NOVEMBER, 1978

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MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT

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NOVEMBER 1978

Moving On

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 8

Have you opened your mail lately to find an attractive "package" seeking to sell you one of the contemporary left-leaning publications?

Over the last several years, the left has learned a great deal from commercial direct mail houses about how to market its products.

These techniques are very positive in many respects. They have helped some publications to strengthen the always-shaky financial base of independent journals. And they have exposed many people to magazines or newspapers that might otherwise have escaped their notice.

There are two problems, however. The first is that such mailings require a large initial expenditure. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, they can reinforce the tendency to presume that subscriptions are sold by "Techniques" rather than by people.

It used to be that the main method of sales for left publications was direct person-to-person contact. Selling papers was a means not just of building circulation, but also of engaging in political dialogue with friends, neighbors, family, and co-workers.

I wouldn't say that such an approach has completely died out but it's certainly on the wane. This is due in part to a disturbing reliance on "media" to get our message across. On the attractive mailing to convince people to buy subs. On the magazine itself to stimulate political thought.

Obviously, mass mailings are very valuable in building circulation. And obviously, a magazine like **MOVING ON** is is very important in presenting new ideas.

But we need to keep in mind that people are the critical factor. **MOVING ON** won't really grow unless you, our readers, make it your personal responsibility to help sell subscriptions. And **MO** won't really be politically useful unless you use it to initiate discussions, engage new people in conversation, or aid your group's political development.

Give a sub for the holidays. And make a new year's resolution to find your favorite article in each issue and talk to someone else about it. Those are small steps–but they could go a long way.

Roberta Lynch

Comment

GettingTogether

Looking For America

The Long View

NAM News & Views

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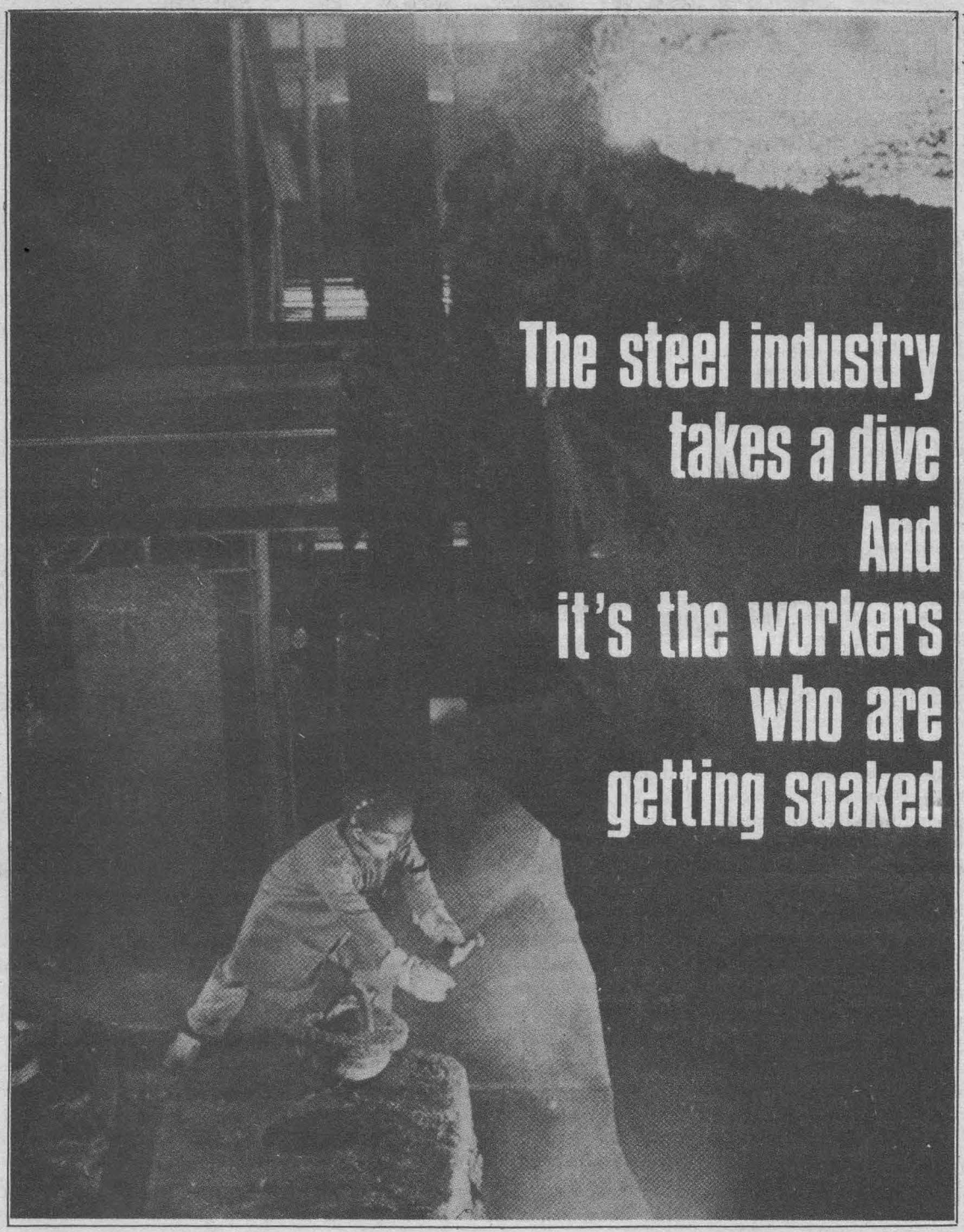

