER APARTHEID

*The New Cold War—Lessons from the '40s*

*Rent Control in San Francisco*

*Between Labor and Capital—A Review*

# Moving On

JUNE/JULY 1980

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*Towards a socialist America*

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# Lessons from the '40s

by Dorothy Healey

**T**HE WORLD OF THE 1980S AND the "Carter Doctrine" bears little resemblance to the post-World War II years when the Cold War was born, except for one factor: political and economic elites of both eras were preoccupied with securing and protecting American imperial interests.

The Left, in the earlier epoch, proved incapable of derailing the "Free World Colossus": indeed, the Left itself was pulverized by the American Cold War machine.

When delegates to the Sixteenth Convention of the Communist Party, U.S.A. met in 1957, they focused their attention on why and how the Party, in one decade, had become isolated from its significant base in the working class and other social sectors. The debate was couched in the language common to Communists of the time: did the Party's isolation stem from "objective factors" (Cold War, anti-Soviet hysteria and full-scale government persecution of Communists) or "subjective factors" (tactical mistakes by the Party leadership or membership)? A majority of the delegates voted for the latter cause—i.e., that the Left facilitated its own demise. What had happened in that post-War decade which led Communists to reach that conclusion, and what lessons can the leftists of the eighties learn from those events?

## **The Labor Movement and the Left**

The winter of 1945 and the spring of 1946 witnessed hundreds of thousands of workers on strike. Auto, steel, mining, packing house, and railways were

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*Many of the strikers who participated in the massive labor confrontations of 1945 and '46 were new to both unions and industrial employment.*

among the industries which experienced major confrontations between employers and the government on the one hand and workers on the other. A large number of the strikers were new to the labor movement, having joined only during World War II as a result of the War Labor Board's maintenance of membership decree. Not only were these members new to union organization and tradition, many were new to industrial employment. Thus the question of unity within the C.I.O. became all-important to Communists.

In order to solidify this young and in-

experienced mass, the Communists placed great emphasis on unity between the C.I.O. leaders who represented what was called the Center (Philip Murray, Sidney Hillman) and those who represented the left unions (ILWU, UAW, UE, etc.), and unity at the state and city industrial council level as well. The latter provided the potential for grass roots (or rank and file) unity as well as unity between labor and community-based movements. The loss of unity at this level prefigured the later isolation of the Left.

The single most significant turning



point in the C.I.O., the election of Walter Reuther as president of the UAW in 1946, was barely mentioned by radical analysts at the time—and is still omitted in most historical estimates. Stewart Alsop, in his newspaper column of November 6, 1947, was one of the few who understood what had happened: "It is difficult to overestimate the meaning of Walter Reuther's overwhelming victory at the UAW convention in Atlantic City this week. For the Communists have lost their last chance to dominate or deeply influence an important segment of the American labor movement. . . In doing so they have lost their last chance to dominate or deeply influence the whole American political left." Within two years, Reuther proved Alsop correct, having by then eliminated most of his opponents from the union's Executive Board and its national and local offices. His opponents, many of them Communists, had prepared the way for their own removal when the Detroit Party decided that it was time to exercise its "independent" role and to down-play the alliance with the R.J. Thomas-George Addis "center" forces.

Reuther's narrow victory in the UAW affected, as well, the balance of power in national C.I.O. Instead of a Center-Left coalition, the traditional barrier against internal and external pressures for expulsion, a Right-Center coalition controlled the national organization.

From this shift in Party strategy and its consequences, we draw our first important lesson from the past: unless the Left has commanding strength, it must have allies. It is necessary for leftists to discern the "greater evil" in any situation and to work with the "lesser evil" in order to prepare the ground for future struggles.

### **The Progressive Party and the Left**

My second example illustrates the consequences of overestimating the readiness of the mass of the population to break with tradition, in this case the hold of the two-party system. In the

1948 presidential election, Henry Wallace headed a third-party ticket—that of the Progressive Party. The massive strikes of 1945-46 convinced many observers that there was an important new wave of militancy in the working class, hence a higher degree of political class consciousness. This estimate was heightened by the resentment elicited by President Truman's use of executive power against striking railroad workers and miners. With many non-Left labor union leaders and prominent figures from other social sectors denouncing Truman, it is understandable why the Communist Party believed that at last the conditions were present for its long-desired break with the two-party system.

Secure in its analysis, the CP moved rapidly ahead. In every union, in every mass organization, in every area where the Party had influence, support for the Progressive Party became the top priority. The results were disastrous (see Curtis MacDougall's *Gideon's Army*, for details). Had Henry Wallace received anywhere near the five to ten million votes expected by his supporters, the fall-out from the Party's single-minded emphasis on his campaign would not have been as serious—would not, that is, have left the Communists stripped of allies and vulnerable before the Right's vengeful counterattack. But he received less than one million votes, while a

record number of citizens failed to vote at all.

The Wallace campaign offers three lessons for leftists today: the folly of substituting one's impatience with the "binding chains of tradition" for a realistic appraisal of the depth and breadth of support for an alternative; the folly of thinking that what is outdated for radicals is also *passé* for the moderate masses; the folly of separating the advanced element of the movement from its base by relying on an analysis which appeals primarily to the advanced.

To sum up, the main errors of the Communist Party were not those of a "reformist" or "opportunist" character. Errors of that type rarely resulted in the isolation of the Party from the organized workers. The consequences of "leftist" errors, however, should demonstrate that although the American working class is militant, it has not yet acquired the broad-based class consciousness indispensable for independent political action. Thus errors of a "reformist" type, while damaging, are more easily accommodated because they reflect the still-dominant tendencies with the working class, the Left's base and haven.

Neither this article nor the outcome of the 1957 Convention—both of which conclude that the Party's main errors of the post-World War II era were of a "left sectarian" nature—represents a call for reformist policies or a dismissal of objective conditions. What the Communists said in 1957, and what I am saying now, is that when the objective conditions portend a reactionary constellation, the tactics of the Left must be based on a realistic estimate, not one of wishful thinking.

Only by basing itself on *what is* will the Left be able to help the *should be* emerge. This does not mean being content with existing reality. It does mean that more advanced policies must include the recognition of that reality if the Left is to be more than Latter-Day Utopians. □



By Helen Bean, Polly Marshall,  
Jim Shoch, and Steve Robbins

**H**OUSING COSTS TAKE THE biggest bite out of an average American family's monthly income, so when home prices and rents skyrocket as they have in the past few years, economic hardship spreads.

In 1974, the average price of a single family home in the United States was \$37,800. In 1978 the price of a similar home was \$60,000, a 60% increase. A family now needs an annual income of \$25,000 to afford a new house. Since only 20% of American households earn that much, this means that the other 80% have become permanent renters.

Priced out of the home ownership market, these tenants are being hit with rent increases rising much faster than the rise in the general cost of living. During the last six years, rental costs in

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# Your Home Is Your Hassle

## *The Struggle for Rent Control in San Francisco*

this country rose twice as fast as in the previous decade.

There are many reasons for the sharp rise in housing costs, most of which are derived from the capitalist organization of the economy in general and the housing sector in particular. The supply of single-family homes and apartments is low relative to a growing demand for housing. This makes for a classic inflationary situation.

On the supply side, new single-family home and apartment construction is discouraged by 1) *high land costs*, fueled by individual and cor-

*As anyone who has tried to buy a home or rent an apartment lately knows, housing of all kinds is both scarce and expensive. This country is in the midst of a severe housing crisis. Tenants are squeezed the hardest by the current housing crunch. As a result, the tenant movement is gaining strength all across the country. In particular, the rent control movement is picking up steam. The last issue of MO (April/May) contained an article on a rent control fight in Baltimore. This article explores a similar, recent effort in San Francisco. A comparison of the two initiative drives provides important lessons for housing activists.*

porate speculation in real estate; 2) *high interest rates* as the Federal Reserve System keeps money tight to combat inflation and support the dollar, drawing money out of the housing sector; 3) *rising energy costs* which makes construction in the far suburban and exurban areas less desirable; and 4) *suburban zoning restrictions* designed to curb high density development.

While these factors hold down the construction of *all* new housing, the supply of *low-income* housing is particularly restricted. Developers who feel they cannot take enough profit out of low-income housing tend instead to build for the more profitable upper-income market. In addition, the low-income *apartment* supply is reduced by developers who convert their units into condominiums in order to earn a higher rate of profit.

Tightening the housing market even further, is the booming *demand* for housing of all types. Due to the entrance of the "baby boom" generation into the housing market, inflationary psychology has families "hedging" against future price increases by buying housing now, while central cities are squeezed by "gentrification"—the movement of young white profes-

sionals into the inner city, seduced by the excitement of city life and accessibility to downtown employment. Housing, particularly in the inner cities, has become a precious commodity.