photo by Herbert Sloudonik

The steel industry takes a dive And it's the workers who are getting soaked

Comment

by Paul Garver

Changing economic conditions are rapidly eroding the basis for the cozy relationship between the steel corporations and United Steel Workers of America (USWA). Corporate needs for higher profits and productivity are coming into open conflict with workers' needs for job security and decent working conditions. By the 1980s neither the steel industry nor the union will be able to afford the mutual accomodations of the previous two decades.

The American steel industry so domi-

inated the world until the mid 1960's that it was able to earn generous profits (12.5% after taxes in 1966) while paying increases in real wages of some 3-4% annually. Relatively high wages and fringe benefits in turn muted union action on cyclical layoffs and unhealthy working conditions.

The industry's pricing power, under no pressure from imports, meant that higher labor costs could be easily passed on to steel consumers (primarily manufacturers of capital and consumer goods). Profits were adequate to finance a 47% increase in steel capacity during the 1950's, and the substantial transformation of productive technology in the 1960's when the basic oxygen process largely supplanted the open hearth.

After the lengthy strike of 1959, both the industry and the union shied away from tough bargaining stances, but even the possibility of another long steel strike created boom cycles in contract bargaining years as customers stockpiled steel, followed by post-settlement bust periods as inventories were worked off. After the contract settlement of 1971, 100,000 American steel workers were laid off for six months, while steel imports for the first time captured a substantial share of the U.S. market.

Given these developments, it was disappointing but not surprising when the union joined the industry in a "Buy American" campaign, setting up joint "productivity" teams, and the no-strike Experimental Negotiating Agreement (ENA). Although many steelworkers objected to the no-strike pledge, the scattered opposition to the ENA did not jell successfully because 1973 and 1974 brought prosperity to the industry.

American steel production and profits reached record highs, as U.S. companies were able to take advantage of a brief boom in the capital goods industry and the problems of foreign competitors who were rocked by soaring energy and labor costs. Their hopes buoyed by the resulting high profit margins, U.S. corporations began ambitious expansion programs for new mill complexes to be built on previously undeveloped ("greenfield") sites.

Since 1975, however, the American steel industry, and that of the entire capitalist world, has been plunged into chronic depression. The combination of sharp increases in the price of steel, and the recession-induced cut in spending for capital goods (two-thirds of steel shipments go into the capital goods industry) drastically reduced the demand for steel. Forced to operate far below full capacity with high fixed costs, steel companies in the U.S., Japan, and Europe began to go in the red.

The American steel industry, which shipped about 110 million net tons in both 1973 and 1974, could sell only 80 million tons in 1975 and about 90 million in 1976 and 1977. By 1977 the steel industry as a whole was operating at a deficit, and even mammoth producers like U.S. Steel stayed narrowly in the black only by earning profits on their expanding investments outside of steel.

Import battles

American steel corporations tried to protect profit margins by repeatedly raising prices (up 79% from 1972 to 1977), laying off workers, and shutting down whole plants in Youngstown, Johnstown, and Lackawanna. Japanese and European producers had less flexibility, were less able to lay off workers, and were forced to sell steel at minimal profit margins to maintain production. As a result, exports to the U.S. soared in the second half of 1977, reaching more than 20% of the U.S. market before being rolled back by the U.S. government's "reference prices."

The Carter administration calculated that this form of import limitation would enable the industry to earn $900 million more annually, and indeed receding imports and a modest pickup in capital spending have restored the industry to an 85% level of capacity utilization in 1978 (fair to middling).

However, it would take price increases of some 7% over and above the general rate of inflation to restore profit levels that would be sufficient to attract investment to steel. The steel corporations themselves are investing primarily in their profitable non-steel divisions, particularly in the development of their holdings in coal, gas, oil, and metallic ores, rather than in new steel capacity or even in modernizing existing facilities.

The union's response to the crisis in steel has been conditioned by its decades of cooperation with management. Its most visible reaction to plant closings has been to demand stiff import quotas in line with industry proposals. But rank-and-file pressure during the last national union election for action against layoffs, as well as the threat to the union posed by the sharp decline in membership due to cutbacks in the productive labor force in steel (down from a peak of about 550,000 in the 50's to 500,000 in 1970 to about 350,000 today), did force the leadership to proclaim "lifetime job security" as a major bargaining objective in 1977.

The union failed to make any real breakthroughs in achieving job security in the 1977 Basic Steel Agreement. Steelworkers with at least 20 years of service are guaranteed a second year of Supplemental Unemployment Benefits, unless offered "appropriate" work at their home plant or "suitable long-term employment" at other company plants. If a plant closes down, steelworkers with 20 years of service are eligible for early retirement with a $300-a-month pension supplement if "suitable" long-term employment is not offered elsewhere.