Especially in central city neighborhoods, these conditions have created a demand for housing that is pushing up home prices and rents, thus displacing many working class, minority and elderly residents of these communities from their homes. It has been estimated by the Urban League that one-seventh of the population of Washington, D.C. or 100,000 people — mostly Black — will be displaced in the next four years alone.

### Rent control in California

In response to the nation's developing housing crisis, the past decade has seen the growth of a promising movement for rent control in California. The California housing crisis is probably more severe than in any other state. Each year, 750,000 people move to California, placing added pressure on the state's housing market. These migrants have been followed by a flood of speculators from all over the world. In 1978 alone, New York banks along with Arab interests bought about \$3 billion dollars worth of California real estate. Phenomenal leaps in the cost of housing have resulted. While, as noted earlier the average price of a single-family home in the U.S. jumped 60% between 1974 and 1978, in California it rose by an astounding 140%. The costs of rental housing doubled from 1970 to 1976. In addition, tenants did not receive the relief expected from the passage of Prop 13 which cut property taxes of landlords drastically.

With ever-increasing rents and tenants' knowledge that landlords costs in many cases had actually decreased, a tenant movement mushroomed almost overnight. By late August, 1978, city councils in Los Angeles, Beverly Hills and two other townships were forced to pass tem-

porary rent freezes. In November, voters in Berkeley and Davis passed rent rebate and rollback initiatives, although similar initiatives were rejected in three other cities, including, most recently, in San Francisco. In California over the past year-and-a-half, we've seen a mixed pattern of victories and defeats.

### The Case of San Francisco

If California's housing crisis is the worst in the nation, San Francisco's is the most serious of any California city. The cost of a single family house in San Francisco has increased almost *four times* in the last ten years, while the Consumer Price Index as a whole has only doubled in the last decade. As for apartments and other rental units, in the last three years, median rents have sky-rocketed. Evictions have nearly tripled since 1971. In San Francisco, a third of all tenants pay more than 35% of their incomes for rent. Over half of the buildings in San Francisco with three or more units are considered substandard. Almost no new housing is being built.

Along with the general factors outlined earlier, massive downtown property "development" and accompanying "gentrification" underlie the San Francisco housing crisis. San Francisco is the West Coast "Capitol of Capital," with many multinational corporations and banks headquartered in the city. A high-rise office construction boom is underway downtown, and the professionals working in these buildings are seeking housing in San Francisco's central neighborhoods. This has meant spiraling home prices, rents and eviction rates. Many longtime San Francisco residents — mainly working people, minorities and the elderly — are being displaced to the city's rim and beyond.

This process has been accelerated by massive speculation in these neighborhoods. Fifty-five per cent of all residential properties sold during 1977, for example, were held less than

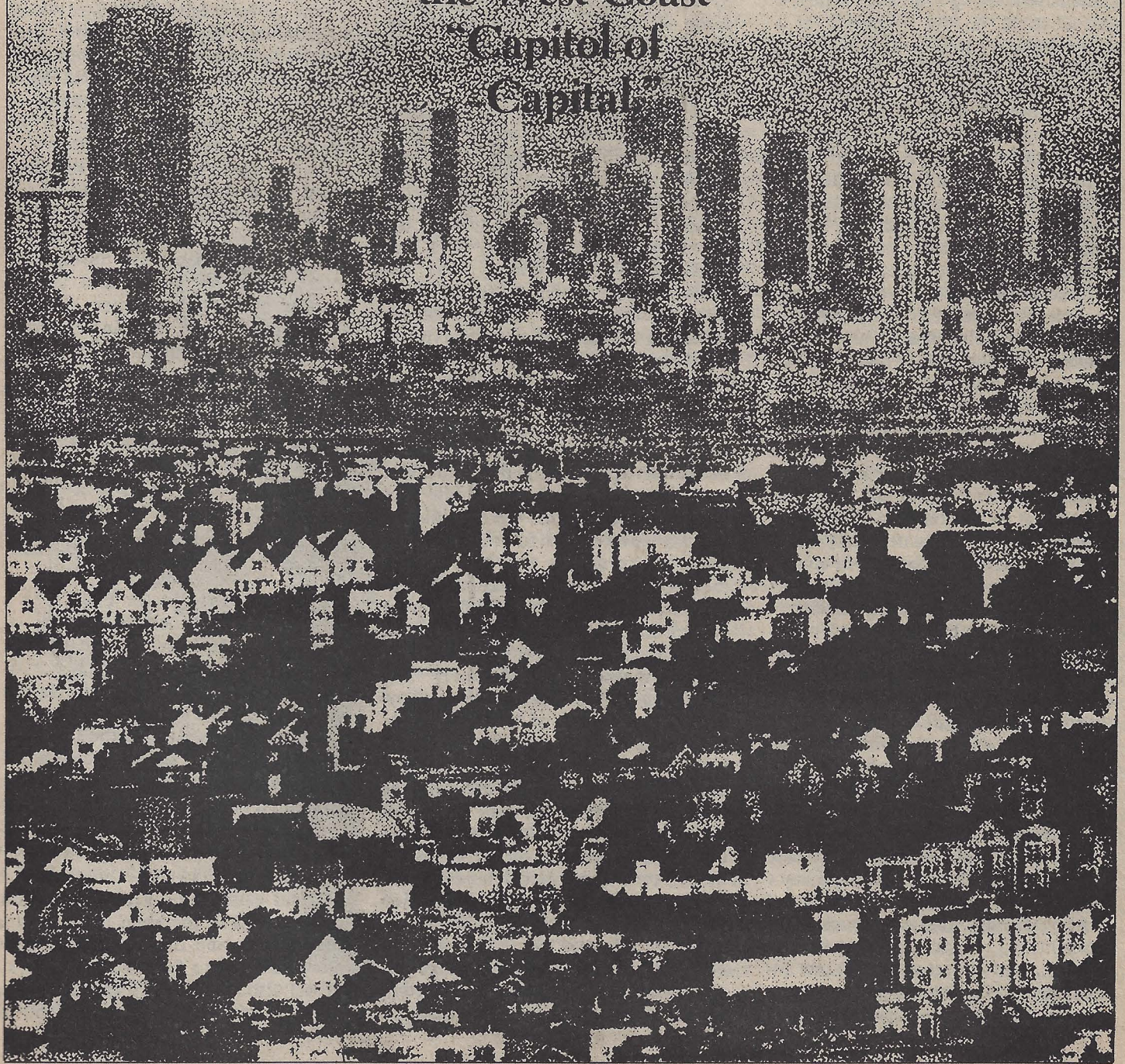
five years, while 30% of all properties sold were held less than two years. Condominium conversions have added to the problem. The number of "condos" has almost doubled since 1970. Seventy-five per cent of the previous tenants of the converted buildings, unable to afford the purchase price of their units, have been displaced from their homes due to these conversions.

Not surprisingly, these crisis conditions in the San Francisco housing market have given rise to a strong rent control movement in the city. The immediate origins of this movement lie in the formation in the fall of 1977 of the San Francisco Housing Coalition, itself an outgrowth of a successful community-and-labor-based campaign to elect Supervisors by district, rather than at-large. After unsuccessful attempts to pressure the Board of Supervisors to enact anti-demolition and anti-speculation ordinances, one wing of the Housing Coalition decided in the wake of the victory of Proposition 13 to place a rent rebate initiative on the November 1978 ballot. Tenant outrage at landlord failure to pass along tax savings enabled the San Francisco Renters Rebate Committee to gather the required number of signatures to qualify the measure — Proposition U — for the ballot. But the initiative failed 53% to 47% as the Real Estate Board and its business allies outspread the pro-U forces by a margin of 28 to 1.

### SFAH and the affordable housing initiative

Early in 1979, activists from San Francisco Renters' Rebate Committee and Catholic Social Services were back at work, organizing to build a broad coalition of progressive organizations to tackle San Francisco's housing crisis. On March 5, San Franciscoans for Affordable Housing (SFAH) was convened. The coalition's initial membership included trade unions, church organizations, ethnic political groups, senior citizen organizations,

Working people,  
minorities and  
the elderly are  
being displaced  
by professionals  
who work in  
the West Coast  
"Capitol of  
Capital"



gay groups, women's organizations, and a large number of neighborhood associations, as well as city-wide progressive organizations.

The coalition felt that the only adequate way in which to address the housing crisis in San Francisco was through the formation of a comprehensive housing ordinance which, if passed could be the beginning of a comprehensive, long-term solution to the shortage of housing and spiraling housing costs in the city. SFAH felt a comprehensive ordinance was necessary to address the housing crisis in its totality in San Francisco. Rent control alone could not deal with aspects of the housing crisis perpetuated by the related dynamics of speculation, increasing costs of rents, and diminishing low income housing stock.