Guidelines for the implementation of these agreements are currently under discussion by a joint Union-Management "Employment and Income Security Task Force." The outcome of these obscure talks has great potential significance for the future of the industry and of steelworkers and their communities. The corporations clearly intend to construe very broadly the definition of suitable long-term employment. Edgar Speer, President of U.S. Steel, recently defended his proposal to build a giant new "greenfield" steel mill at Conneaut,

photo by Martha Tabor/LNS

If the policy of union collaboration with industry continues, the likely outcome is union acquiescense in the de-facto liquidation of jobs.

Ohio by pointing out that laid-off steelworkers from Youngstown could commute to work there (a one-way distance of 60 miles!). Will Bethlehem Steel attempt to reduce its massive pension obligations in Johnstown and Lackawanna (responsible for most of its $577 million in "losses" there last year) by offering jobs at more modern mills in Indiana and Maryland, and compel relocation or loss of benefits?

In ract, one of the chief deterrents to closing all older plants today is unfunded pension liabilities. At the end of 1976, vested pension benefits by employees of U.S. Steel exceeded the value of trust assets by $400 million, while the unfunded accrued liability of past service was an additional $1.2 billion.

Only if the companies can compel workers to commute long distances or relocate under pain of losing early retirement benefits can they avoid massive losses on plant shut-downs. The union, on the other hand, by hanging tough on this issue, would make it more attractive for companies to modernize and expand facilities at their present sites, the course demanded by steelworkers who want to preserve existing jobs and communities. In any event, it may be impossible to reconcile steelworkers' needs for job security and community preservation with the companies' needs to increase productivity and cut labor costs. Wall Street firms such as Merrill, Lynch and Argus Research are recommending a strategy of "de facto liquidation" of 15-20% of U.S. steel capacity, permitting the operation of remaining mills at higher rates of utilization, thus reducing unit costs and raising profit margins.

The chronic shortage of steel so created would permit sharply higher steel prices (and return the U.S. economy to double-digit inflation as steel customers passed on their costs to their consumers), but would mean permanently slashing another 50-100 thousand jobs in steel. Even if such brutal measures restored steel industry profits, and if the companies would choose to invest those profits in domestic steel capacity rather than overseas or in non-steel operations, new greenfield plants would provide few jobs.

U.S. Steel's projected mill at Conneaut, Ohio would produce 7½ million tons of steel in 1987 at construction costs of some $7-$8 billion, but would employ fewer than 8500 workers, while at least 30,000 steel workers are employed at U.S. Steel facilities in the Pittsburgh and Youngstown areas that would be replaced by Conneaut.

Direct Assault

A direct assault on labor costs by means of employer resistance to wage increases cannot be ruled out. Pittsburgh newspapers in the last few months have featured remarks by numerous economists blaming the crisis in steel on high labor costs and citing the "unfair" wage advantage of steelworkers over other U.S. manufacturing workers.

Since labor costs have risen even faster in Europe and Japan, it is likely that industry resistance to increases in labor costs will focus less on wages than on demands for productivity increases and greater management control over work assignments and absenteeism. This follows the pattern set on the employer side of the coal and iron ore strikes, and by the smaller steel companies that withstood a wave of strikes in the Pittsburgh area rather than follow the Basic Steel agreement in 1977.

If there is no massive pressure from below in the USWA, the union will enter the 1980's unprepared to confront these harsh realities. If the policy of collaboration with industry continues, the likely outcome is union acquiescense in the de-facto liquidation of jobs. Senior members of a shrinking workforce would be protected by extending income protection measures, but older steel communities would be abandoned and the more junior (often female and minority) workers left jobless.

Even a sharp decline in per capita payments to the union as the number of steelworkers tumbles has not snapped the union leadership out of its lethargy. Although the August issue of the USWA newspaper, STEEL LABOR, reflects a growing interest in legislation to mitigate the effects of plant closings on dislocated workers, there is little evidence that the union is developing a

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The state of the union —United Steelworkers convene

Dissident steelworkers were beaten on the boardwalk outside the Convention Center. Inside McBride supporters controlled the floor... Most outrageous, the convention passed a highly undemocratic resolution prohibiting any campaign contribution by a non-USW member to candidates for International or District level office.

by Rob Persons

Midway through the United Steelworkers' Atlantic City convention, a friend brought a newspaper clipping to work and asked, "What's going on out there?"

"We're getting our butts kicked," I told him.

He and I had both supported a slate of delegates pledged to win for steelworkers the right to vote on the contracts we work under.

"Man, that union's turned into a syndicate." My friend shook his head and went back to work.

It has not yet been two years since the International election contest between Ed Sadlowski and Lloyd McBride that excited steelworkers across the country and caught nationwide media attention. That campaign offered two very different roads for the union to travel and showed a membership very nearly evenly divided on the course. Yet most reports out of Atlantic City stressed McBride's total control of the proceedings. Has the situation really changed so dramatically in so short a time?

Most of us who work in the mills simply pay our dues, do our job, and feel removed from the politics that take place at the upper levels of the union. Pittsburgh is as far-away and unresponsive to our needs as is Washington, D.C.

On many issues of importance in the union or in the larger political world we disagree. The arguments are often long and loud on the job and in the bars and coffee-shops that line the roads leading to the mills.

On many other issues, however, there is nearly unanimous agreement. More than ever, steelworkers feel a need for a union that actually represents our interests. In turn, a union capable of defending itself against the industry's current attacks must enjoy the full support of an active and educated rank and file.

The USWA today is far from being such a union. As a result it finds itself floundering in its dealings with management as well as with its own membership.

The crisis is real and Lloyd McBride understands the need for a strong and unified front as well as do my co-workers. Unlike those of us on the shop floors and in local union halls, however, he believes such support can be bullied and cajoled from the membership.

It is in this light that we should examine the convention and the prospects for the future of the USWA.

Signposts showing the political direction to Atlantic City began to appear shortly after the 1977 International election.

After a brief, post-election appeal for unity, McBride took to denouncing any opposition groups within the union, and declared that supporters of Steelworkers Fight Back have no place in union ranks. For the first time in USW history, district staff appointments were made over the objections of District Directors. Directors Jim Balanoff and Linus Wampler, both Sadlowski supporters, were forced to accept International decisions over their district personnel.

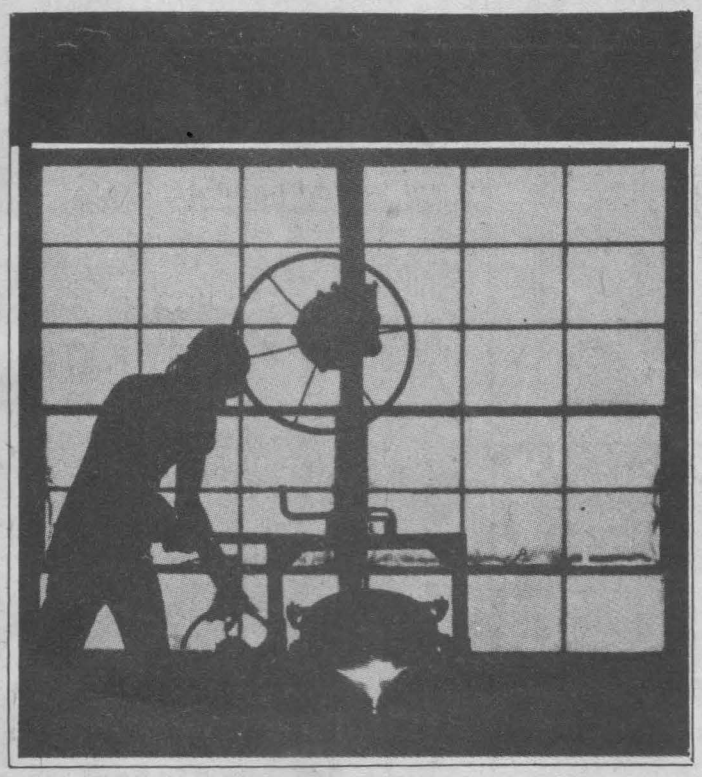
Shortly thereafter McBride dredged up the campaign issue of "outsiders" controlling the union by means of a federal suit alleging use of foundation and corporate financing in the 1977 election.

Many steelworkers, particularly those in basic steel, do not presently have the right to vote on their own contracts. In the summer of 1978, when a "Right to Ratify" campaign began getting off the ground, the International prohibited local unions from spending their own dues money to correspond with sister locals on issues to come before the convention.

Finally, in the week prior to the convention, an attempt was made to unseat legally elected delegates from Local 1010, the largest steelworkers local in the country and center of the contract ratification forces.

By the time of the invocation and singing of the national anthem, the groundwork had been laid for a completely controlled convention, by an administration that would brook no opposition.

All that followed was predictable. Dissident steelworkers and radicals were beaten on the boardwalk outside the Con-



vention Center. Inside, McBride supporters monopolized the microphones and controlled the floor. The administration refused to even consider the issue of contract ratification at this convention, referring it to the next Industry Conference. Opposition delegates and District Directors were loudly booed from the floor. Most outrageous, the convention passed the highly undemocratic and possibly illegal resolution prohibiting any campaign contribution by a non-USW member to candidates for International and District level office.

Not even in the hey-day of past presidents, McDonald and Abel, were such extreme and dictatorial tactics attempted.

But the very use of such measures indicates a fear approaching panic behind the administration's show of force.

The reasons for this fear are real. Under the superficial unity of the convention lies a union still bitterly divided. Not only does there remain the important base of support for union reform, represented by the Steelworkers Fight Back campaign, but cracks and strains are showing in the "Official Family" as well.

As far back as August, 1977, the Basic Steel settlement was nearly rejected by a vote of local union presidents afraid and unwilling to take the contract back home to their members.