The ordinance focused on three major points: (1) protection for tenants; (2) relief for homeowners; and (3) increasing the housing supply. First, tenants were protected by a strong rent stabilization measure. Within any given year, rents could only be raised by an amount equal to the percentage increase in the rental component of the Consumer Price Index in the Bay Area (running at 6-7% this past year), plus increases to offset necessary and documentable repair costs or to enable the landlord to earn a "fair and reasonable" rate of return (to be determined ultimately by the courts.)

Controls over condominium conversions and protection against arbitrary evictions were also included to help tenants. Secondly, controls against housing speculation, provision of low-interest rehabilitation loans, and encouragement of apartment construction were measures SFAH included to offer respite to homeowners from skyrocketing costs. Lastly, to increase the supply of housing, the ordinance included provisions for use of local public funds to construct and rehabilitate low and moderate income housing, and the creation of low interest loans to assist low and moderate income families to buy their own

homes.

Fourteen public hearings were held in the different neighborhoods and districts of the city, in order to assess public sentiment on housing issues and to incorporate people's input into the drafting process of the ordinance. When the hearings were completed, the SFAH steering committee — a body of some 40 people, each representing an organization in the coalition — discussed and voted upon each point in the proposed ordinance.

In May, just before the initiative signature drive was to begin, the S.F. Board of Supervisors passed a "rent stabilization" measure, introduced to the board by the mayor. It was clear to housing activists from the moment the Supervisors' "rent control" was first discussed by the board, that the measure was a direct response to SFAH's organizing efforts, and a reflection of many of the Supervisors' fears that a measure as stringent as our Prop R would pass. Only a few weeks before the supervisor's ordinance was passed, a major San Francisco landlord had substantially raised rents in all of his semi-luxury apartment buildings, and suddenly middle and upper income tenants were bombarding city government for relief. It was apparent, even to the conservative members of the Board, that public sentiment demanded some kind of rent control in San Francisco; in an effort to undercut other movements, they passed their own ordinance. The Supervisor's "rent stabilization" law was the epitome of watered-down, name-only, rent control. It included a very weak just-cause eviction and allowed for vacancy de-control (the landlord can raise the rent on a unit without limit when a tenant moves out). The burden lay on the shoulders of the tenant to appeal landlord excesses to the city rent stabilization board. And finally — rather revealingly — the ordinance was to last only fifteen months. Since the passage of "rent stabilization" rents have continued to rise dramatically and evic-

tions have increased 25% due to the existence of vacancy de-control.

### The campaign

In June of 1979 the SFAH initiative qualified for the ballot with 23,000 signatures, and was labeled Proposition R.

Low voter registration and voter turnout has traditionally hurt progressive ballot issues, therefore a voter registration drive went hand in hand with the signature drive, especially in the Latino and Chinese areas of the city.

Several pieces of literature were produced for the campaign, aimed at different constituencies in the city. There was a general piece of literature for use early on in the campaign during our voter registration drive, and later a fundraising piece, a renter piece, a homeowners' piece, a Chinese leaflet, and a bilingual Spanish-English piece pushed especially by NAM. At first, attempts were made to distribute the literature by canvassing neighborhoods, but this method proved very difficult and time-consuming, especially in the Spanish-speaking areas. Thus, as time passed, most literature was distributed through massive literature drops, and nearly all of the city was covered in this manner.

Funds were raised for Prop R in a variety of ways, including individual pledges, garage sales, benefit dances, films, performances and a large benefit dinner. In the end, we raised \$48,000—the most ever raised for a pro-rent control campaign in the U.S.

The campaign steering committee was reduced in number from the original SFAH organization in order to accommodate the many non-profit organizations in the coalition who were not allowed to be directly linked with a political campaign. Work committees were created in the areas of publicity, fundraising, and outreach. Staff people were hired to facilitate their work. SFAH also attempted to encourage the development of district committees; in



some areas these committees were well-developed and very active, and in others they were not.

### Aftermath — evaluation

The San Franciscans for Affordable Housing Initiative, Proposition R, lost dramatically in the November elections by an alarmingly high percentage of the vote: 59% — 41%.

However, Prop R was not the only progressive initiative to lose in this November's election. Every progressive measure on the city's ballot went down in defeat. There were no major liberal candidates to bring out the city's progressive vote. The voter turnout was extremely low. The stormy weather on election day did not

help the situation and most likely kept many vacillating voters away from the polls. Traditionally, it is the conservative vote which turns out in such conditions; with the addition of the statewide anti-busing and state expenditure limitation measures on the ballot, the conservative vote turned out in full force.

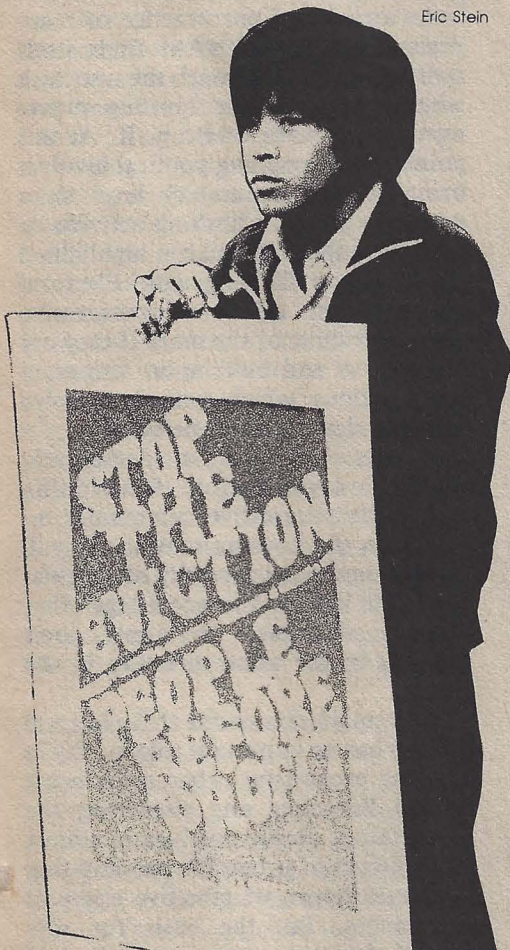
Prop. R's strength was undercut directly by a combination of factors which worked to increase voter confusion and uncertainty around the issue. First, the enactment of a weak rent control law by the Board of Supervisors hurt Prop. R's efforts by tending to confuse voters. The opposition argued that voters should give the present rent control ordinance a chance to operate before voting in a stiffer measure. (Baltimore had no rent control law of any kind in effect before the election, so the campaign was not undercut as it was in San Francisco.) Secondly, the comprehensive character of the Prop. R ordinance might have increased uncertainty and voter's sense of confusion regarding the precise nature of SFAH's initiative. A lack of educational emphasis in the campaign might have enhanced this problem.

SFAH was also outspent over 13 to 1 by the board of realtors whose supply of money to fight such initiatives seems inexhaustible. \$600,000 was raised to bring down Prop. R with 10% of all funds coming from out-of-state sources. SFAH, on the other hand, raised a total of \$48,000 with the majority of its funds coming from \$5-\$25 contributions.

The realtors' \$600,000 provided the backing for the effective opposition campaign headed by Don Solem and Associates. Solem has built a reputation as an expert in defeating rent control initiatives. His only loss was in the Baltimore campaign. He has perfected the tactic of direct mail, spending phenomenal amounts of money the last week before election day in targeted mailings to all of the city's residents (specific messages for homeowners, tenants, blacks, and elderly). He often

uses conflicting evidence and arguments within his own literature depending on the particular constituency addressed. To renters, he claimed that Prop. R would cause rents to rise, and to property owners he charged the initiative for being too restrictive. In addition to these outright lies, Solem played on people's fears of increasing bureaucracy and government regulations and the threatened "South Bronxification" of San Francisco. Studies by sociologist John Gilderbloom and others have shown that it is poverty and not rent control that underlies the problem of housing abandonment in the South Bronx. These studies also show that so-called "second generation" rent control of the kind in effect in 100 New Jersey as well as other American cities, because it allows landlords rent increases sufficient to offset increased repair costs and to earn a "fair" rate of profit, has not at all led to housing abandonment and deterioration in those cities as alleged by opponents of rent control. But these arguments against rent control, presented at the last minute when voters here were making their decisions, precluded any response from Yes-on-R forces.