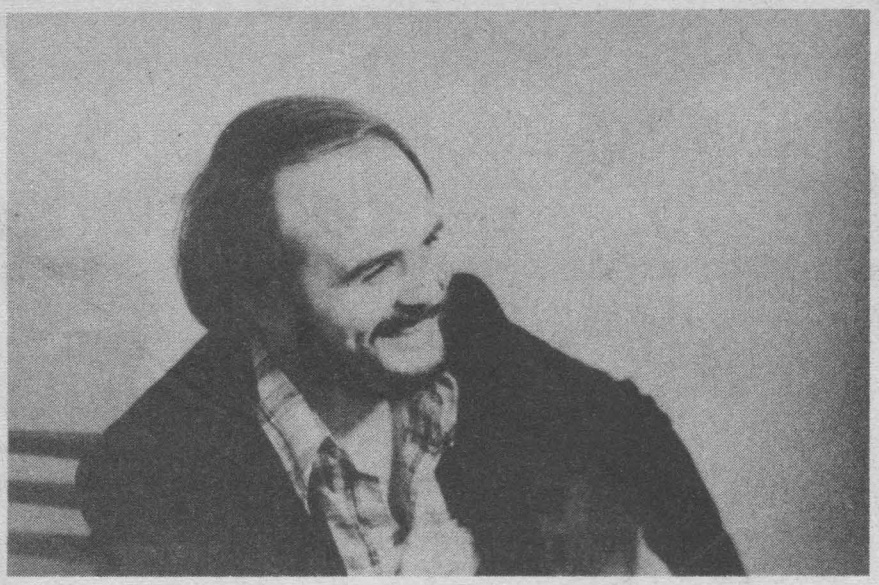
Despite McBride's almost total control of money and staff appointments, serious divisions have arisen at Executive Board meetings. This came to a head at a recent meeting when an administration proposal to reveal union bargaining priorities before the 1980 negotiations was defeated.

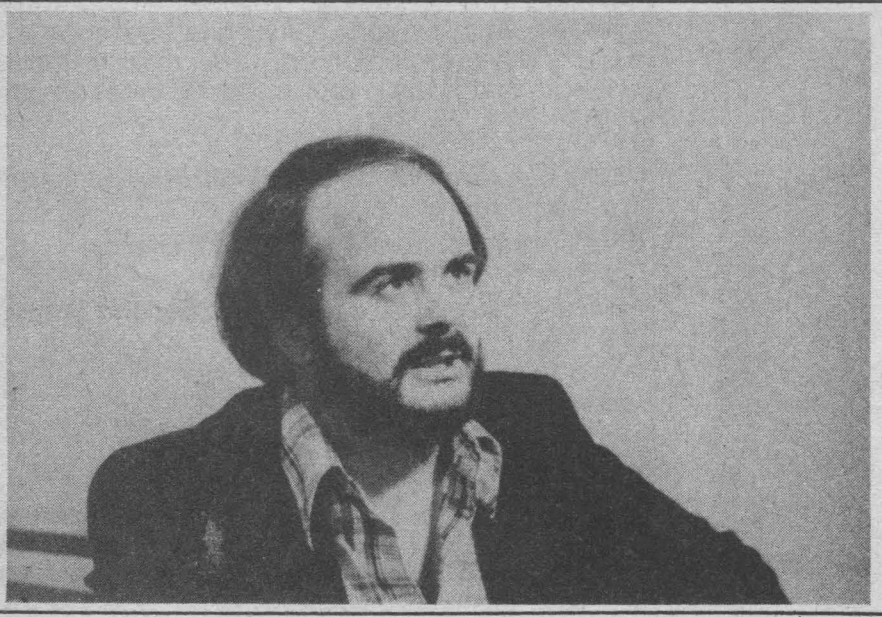
Open speculation goes on concerning a possible 1981 challenge to McBride from currently loyal Directors and staff.

The weakness of reform forces in the USW is real. We presently lack an organization, a program, and a voice. But we possess important resources, nevertheless. The crisis within the steel industry and the ineffective union response are producing small but growing pockets of active discontent. And this trend is likely to intensify. Moreover, the fragility of the leadership coalition within the union represents a potential wedge we in the opposition have not fully grasped.

McBride's strong-arm tactics may also point the way for future battles. By hitting at his weak link, the issue of union democracy, we can offer our own hope for the future—a union that deserves the respect and garners the enthusiastic support of steelworkers across the country.

Rob Persons is a member of USWA Local 1010 in East Chicago, Indiana.





photos by Tom Simonds

Bill Perkins

by Ronaele Novotny and Judy MacLean

NAM members Marty Fruendt and Bill Perkins are officers in the Allegheny chapter of the Pennsylvania Social Services Union (PSSU); Fruendt is president and Perkins, secretary. They talk here about what they do as socialist union officials—how they're using their posts to try to build the power and change the consciousness of the union members. Fruendt has been a welfare worker at the Department of Public Assistance for the past 6 years; Perkins has worked at Pennsylvania's largest mental hospital for the past five. Both were shop stewards before being elected union officers.

"Most people still experience their work and private lives as isolated individuals rather than as a conscious collective. Our role is to try and change that."

PSSU was born after a wave of public school teacher militancy in the late 1960's forced the state of Pennsylvania to pass Act 195. That law allows public employees to bargain collectively with a limited right to strike. PSSU, Local 668 of Services Employees International Union, began representing workers in 1972. Today the union serves 11,000 workers, most of them in welfare departments, mental hospitals, and rehabilitation facilities. The local is divided into eight chapters statewide.

Workers control— it begins in the union

Would you say PSSU is a democratic union?

Fruendt: My ideal of democracy is not where people vote in regular elections out of habit. It's a model where each person hears and engages in debate in a collective setting, feeling free to participate. Then, a decision is reached, by more than a narrow majority, that everyone can collectively support, including being able to re-argue and revise it together later.

Our union structure is a model of democracy. There are provisions for referendum votes on issues. All the positions except the business agent and negotiating team are elected, and officers who aren't living up to what their constituents want can be recalled. I don't think though, that there's actually the awareness in the union to fill in that form and give it content. Conservatives in the union say the form is ultra-democratic and saps the union's strength. Actually, there isn't enough discussion and participation. But that's beginning to change.

Perkins: The barrier is really the strength of bourgeois ideas. That is, most people still experience their work and private lives as isolated individuals, rather than as a conscious collective. Our role is to try and change that by providing the rank and file with different experiences in participating in and directing their union.

The process is important. For example, we had shop steward training recently. In most unions, they bring in experts to teach skills. We thought it was better, since the stewards know the problems in the shop, that they do the training themselves. Through the process people had to collectively decide what the problems were and come up with solutions.

Fruendt: In 1977, there was a budget crisis. There was no state budget, we weren't getting paid, there were layoff notices out, and welfare recipients weren't getting their checks. We had a county wildcat strike over a political issue—the issue of whether the budget got passed and whether it included money for social services and the people who deliver them.

Perkins: The important thing was how it got organized. From beginning to end, the stewards controlled the process. They decided they had to respond collectively. They decided to break the law. They decided how to do the media work, as well as the politics that would come across to the media. They came to a common analysis of what was happening to us. They organized all the shops to participate. They developed instructions for picketing. There wasn't just some leader calling the strike. The process was controlled by the stewards. It was a healthy development.

How would you define progressive union politics?

Fruendt: Partly it's real democratic debate and not just form. As that develops, we have to train other people to be leaders. For the future, I'd like to see a socialist caucus that would put forth a socialist direction for the union in the context of that debate.

Could you give some examples?

Perkins: We've tried to stress that the union should respond to a variety of issues besides on-the-job or contract issues. We've encouraged strike support. In 1975, we did this around the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers strike. In 1977-78, we were able to get a lot of members to participate in and understand the issues in the United Mineworkers strike. Through those experiences, people have learned how important it is to support other labor struggles, and what that means in terms of improving our own position.

We've encouraged people to become involved around the ERA and gay rights. It hasn't always been easy. We did get a lot of PSSU members to the ERA demonstration in Washington, D.C. and to participate in local activities. We've twice fought off attempts to prohibit gays from working in state institutions. That was difficult for many of our members to get behind, but we've had a good deal of success in changing attitudes.

Something that's begun to surface recently is that we somehow have to strengthen PSSU's weak position. Some people talk about backing candidates in state legislative races, or for governor. Marty and I both argue that's a pretty limited approach. We need to get members to be more active on issues, to develop our own solutions.

For instance, a lot of people think that during a budget crisis all you need are some people in your hip pocket at the state capitol to fight for your part of the budget. We argue that we need to begin meeting with other unions around the state and putting together an alternative budget and rallying members behind it.

Is PSSU a militant union?

Fruendt: No. During the budget crisis people took militant action, but we need more debate about what gives power to a union. Bill and I believe a powerful union comes from militant members, not from influencing politicians.

What would a militant union do?

Fruendt: Get the members in motion.

Perkins: For example, take workload size for welfare workers. PSSU has tried legal maneuvers for years to get the

right to bargain over workload size. The legalistic approach has produced only frustration. This fall, in the Allegheny chapter, we're going to try to organize people to fight in the shops and on the county level to reduce caseload size. It's an issue people are concerned about and will act on. That's a healthier approach.

If we win, the caseload reduction will be the result of action by the membership and stewards in Allegheny County. That will change their view of themselves, what they're able to get, and how you go about creating change.

How did progressive leadership come to PSSU?

Fruendt: It started in 1976 with a campaign against the statewide executive director and the leaders here in Allegheny County who supported him. The main complaints were that the contracts weren't addressing problems at the work site and that the executive director simply attempted to oust union officials who weren't in agreement with him.

Bill and I began to organize the shop stewards here, had a lot of meetings, started a petition to recall the local leaders and joined the move, which began in Philadelphia, to oust the executive director. This gave us an opportunity to talk with people about how they felt, and to learn their ideas for changing the union. The local leaders were overwhelmingly recalled, and I was elected as the chapter president. Later, new statewide leaders were elected.

Perkins: In addition to removing certain people, we also had a constitutional convention to change the old undemocratic structure. We used to have a dual leadership structure with an appointed executive director who controlled the flow of information and decision-making within the union. Now we have just paid elected leadership, so the rank and file has more control.

Why did people sign the petition?