Solem's tactics were successful. Voter opinion changed from 2 to 1 in support of the initiative three weeks before election day to the stunning defeat mentioned above. SFAH had failed to build a base among the renters of San Francisco. Although the coalition was composed of a broad base of over 50 community and labor groups, the workings of the campaign failed to activate their constituency and failed to develop new bases of support. In particular, the lack of adequate participation by organizations based in minority communities seriously hurt the campaign. Over 40% of San Francisco residents are Black, Latino or Asian, as are an even greater proportion of the city's tenants. The nearly all-white character of the campaign — the result of campaign failures and the weak state and other priorities of community



*Young protestor at the International Hotel eviction in San Francisco, 1977.*

organizations in minority neighborhoods — was a major drawback. (One key to the Baltimore victory, in contrast, was the active participation of two significant Black community groups.)

Education around the housing crisis and direct outreach to renters was subsumed under the more urgent needs of campaign duties (e.g. literature distribution). District committees never managed to build their forces and grow to the extent necessary to develop a strong grass-roots substructure to the campaign.

### NAM and SFAH

San Francisco NAM joined SFAH when the coalition was first convened, and our goals in doing so were many.

## *cineaste*

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Housing reform itself was well worth fighting for, both to preserve the ethnic and working class character of the city, and to pave the way for future tenant organizing. We also thought that the organizing necessary to win Prop. R. would help to build a base for future activity among the working people and minorities of the city, and develop a network of communication and alliances throughout the neighborhoods' that would be necessary for some form of progressive alliance to emerge. In line with this goal, we felt it was essential to develop a grass roots oriented and democratically-controlled campaign. Therefore, we chose to work on district organizing committees instead of more centralized campaign committees. We felt that within district committees we could promote the educational aspects of the rent control campaign and facilitate community involvement in the issue.

We also felt that the coalition provided a receptive forum for our socialist perspective on the housing crisis. We published *Where Has All The Housing Gone?* a comprehensive reader providing an analysis of the political economy of housing in the context of the crisis of U.S. cities with the focus on S.F. We also obtained a copy of *"We Won't Move"*, an excellent national slideshow produced by the Dayton Media Collective (which includes NAM members), which we showed to as many groups and organizations as possible, in an effort to lend perspective to our struggles.

In evaluating NAM's contribution to SFAH, it seems clear that our strategy of building a base through the activity of the campaign politics was flawed and a bit idealistic. The mechanics of campaign politics tended to assume priority within district committees, overpowering educational work and restricting diversified levels of neighborhood involvement. Further eff- sible as the campaign progressed. District committees were functionally reduced to being the footworkers of the campaign while the central office

established the overall direction and shape of the campaign effort. Therefore, NAM's decision, to focus its energies on the district level, in some ways, precluded our involvement in more "essential" or "key" aspects of the campaign structure.

However, NAM did accomplish some goals within the course of the Prop. R campaign. We established considerable ties among progressive organizations working on housing issues and built a well respected presence among activists in San Francisco. We also developed our political understanding of urban politics and electoral formations through a combination of chapter study, discussion, and concrete political practice.

As a result of our practice of reappraisal and study, NAM finds itself well situated to approach the next task which confronts the housing movement in the wake of Prop. R. At this point, we see ongoing political involvement at the community level as a necessary step for housing activists to take given the inadequacies highlighted by the Prop R campaign. Electoral strategies on behalf of progressive issues fall short of the mark if they are not tied to and built upon long-term organizations which actively involve working class constituencies.

NAM's role, as a democratic socialist organization functioning within the progressive community involved in the housing movement, will be to promote the necessity of organizing at the base and to encourage other housing activists to apply their energies in the same direction in the future.

We remain convinced that electoral politics has an important role to play in building progressive urban movements in San Francisco and elsewhere; the local state is deeply involved in almost every aspect of urban life necessitating the development of effective electoral approaches. But the basis for *successful* electoral contests must be laid through sustained organizing at the "grassroots." □

by Bob Park

**I**N A CINEMATIC COUP THAT AL-  
most rivals the release of *China  
Syndrome*, on timing, Josh Hanig  
and David Davis' *Song of the  
Canary* captures the unfolding of a  
scandalous industrial poisoning  
epidemic on film. Over the course of  
several weeks' confrontation with  
management, workers at an Occidental  
Petroleum pesticide factory in Califor-  
nia confirm their suspicion that ex-  
posure to the pesticide DBCP has made  
them sterile. (DBCP, dibromochloro-  
propane, is used to protect the roots of  
vegetable crops from worms.) The film  
then moves on to old textile mills and  
company towns in the South and frames  
a world where chronic lung disease has  
long been the price one pays for work.  
From these two extremes—high  
technology production, unionized,  
relatively well-paid young men in the  
good-life of California, and, non-  
union, low-paid millworkers, mostly  
women, blacks and older workers in the  
paternalistic Southern tradition—the  
film creates a startling and generalizable  
picture of industrial illness. For workers  
facing these conditions, this film may be  
a heartening boost. For others, as the ti-  
tle implies (caged canaries were used to  
detect poisonous gases and warn miners  
of the hazard), the film spotlights a warn-  
ing on the human devastation that en-  
vironmental degradation, beginning in  
the workplace, promises. For the social-  
ly concerned and politically active, the  
film creates a quandary and challenge.

#### Your Job or Your Life

Several features of *Song of the Canary*  
make its impact particularly forceful.  
The film moves smoothly between real-  
live proceedings, running commentary  
giving background and interpretation,  
and interviews with the interviewer off-  
camera. The unobtrusive interview and

*Bob Park is currently an occupational  
safety and health student in Boston.*



Mike Russell

# SONG OF THE CANARY

*From a DBCP  
pesticide factory  
in California to  
textile mills in  
the South, this  
film documents  
the fight for  
occupational  
safety.*

camera work brings film-viewers quick-  
ly into the bar-room, ball-game, and liv-  
ing room conversations of Oxy workers  
as they (all men) and their families  
discover the depth of their calamity.  
DBCP workers had long put up with  
some more usual effects of toxic  
chemicals: bleeding, headaches, skin  
disease and several seemingly early  
deaths. What is shown is a diverse  
group of young to middle-aged men  
wrestling with a stark, brutal reality,  
openly showing their anger, pain and  
bewilderment. Dealing with textile  
workers' brown lung disease, the film  
reveals the lives and feelings of retired  
or disabled textile workers, many of  
them barely able to breathe, and follows  
their determined fights to get compensa-  
tion for the disabled and protection for  
those still at work.

Bright sunshine, garish pastel  
buildings and shiny, billowing stacks at  
the Oxy plant provide the backdrop for  
corporate executives and company doc-  
tors' assurances of safe and healthful  
factory conditions (soon to be soundly  
contradicted by union-conducted and  
widely publicized tests). In the textile  
towns, lush rolling hills and attractive-  
from-a-distance mills are the setting for  
mill owners and managers who love  
their workers and insist that health pro-  
blems exist only for a few "reactors"  
(people who they claim are unusually  
susceptible to lung disease).

The sterility issue itself is important  
for several reasons. At a time when  
women are being excluded from certain  
jobs because of reproductive  
hazards—rather than cleaning the place  
up—this example illustrates these  
hazards cover men too, and are not  
predictable. With increasingly exotic  
chemicals being introduced, subtle toxic  
effects, reproductive problems and  
genetic damage, including cancer, are  
certain to multiply. For many people  
seeing *Song of the Canary*, DBCP is a  
flash from the future.

Because hazards have always been  
part of the workplace, and sex roles in  
our culture have appointed men to be  
the providers of income and security,

health hazards have been an inevitable focus of macho self-perception. The DBCP incident shows this behavior to be ultimately contradictory: acceptance of risks on behalf of their families threatens the existence of their families.

There are aspects of the industrial

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disease problem that might have been treated in sharper relief, to advantage, in this 58-minute film. Some of these are technical in nature while others represent political choices in documentary film-making. Thus the tortuous sequence in *Song of the Canary* by which DBCP is proven an outrage is a superb close-up of science-hype and how corporations use technical knowledge to intimidate and mystify for their advantage. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is portrayed accurately in the Oxy episode as an often ineffectual presence, able to act only after the bodies have started to fall; and the film shows state Workman's Compensation Laws to be a cruel hoax, unreliable for chronic conditions as in brown lung cases, where it is virtually impossible to find medical opinion knowledgeable and willing to challenge local industrial giants at Compensation hearings. However, in the broader context, it would not suffice even for industry to be honest with its science. In fact, there is no practical way that chemicals currently in use and those coming out of laboratories by the thousands can possibly be adequately tested to define safe exposure levels. Dealing with the problems of industrial chemicals requires a much more harsh and systematic approach: engineering-changes that vastly reduce exposures across the board, or decisions not to produce at all (DBCP is inherently hazardous to farm workers; well water in 24 California counties is now contaminated with DBCP, and vegetables in markets now contain DBCP).