Fruendt: Not always for the right reasons. Bourgeois ideology makes people see change in policy as coming solely through a change in leaders. We tried to explain that this was a first step toward really changing the union.

Perkins: Until then, most of the shop stewards were passive, felt shut out. The recall campaign provided stewards with a way to become active and organize people in the shops.

Do you have a solid base of support?

Perkins: We have an active core of about 25-30 people in the Allegheny County chapter that actually run the union, day to day. They support the general trend of our politics. In addition, we both try to talk about socialism and about the New American Movement. A number of people in my shop have joined Friends of NAM and support local NAM activities. When the union has responded to attacks like cutbacks on a statewide level or discrimination against gay state workers, we've responded in coalition. NAM is usually in the coalition and received by the union members in a good way.

Fruendt: I've never made a public announcement about socialism. I talk with stewards and people in the shop day to day about socialism and about being in NAM. I have some questions about how many of the 700 members realize two of their chapter leaders are socialists, and I'm wondering how to address that.

You've spoken a lot about increasing participation. Won't that increase participation of people who don't have progressive politics? Could formal democracy lead to more conservative directions?

Perkins: It's a problem, but a healthy one. It allows us to engage in political debate, rather than just formulating policy and having that implemented. When there are opposing views, it allows us to offer a socialist analysis and argue for our politics.

For example, recently there was a large demonstration against Anita Bryant in the city, and a few members who are out of the closet wanted the union to participate. We do have a contract item calling for no discrimination against gay state workers.

We could have just got the officers together and passed a resolution supporting the demonstration, but what point would there have been? It wouldn't have allowed the stewards to discuss it and decide things for themselves. So we did have that discussion at the chapter board. It was difficult. A lot of people expressed pretty bad opinions about the gay issue. But we eventually did endorse the demonstration and the whole process was a lot healthier.

Fruendt: There are going to be reverses. It's all part of the process of engaging people in debate, trying to win them to our way of thinking, that this is the logical way to gain power for ourselves at the work site and then beyond, in our whole life. Debate is critical. It's more important than whether I remain chapter president.

How is the participation of black people and women in your union?

Fruendt: Our union is about 50-60% women and 15% black workers. Participation by women has been good; approximately half the stewards are women, although only one out of five officers is a woman. Participation by black workers is far below their numbers. To increase participation by both groups, we called the 1978 shop steward training "membership training" to encourage more people to participate. We had a specific session on organizing women and minority union members. But we haven't made enough progress yet.

How do you see your work evolving

continued on page 19

Organizers' Notebook

"Organizer's Notebook" is an occasional column on political and organizing problems. There are no definite answers to the complicated issues that all of us confront in our work. However, this feature will draw on the experiences of those who've dealt concretely with the question at hand and the knowledge of those who've been involved in left politics in order to gain new insights. We invite readers to submit questions as well as their own ideas on solutions to the problems.

Dear Organizer's Notebook:

I work construction in a western state. The crews are all male, and all the men are constantly harassing women who pass by the site. Also, a lot of conversations center around degrading and objectifying women. They don't seem to consider their wives as people—just forces who keep them from staying out for after-work beers. I am also married with two small children. I'm trying to figure out what I can do to fight sexism on the job. Any ideas?

—T.N.

Dear T.N.:

First of all, you should realize you are in a tough situation. All-male work situations make it harder, and construction is the worst, in many people's experience.

Bursting out with moral indignation on the construction site won't help—you will only isolate yourself. One organizer who tried this said, "Then, after every anti-woman joke, they'd tell a second joke—about me, the guy who disapproved of the joke."

Attitudes like sexism are tied up with things that are very close and often painful. How many of the crass remarks about "the old lady" not wanting them to stay out and drink hide real pain about the state of their marriages?

To make any headway at all, you need a long-term commitment to the job, experiences with the men solving on-the-job problems, and an understanding of the things you share with them in your own life situation. "If you are not dealing with the same problems they do, year in, year out, how can you expect them to listen to you about how they view women?" says one organizer.

Once you have a basic relationship with the men, there are a number of things you can try. A lot depends on your own personality and what you feel comfortable with.

"I take very few ideas into the mill knowing I'm absolutely right. I have a lot to learn from the guys I work with. If I'm open to that, they'll be more open to finding what ideas I have that are better than theirs," says a steelworker.

He makes a distinction between crude sexism (use of words like "cunt" and "pussy") and more subtle forms. On the first, he's "pretty firm, I just don't stand for it. But that doesn't go too far."

As for the second, "The old rules for relationships are gone, and a lot of guys are bewildered, deep down, about how to live with their wives and girlfriends." He tries to be more understanding, and talk, if it is possible, about the real source of the problem over a beer after work.

Several organizers commented that having women on the job helps a lot. When men have to begin to deal with women as people and fellow workers, it becomes harder to objectify them. You can then deal with sexism in the context of the need for all workers to stand together, or to make the work easier. "There are probably women somewhere in your town who are trying to break into construction. Find them and help them," advises an ex-construction worker.