The problem, therefore, is larger than industry's refusing to disclose hazards, clean-up the bad processes, or concede responsibility for well-known illnesses. While *Song of the Canary* does lay out the pervasive extent of the problem, it doesn't succinctly place the economic impact of safe and healthful workplaces squarely in the same league as employment itself, the distribution of income, and the global competition of producers. If occupational health and safe-

ty are not to remain at the level of body counts and adjustments after problems become obvious (it takes most cancers 10 to 20 years from initiation to be detected), working people are going to have to find a way to impose very different priorities on industrial production.

### Choices in Documentary Film

Honest film-making attempts representations of reality, statements of truth as seen by film-makers, however abstract these may be in some forms. In a documentary, the representation is necessarily concrete, and the statement made is important both for what it says and what it leaves out. Consequently, politically self-conscious makers of documentaries face difficult choices, for example, "how much to say" in painting the broader context, choices which have both practical and theoretical limitations.

*Song of the Canary* does not directly acknowledge the need for, or likely form of, strategic solutions. Unions are mentioned in passing and individual union members shown to be particularly active; the Brown Lung Associations of North Carolina are given prominence. But the necessity of a large scale organizational response is only implicitly evoked. Making real gains in health and safety conditions is possible, initially, only through bitter collective bargaining, strikes and strong contracts, in the absence of a sympathetic state apparatus. Like any class struggle, this requires unity, skills, experience and leadership, qualities that grow out of militant, local participation and control in large, committed unions. (Struggle in the cultural arena, of which this film is an example, can contribute vitally to this process.) Enforcing compliance with OSHA and other legal "protections," including the right to refuse dangerous work without penalty, or the full disclosure of hazards, are essential for workers not to be overwhelmed by corporate coercion. Brief

*Continued on page 22.*

by Stephanie Urdang

**A**LMOST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ago, on August 8, 1956, the serene, manicured and very white capital of the South African regime found itself playing reluctant host to 20,000 women, mostly African, who had converged on Pretoria from every part of South Africa. Their protest was directed against the recent extension of the pass laws to include African women. Until then only men had been forced to carry

*Stephanie Urdang, a long-time member of the Southern Africa collective is the author of a book on the role of women in Guinea-Bissau, Fighting Two Colonialisms. She has recently worked on a study of women under apartheid for the United Nations. This article is reprinted from Southern Africa.*

# WOMEN UNDER APARTHEID



Suzette Abbott

the notorious pass book and suffer under the myriad of restrictions that came with it.

The march had been far from easy to organize. As preparations had gained momentum, police intimidation had mounted. Ignoring this, the women staged fundraising events, chartered buses, organized cars, and paid for train tickets.

In anticipation, the government banned all demonstrations in Pretoria that day. Undaunted, the women circumvented the law by marching in groups of two or three. Once assembled, they stood for thirty minutes in total silence in the wintry sun, before bursting forth to sing their national anthem.

The hurdles strewn across their path by the apartheid regime weren't the only resistance the women had to overcome. Some of their male allies in the liberation movement clearly felt threatened by the independence of the action. As the husband of one of the leaders of the march recalled wryly some fifteen years later, with a flash of lingering irritation: "We asked the women what we could do to help them and to protect them. They were taking on a potentially very dangerous task. You know what they answered? 'If you want to help us, you can stay at home and look after the children.'"

But while the march raised questions about the role of women, the women themselves made it clear that the apartheid regime was the main target of their struggle.

The Pretoria march was a high point in the 1950s—a decade marked by frequent militant demonstrations, by the increasing repression of the National Party government, and finally by the banning of the liberation movements. Throughout the decade, women played an important and active part, not only as supporters, but as initiators and organizers.

While the march could not change the laws, it showed a determination on the part of the women to continue their resistance against apartheid.



## A domestic worker's energy goes to "madam's" children. She has none left for her own.

The effects of apartheid on women have been especially harsh. They had reason to protest.

### Harsh Life in the Reserves

The apartheid regime has an insatiable need for cheap labor in order to fuel its economy and ensure continued high profits from its vast mineral resources, which are critical for both South Africa and the industrialized West.

Out of this need has come an intricate set of repressive laws designed to maintain and control all facets of the lives of the vast majority of people. While African men provide most of this labor and receive unlivable wages, it is the women who bear the heaviest burden. This can be seen most starkly in the reserve areas.

In pre-colonial society, African women played a vital role in the economic life of the village, with greater responsibility for, and input into, subsistence production than the men. The advent of colonialism and development of apartheid have seriously eroded this role.

The apartheid policies and the critically reduced land area have diminished women's economic produc-

tivity, and with it their political and social role. This has increased women's dependence on their husbands, their fathers or their male guardians, thereby reinforcing the existing patriarchal system.

The premise lying behind the establishment of the so-called "bantustans" is that Africans may only be permitted into the prescribed "white" areas—the towns—in order to work. Once a man can no longer sell his labor, he is expected to return "home," regardless of how long he has lived in the urban areas.

The meager wages he receives for his labor barely cover his own basic needs, let alone those of his family left behind in the reserves. In theory, this family is presumed capable of providing for itself off the land, thus justifying the low wages paid migrant workers. In reality only a tiny fraction of families produce sufficient food for their own survival.

A depressing picture emerges. Much of the limited land made available for subsistence farming is not arable. It is simply impossible to survive without supplemental incomes from migrant workers. But women waiting at home find the flow of money from the men away at work both insufficient and unreliable. Very often the money does not arrive at all.

Yet to earn this pittance, the men have to work on contract for years at a time, perhaps returning for a two-week period each year, often staying away from their families for several years at a stretch.

This disruption of family life is one of the cruelest manifestations of the apartheid laws. Besides economic hardship, it creates severe emotional stress. Wives do not have the same possibilities as their husbands for alleviating their loneliness, and must wait month after month, hoping for a letter, particularly hoping for one that contains some money.

In desperation women have left the reserves to find their husbands in the towns. This does not always end in a happy reunion.

One woman from the Tranksei, interviewed in 1978, described what happened to her. After failing to hear from her husband for months, and after agonizing over her hungry children, she borrowed money from friends and set off for Cape Town. When she finally tracked him down, he was embarrassed and angry. "He looks away but eventually tells me about this other woman. I can sense that it is this woman who has been

eating the money that my husband should have been sending me and our children. She is now fat and attractive. I am starved and ugly in my husband's eyes. I have become a burden to my very own husband."

"Marriage is not worthwhile for us black women. It traps us. Men are having it all right in town with their girl friends and money, while we must keep home on empty pockets and empty pro-

mises. We feel lonely in that desolate place."

### Little Better in Towns

Strict regulations prescribe the precise conditions under which a person may be permitted to remain in the urban areas. Given that women are not encouraged to be there, these laws affect them even more adversely than the men. The laws are so extensive and pervasive, so arbitrarily and indifferently carried out by government officials, that only a small proportion of women can actually consider themselves urban dwellers. The rest live constantly under the cloud of possible "endorsement out"—the rubber-stamped order that forces the bearer of the pass to return home.

To the woman endorsed out, "home" can mean a barren area where no living relatives remain and where she has no contacts, or it can, and regularly does, mean a notorious resettlement camp unfit for human habitation.

In order to remain legally in the town, it is necessary to qualify in terms of the Bantu Laws Amendment Act, Section 10 (a), (b), (c), or (d). In essence, a woman has the right to remain in an urban area if she has lived there *continuously* since birth; or has worked continuously for the same employer for ten years or in the same area for fifteen; or is married to a man qualified under the previous two, on condition she entered the area legally in the first place; or if she has "special permission."

As bad as these regulations look on paper, they are nightmarish in practice. Many women will have spent disqualifying periods away at some point in their lives; perhaps as children they were sent to grandparents when their parents were working and unable to care for them, or left the city for the birth of their children.

Marriage does not legalize a woman's status, and may even have the opposite effect. Unless a woman qualifies in her own right (through birth for instance), she takes on the status of her husband. If he is not permitted to have his wife



Suzette Abbott

Most of the women in the towns work as domestics for the whites.

living with him in terms of *his* status, she will find herself endorsed out to his "home," regardless of the conditions she will have to endure there. Desertion, divorce or death by her husband can result in the same loss of qualifying status.

The essential feature of the life of most African women is its insecurity. In the rural areas, their very survival is at stake; in the urban areas, should their circumstances change or their illegality be discovered, they are uprooted from their community and from family life.

### Women and Work

Despite the best efforts of the government to keep African women out of the wage labor market, the number of women workers has been growing. Driven off the land by its inability to provide sufficiently, women—like their men before them—have taken the route to the urban areas or onto white farms, more often than not illegally.

And so a point has been reached where one out of three African workers is a woman. There are two broad categories of employment in which African women are found in large numbers, and, not surprisingly, they are the least skilled: domestic workers and farm laborers.

The 1970 census (the latest available) showed that 91 percent of the female workforce was made up of service workers and agricultural workers, with the former predominating. Both these areas of work exclude unemployment benefits or other forms of social security, and are exempted from minimum wage guidelines—negligible though these social services are in the first place. In addition, the average woman worker earns a wage that is less than half that of the average male worker, and only eight percent of the white male's income. When they do the same work as men, they earn considerably less.

Most of the women working in the towns work as domestics in the luxurious homes of their white employers. Many work illegally, although this has



Winnie Mandela

**"The struggle  
in this country  
will be won  
by the women."**

become more difficult with the passage of a new regulation that imposes a heavy fine on the employer guilty of keeping any illegal workers.

If a domestic worker is living with her children in a township, she will have to leave them at a very early hour, only returning home late at night. After she has spent the day cleaning the large house of her "madam," cooking for the children, generally attending to their needs, she will return to her tiny, impoverished quarters, find food for her tired children, feed them out of her pathetic salary and fall asleep exhausted. Her energies are directed to the home and children of her employer. She has none left for her own.

If she is a "sleep-in" domestic, she will encounter more restrictions placed on her life. She will not be able to have her husband or lover stay in her room for even one night; neither can her children ever live with her. A woman who breaks these rules runs the risk of being caught in one of the regular police raids on domestic workers' quarters and jeopardizing her job.

Those who have not been able to make it to the towns or as domestic workers in the rural areas, turn to agricultural labor as the only other source of earnings. Farm workers are paid among the lowest wages of all

categories of workers and even here women receive less than men. Men will seek other forms of employment if at all possible, but women seldom have this choice.

The balance of the labor force is made up mainly of factory workers, although there are a fair number of nurses and teachers, relative to the number of African men in these professions.

Many of the laws, which have made the lives of African women so much harder, have been passed since that momentous march back in 1956. The extension of the pass laws initiated many other changes and the situation for both men and women has worsened year after year.

But this oppression has not been accepted passively.

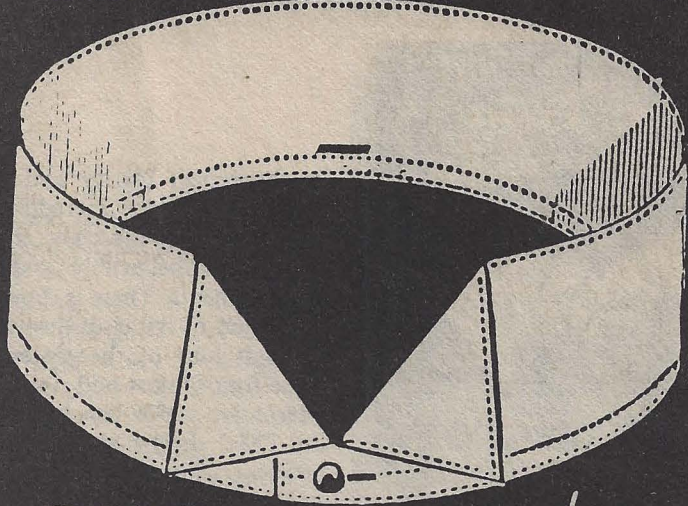
Shortly before the twentieth anniversary of the Pretoria women's march, another important march took place in South Africa. This time it was Soweto students, marching to protest the system of "bantus education." Among them were the daughters and grandchildren of the Pretoria protesters, once again marching peacefully. The police responded with guns, and an uprising spread throughout the country. Over 1,000 students were killed before their resistance was subdued by the police.

The only possibility for real change in the society as a whole and for the end to the particular suffering of women lies in the total abolition of apartheid. That women have a special role in this process has been recognized by many women militants. As Winnie Mandela, who has been persecuted for her efforts, says:

"Black women not only have to face the repressive laws but also grave cultural difficulties. The struggle in this country, I believe, will be won by the women. I am fully convinced that the role of women in the struggle for my people is a major one and despite all the repressive laws they are faced with they have emerged as an outstanding group in fighting for the cause of black people in this country." □



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A REVIEW:

# Between Labor & Capital

BETWEEN LABOR AND CAPITAL

Pat Walker, editor  
South End Press, Boston, Mass., 1979

by Frank Ackerman

“IF THE LEFT IS TO GROW, IT must begin to come to an objective understanding of its own class origins and to comprehend objectively the barriers that have isolated it from the working class.” That’s how Barbara and John

Frank Ackerman is a member of Somerville NAM (Massachusetts) and works on the magazine Dollars and Sense.

*NAM has recently reached an agreement with South End Press that we hope will be beneficial to both of us and to the U.S. Left as a whole. The Press “publishes books which help people understand the world, and suggest ways to overcome all forms of oppression.” In exchange for reviewing South End Press books we believe are of special significance for Moving On readers, South End will offer these books at reduced prices to Moving On subscribers. The following review of Between Labor and Capital is the first product of this collaboration. For information on how to get both this book and Unorthodox Marxism, please see the ad on page 20.*

Ehrenreich describe the goal of their controversial essay, “The Professional-Managerial Class.” That article, together with ten responses and the Ehrenreich’s reply to their critics, is now available in book form in *Between Labor and Capital*, edited by Pat Walker.

## The Left and the Professional-Managerial Class

In the Ehrenreichs’ view, the left should understand itself as largely based in the professional-managerial class (PMC). The PMC is defined as “consisting of salaried mental workers who do not own the means of production and whose major function in the social division of labor may be described broadly as the reproduction of capitalist culture and capitalist class relations.” This includes both those directly concerned with social control and ideology (teachers, social workers, entertainers, advertising copy writers, etc.), and middle-level administrative and technical employees within the production process itself. The Ehrenreichs estimate that the PMC includes 20% to 25% of the population, or around 50 million people.

The PMC is thus unique to monopoly capitalism and, as the Ehrenreichs stress, not to be confused with the old middle class of independent shopkeepers, farmers, and artisans. It is the twentieth century social fragmentation and reorganization of working class life that has generated the PMC in both the workplace and the community. In the workplace large numbers of scientists, engineers and administrators are hired to redirect production. In the community new professions “deliver” health, education and welfare. Meanwhile the rise of entire new industries such as advertising, mass media and commercialized recreation and entertainment create their own new professions.

A new class means new conflicts. On the one hand, the purpose of the PMC is to administer and control the new way of life set out for the working class. Yet the PMC is also fundamentally at odds

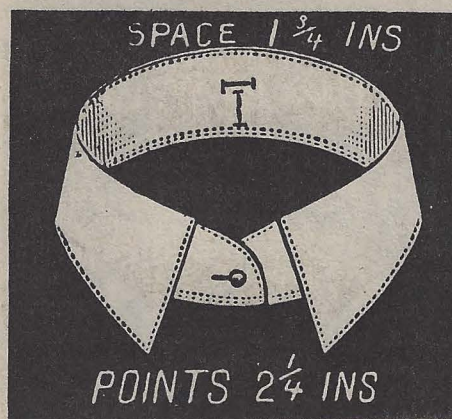
with the capitalist class. Many PMC functions require considerable on-the-job autonomy, which employers generally resist. And the PMC values of expertise, efficiency, rationality, professionalism, etc., often conflict with capitalist priorities.

A new class also means a new ideology, lifestyle, and political movements. Whatever the defects of the Ehrenreichs' argument in other areas (more on this in a moment), their analysis is certainly suggestive as an explanation of the new left of the 1960's. The Ehrenreichs chronicle the rise of the new left from largely PMC origins, and the still very "professional" albeit radicalized, goals and ideology of the campus movement through the mid-60's. Finally, under the impact of the Black liberation movement and the war in Vietnam, in the late 60's major sections of the new left began to detach themselves from, and even attack, their own PMC origins and destinations. Some went into the "new communist movement" of the early 70's. Others took a very different path into the "radicals in the professions" movement of the same years.

### The Questions and the Critics

It's a fascinating, well-presented argument—and one with a clear political message at the end: let's face it, the Ehrenreichs seem to be saying, most of the left obviously comes from a structurally different position in society than most of the working class. Instead of pretending it's not so, why not accept the reality of the difference, and organize movements to demystify, critique and redirect the professions we're channelled into—the better to ally with working-class radical movements as they appear?

This is a key question of political strategy, one which (usually in confused forms) has appeared throughout NAM debates on labor strategy in the past few years. A number of important questions can be raised. In view of the small size of the left and the weakness of working-class radicalism, should cadre of PMC



**The purpose of the PMC is to administer and control the way of life set out for the working class. Yet it is also at odds with the capitalists.**

origins put their efforts into organizing the traditional working class? Can a radical movement in the professions sustain itself in the absence of working-class and minority movements? What would a strategy of concentrating on the PMC imply for any working class people who are already leftists?

Such issues strike me as more to the point than much of the debate surrounding the PMC theory. *Between Labor and Capital* contains, in addition to the Ehrenreichs' original and two supporting essays (by John Welch and Sandy Carter), eight critical articles and the Ehrenreichs' rebuttal. Among the critics, only David Noble and Erik Olin Wright are a match for the Ehrenreichs

in theoretical clarity and readability; some of the rest is incredibly dense.

As a whole, the eight critical essays raise an unbelievably wide range of disagreements. There is, however, a major strand of criticism threading its way through four of the pieces. Together, these four almost add up to a coherent alternative which can be posed against the PMC theory as both analysis and political strategy. Let me try to construct that alternative.

David Noble's essay is the best place to start. Among other points, Noble argues that the PMC theory is unable to tell us much about the movement of history—unlike classic Marxism, in which the description of society led directly to predictions about change. For Noble, this weakness in the PMC theory is linked to its overly static view of the world. Reproduction of capitalist relationships, the specialty of the PMC, is portrayed as something quite separate from production: the rising role of the PMC is a result of historical changes in capitalism, but it has little effect (aside from its unchanging function of pacifying the working class) on the future of the development of the system.

Ultimately, says Noble, this separation of reproduction from production leads even to an inaccurate description of many professions. The Ehrenreichs claim that the creation of the PMC involved expropriating the skills and culture that once belonged to the working class. This, replies Noble, is a good picture of the role of efficiency experts, but hardly explains the functions of electrical engineers, organic chemists, or statisticians. Noble dwells on the role of engineers, one of the largest PMC occupations, arguing that much (not all) of its work is directly productive—contrary to the Ehrenreichs.

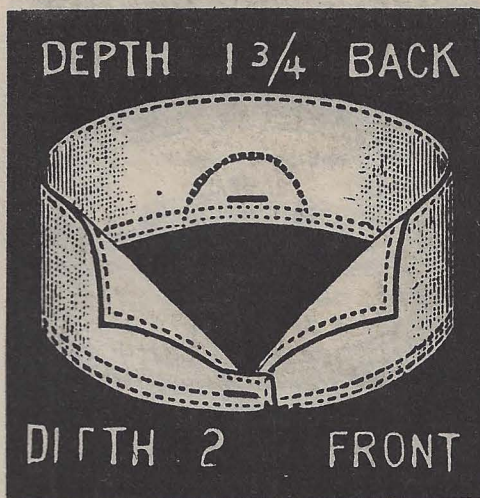
While Noble offers questions about the PMC, Erik Olin Wright begins the attempt at creating an alternative theory. His essay approaches the question of class analysis in monopoly capitalist society by contrasting five theories of the class position of intellectuals: they are part of a new or expand-

ed working class; they belong to several different classes, depending on whose interests they serve; they are members of the petty bourgeoisie; they belong to the PMC; and (Wright's own theory) they are best understood as occupying contradictory class locations. In response to the PMC theory (his comments on the other theories are also worth reading), Wright says that the Ehrenreichs are defining people's class positions solely by the *function* they play in society, and ignoring the *structure* of their work situations. Within the PMC, some people have very autonomous or even powerful positions, while others are in very oppressed, powerless jobs—a factor which must matter in analyzing class.

Wright's alternative is to suggest that most of the PMC falls into contradictory locations, objectively torn between aspects of the roles of different classes. The structure of work for a member of the PMC may be in part like wage-labor, in part like the autonomy of the petty bourgeoisie; the ideological function of a PMC person in some ways parallels the ruling-class attempt to control the workers, but in some ways reflects the lack of control which the PMC itself has. Why pigeonhole such people into one class or another?

Yet after offering this provocative contribution to class analysis, Wright's essay concludes without adequately developing the politics of his own theory. It remains for other essays in *Between Labor and Capital*, notably those by Stanley Aronowitz and by Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel, to develop more useful applications of Wright's approach.

Aronowitz, after some lengthy detours into his own version of Marxist class analysis, wraps up the first section of his essay with the conclusion that the PMC is properly seen as the middle strata of society, not as a sharply-defined class. Aronowitz points out that managers are much more closely identified with the interests of capital than is the rest of the PMC, and accepts



**The left must realize that most of the working class comes from a different position in society than they do.**

---

Wright's "contradictory class locations" as a description of professionals and technicians.

In the second section of his article, Aronowitz begins to get at the difference all this might make for political strategy. The "professional-technical middle strata" does not have interests sharply opposed to those of the working class. In fact, argues Aronowitz, the ongoing crisis of capitalism, involving budget cutbacks in government, impoverishment and "proletarianization" of many professions, etc., is drawing the interests of the working class and the middle strata closer together. The strategic implications are that, while the

working class needs its own organizations, it should welcome the chance for alliance with the middle strata against capital; and that the left should help to build movements of the middle strata (such as the environmental and anti-nuke movements) as allies of the working class.

Carrying the discussion further, Albert and Hahnel suggest an intriguing alternative: perhaps there is a new class in modern capitalism, but one which includes only a fraction of the PMC. Albert and Hahnel define their new "coordinator class" as those who are neither capitalists nor workers, but who have coordinating, controlling, or authoritative roles in the labor process. Examples of coordinators include elite professors, top industrial engineers and designers, union bureaucrats, psychiatrists and the like.

The rest of the Ehrenreichs' PMC, for Albert and Hahnel, is seen as occupying contradictory locations between the working class and the coordinator class. The immediate political implication is that members of the coordinator class, having distinct class interests, are people the working class and the left can ally with, but should not merge with organizationally. Members of the contradictory middle strata, on the other hand, do not have interests which are necessarily opposed to those of the working class; middle strata-ites are therefore welcome in left organizations.

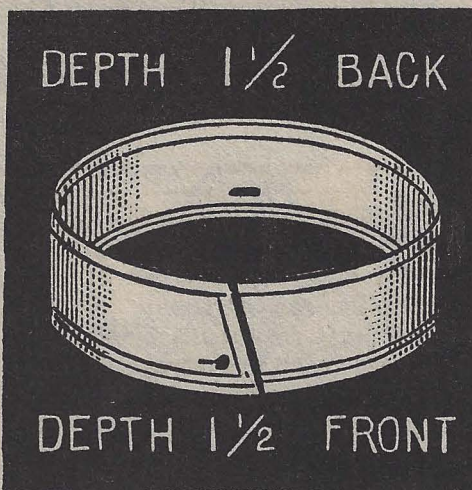
### **Strata, Class, and Political Strategy**

What does it all add up to? At the level of theoretical class analysis, the principle rival to the Ehrenreichs' approach is Wright's concept of contradictory class locations. Both have strengths and weaknesses. The PMC theory calls attention to the common features of a large group of people, and provides an explanation for the political movements of that group. But it does so by creating a static (and thus ahistorical) conception of a new class and its functions, a conception which almost everyone finds

deficient. The contradictory class locations approach provides a tighter theoretical framework, but leaves us with a large number of categories and somewhat obscure political implications. Thus neither is entirely adequate nor completely developed at the level of theory.

At the level of political strategy, however, there is a clear choice that emerges when comparing the Ehrenreichs with Aronowitz. Are the interests of professionals so distinct from those of the working class that the left should emphasize organizing the PMC around the critique of its professions? Or is the current crisis of capitalism drawing the needs of workers and professionals together so much that the left should emphasize organizing around common interests of both groups? In somewhat oversimplified form, this is *the* question, the main point of the whole debate.

To answer *the* question, suppose we classify occupations according to how important it seems to organize around a



critique of the content and purpose of the job. To begin with, it should be noted that the creation of socialism will eventually require criticism and redirection of most jobs; capitalism distorts and misdirects almost everyone's work. Still, among the traditional working class (blue-collar, clerical, sales and service workers) such issues will often be secondary in a realistic organizing strategy for the near future.

There are, of course, occasional exceptions—two cases which come to mind are the longstanding campaign of

Lucas Aerospace workers in Britain to convert their company to socially useful production, and the Australian construction unions' alliance with neighborhood and environmental groups to protect "green belts" within the metropolitan areas. But these are dramatic high points of struggle, not something which we can expect to become the norm anytime soon.

At the other extreme, consider the elite professions such as doctors, psychiatrists, lawyers and tenured college professors. Here the Ehrenreichs' image is certainly appropriate: a left strategy for organizing the elite professions must place a major priority on redefining the social meaning of these occupations. Organizing around wages, hours, working conditions, etc., would seem bizarre in the absence of a critique of the profession.

But what about the lower-level professions, such as nurses, welfare case workers, public school teachers? How should the left approach organizing

*Continued on page 23.*

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# All the News

## MOVING & SHAKING

NAM members from several chapters were among the tens of thousands of marchers at the National March for the ERA in Chicago on May 10. Members came from **Blazing Star, Chicago Northside, Madison, Milwaukee, Detroit, Bluegrass, and Champaign-Urbana**. One of the featured performers at the rally following the march was Kristin Lems of **Champaign-Urbana**. Estimates of the number of people attending the march and rally ranged from 30,000 to 50,000 to 100,000—people came from as far away as Alaska and Florida, and everywhere in between. . . . Around the country, gay and lesbian communities have been active in protests against the films *Cruising* and *Windows*. Both of these films are anti-gay, and *Windows* is anti-women as well. Several NAM chapters have participated in these protests, including **Blazing Star, Boston Area, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh**. Pittsburgh NAM was also involved in a demonstration to protest Anita Bryant's appearance in that city in April. . . . St. Louis NAM was one of many gay and non-gay organizations which joined together this spring to sponsor the first Gay/Lesbian Pride Week in St. Louis. . . . Dayton NAM has played a major role in starting a Boycott J.P. Stevens group in that city. One of their protests at a department store led to the arrest of several boycotters and a local radio reporter. Mark Mericle, station manager of WYSO-FM, and a member of

## CORRECTION

The February/March issue of *Moving On* failed to identify the books reviewed by Kathie Sheldon in her article "Women in Struggle." They are: *Women in Class Society* (Saffioti), and *Fighting Two Colonialisms* (Urdang). Both are available from: Monthly Review Press, 62 W. 14th Street, N.Y.C. 10011. Our sincere apologies to all three authors.

Dayton NAM, was arrested on criminal trespass charges while covering the demonstration. He was detained by the store's security personnel on the grounds that he was not a legitimate customer. The store's management also claimed that a reporter would need their prior approval for news coverage in the store, which Mericle called preposterous because they couldn't possibly give prior approval for news coverage of a fire or other emergencies.

## CITIZENS PARTY

A number of NAM members and chapters have been active in organizing for the Citizens Party. Delegates to the Party's founding convention in Cleveland (April 11-13) included NAM members from **Chicago, New York City, Colorado, Milwaukee, Nashville, Los Angeles, and Boston**. Also present as observers were NAM members from the **Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, and Detroit** chapters; Political Secretary Bill Barclay represented the National Office. Katherine Kennedy, NY NAM and Michelle Pritchard, LA NAM, were elected to the Citizens Party's National Committee, and Kennedy also to the Executive Committee. Congratulations!

## CULTURE

Socialist education and culture are alive and well in many NAM chapters, with socialist schools and other cultural events this spring. The newest school is **Red Rose**, sponsored by **Portland NAM**. In their first session this spring, they offered courses on labor history in the Pacific Northwest, and an introduction to Marxism. . . . The spring session of **Second City Socialist School**, a project of **Chicago Northside NAM**, featured one tour of Haymarket Square and Waldheim Cemetery (grave-site of the Haymarket martyrs and other radicals); and another tour of Chicago's murals, highlighting the south and near west sides. A similar mural tour took

place in East Los Angeles, sponsored by **LA NAM's Socialist Community School**. The **Socialist Community School** this spring also featured speeches by E. P. Thompson, the British Marxist historian; and by Lillian Rubin, the American sociologist. **LA NAM** also held a cultural event, "Music in the Movement," with Guy Carawan and friends. . . . NAM and DSOC in **Milwaukee** have co-sponsored a series of forums on "Politics of Labor and the Community in the 1980's". . . . Larry Ceplair, an at-large member of NAM, has recently published a book called *Hollywood on Trial* (Doubleday), about the Hollywood Ten trial in the 1950's. The book received a good review in a recent issue of *Cineaste*.

## NEW CHAPTERS

New chapters have formed in four cities during the past few months. **Cleveland NAM** and **Washington, D.C. NAM** have joined the **Industrial Heartland Region**, and **Oakland-Berkeley NAM** and **Marin NAM** have joined the **Northern California Region**. Welcome!

## STANLEY ARONOWITZ ON LABOR STRATEGY

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# Canary

Continued from page 12.

examples of rank-and-file battles, demonstrating these points, on health and safety issues that are more common but less dramatic than the DBCP example, could have been included in *Song of the Canary*, and exemplary union contracts cited. For workers, some insight into the contributions that progressive professionals can make would have been valuable. For intellectuals, the same examples would make meaningful role models.

Another matter which, if not discussed, inevitably dampens hope, is the problem of global regulation: safer working conditions in the U.S. means more industry moves abroad (just like the textile mills moved South from New England for low wages.) In fact, *Song of the Canary* relates that DBCP production was shut down by Oxy and

moved to Mexico! Defense against this threat is not hopeless. For example, beginning collaboration exists between autoworker, rubber and chemical worker unions in different countries, seeking more uniform goals and concerted action. Assisting the development of strong unions in Third World countries, especially where outlawed, would significantly reduce capital flight to low wage, low regulation countries.

## The Cutting Edge

The final element in a statement on confronting a major social problem is the relevance of political organizations explicitly committed to class struggle. For example, *Song of the Canary* could have mentioned the Communist Party (CP) of the 30s and its contribution, ultimately, to racial integration of the textile mills and to the creation of industrial unions. The film could then pose the enigma of the CP's demise. Before lack of this activity can be appreciated widely by working people, an open critical examination of the history

of the left in the U.S. has to come.

Other documentaries by people who presumably share an assessment of the CP's early achievements, also have chosen not to make these connections. An example is *Union Maids*, where the three organizers interviewed clearly had extensive, personal contact with the CP although it is never mentioned.

Concrete, real world experiences provide the best (and probably only appropriate) occasions in which to posit a novel world view. Of course it can be done badly, therefore, style and tact become paramount considerations although sometimes lacking in the polemics of "political" artists. Concerning the practical limitation of how much analytical burden a one-hour documentary can carry, it seems necessary to address again the question of audience. Many of the audiences seeing this film consist of union members who already have considerable awareness of the dictatorship of capitalist relations in the workplace, and the hazards resulting. For them, providing more historical perspective in *Song of the Canary* would have invited reference to the crucial struggles of the 30s and workers' organization, and could have provoked probing thought about the magnitude of the confrontation required and concrete steps that can be taken toward broader, more long term objectives.

In contrast, for non-industrial or intellectual workers, of all kinds, it is likely that the revelation of workplace dangers and the importance of workers' collective actions to the broader environmental conflict is an ample message. Some additional, ancillary discussion of historical and strategic issues would have been desirable, but a broad formulation of the class struggle overview was probably not feasible. While providing a focus for discussion on the problems of political filmmaking, *Song of the Canary* remains, nonetheless, a timely and excellent addition to the genre of progressive documentaries from which all viewers will benefit. □

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# Classes

Continued from page 20.

them? On the one hand, as stressed by the Ehrenreichs, the traditional working class usually perceives the professions as a group—moreover as an intimidating, often oppressive group. Thus the critique of even lower-level professions and their effects on the working class will be important to political strategy, at a much earlier point than the critique of, say, most factory or construction work. Organizing the lower-level professions is not the same as organizing the working class.

On the other hand, neither is it the same as organizing the elite professions. Fighting simply to protect wages and working conditions has a different, more plausible political meaning among nurses and high school teachers than it does among doctors and tenured professors. In organizing the lower-level professions, the relative importance of

immediate self-interest vs. the critique of the professions is a difficult question with no absolute “either-or” answer.

Taking one last glance at the theoretical debates, this discussion of strategy fits best with the Albert and Hahnel position, with lower-level professions in a “contradictory location” between the class of elite professions and the working class. If—as the Ehrenreichs quite reasonably insist—the theoretical discussion of class analysis is to relate to strategy, then the differences between left approaches to upper and lower-level professions should imply that the PMC is too diverse to be a single class.

*Between Labor and Capital* is a provocative but at times frustrating book about a very important topic. The idea of presenting a debate in a collection of essays is an appealing one, although it could have profited from a much heavier hand in editing. Still, anyone interested in the theoretical and political implications of current debates on class analysis will find most of *Between Labor and Capital* well worth reading. □

## The New American Movement...

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 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 own 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.

### In Memoriam

We deeply regret to announce that our good friend, Martin Chancey, died suddenly on May 26th, 1980. Martin has been a mainstay of the Left in San Diego since he and Sally moved there from Ohio six years ago. From his union organizing days in the '30s, through his involvement in our current struggles, Martin was always optimistic, full of energy, open-minded and practical, and totally dedicated to the building of a strong socialist movement in this country. Even though he was in poor health, there was no thought of withdrawing from active involvement in our movement.

We offer support and sympathy to Sally and pledge to try to give as much of ourselves to the struggle as Martin did.

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