It might work best for you to try to establish a relationship with one or two men first. Then you can get to a point where you can talk about your own marriage and its problems and ask what the other man's problems are, and discuss it at that level. Or, you might give a friendly challenge, "Why do you always have to put your wife down?" or "Why does she want you home, anyway?"

One way to handle the whistling and calling out to women from the site is to ask the men what advice they give their daughters about walking past construction sites.

You might also try to get some joint social events together. That might help break down the wives-as-nonpersons syndrome. Of course, you'll have your work cut out for you creating an atmosphere where all the couples can talk as people instead of the women talking kids in one corner and men talking shop and sports in the other.

Whatever you try, you should be commended for trying to deal with this situation instead of leaving the fight against sexism solely to women. Good luck.

—Judy MacLean

photo by Carl Van Vechten

Zora Neale Hurston — a cautionary tale

by Alice Walker

I became aware of my need of Zora Neale Hurston's work some time before I knew her work existed. In late 1970 I was writing a story that required accurate material on voodoo practices among rural southern blacks of the thirties; there seemed none available I could trust. A number of white, racist anthropologists and folklorists of the period had, not surprisingly, disappointed and insulted me. They thought blacks inferior, peculiar, and comic, and for me this undermined—no *destroyed*—the relevance of their books.

Fortunately, it was then that I discovered *Mules and Men*, Zora's book on folklore, collecting, herself, and her small, all-black community of Eatonville, Florida. Because she immersed herself in her own culture even as she recorded its "big old lies," i.e., folktales, it was possible to see how she and it (even after she had attended Barnard College and become a respected writer and apprentice anthropologist) fit together.

The authenticity of her material was verified by her familiarity with its context, and I was soothed by her assurance that she was exposing not simply an adequate culture, but a superior one. That black people can be on occasion peculiar and comic was knowledge she enjoyed. That they could be racially or culturally inferior to whites never seems to have crossed her mind.

When I read *Mules and Men* I was delighted. Here was this perfect book! The "perfection" of it I immediately tested on my relatives, who are such typical black Americans they are useful for every sort of political, cultural, or economic survey. Very regular people from the South, rapidly forgetting their southern cultural inheritance in the suburbs and ghettos of Boston and New York, they sat around reading the book themselves, listening to me read the book, listening to each other read the book, and a kind of paradise was re-

gained.

For Zora's book gave them back all the stories they had forgotten or of which they had grown ashamed (told to us years ago by our parents and grandparents—not one of whom could *not* tell a story to make us weep, or laugh) and showed how marvelous, and, indeed, priceless, they are.

This is not exaggerated. No matter how much distance they tried to maintain between themselves, as new sophisticates, and the lives their parents and grandparents lived, no matter how they tried to remain cool toward all Zora revealed, in the end they could not hold back the smiles, the laughter, the *joy* over who she was showing them to be: descendants of an inventive, joyous, courageous, and outrageous people: loving drama, appreciating wit, and, most of all, relishing the pleasure of each other's loquacious and *bodacious* company.

This was my first indication of the quality I feel is most characteristic of Zora's work: racial health—a sense of black people as complete, complex, *undiminished* human beings, a sense that is lacking in so much black writing and literature. (In my opinion, only Du Bois showed an equally consistent delight in the beauty and spirit of black people, which is interesting when one considers that the angle of his vision was completely the opposite of Zora's.)

Self-confidence

Zora's pride in black people was so pronounced in the ersatz black twenties that it made other blacks suspicious and perhaps uncomfortable; after all, *they* were still infatuated with things European—*everything* European. Zora was interested in Africa, Haiti, Jamaica—and, for a little racial diversity (Indians), Honduras. She also had a confidence in herself as an individual that few people (anyone?), black or white, understood.

This was because Zora grew up in a community of black people who had enormous respect for themselves and for their ability to *govern* themselves. Her own father had written the Eatonville town laws. This community affirmed her right to exist, and loved her as an extension of itself. For how many other black Americans is this true? It certainly isn't true for any that I know.

In her easy self-acceptance, Zora was more like an uncolonized African than she was like her contemporary American blacks, most of whom believed, at least during their formative years, that their blackness was something wrong with them.

On the contrary, Zora's early work shows she grew up *pitying* whites because the ones she saw lacked "light" and soul. It is impossible to imagine Zora envying anyone (except tongue-

Zora's voice:

"By five o'clock the town was full of every kind of a vehicle and swarming with people. They wanted to see that lamp lit at dusk. Near the time, Joe assembled everybody in the street before the store and made a speech.

"Folkses, de sun is goin' down. De Sun-maker brings it up in de mornin', and de Sun-maker sends it tuh bed at night. Us poor weak humans can't do nothin' tuh hurry it up nor to slow it down. All we can do, if we want any light after de settin' or befo' de risin', is tuh make some light ourselves. So dat's how come lamps was made. Dis evenin' we'se all assembled heah tuh light uh lamp. Dis occasion is something for us all tuh remember tuh our dyin' day. De first street lamp in uh colored town. Lift yo' eyes and gaze on it. And when Ah touch de match tuh dat lamp-wick let de light penetrate inside of yuh and let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. Brother Davis, lead us in a word uh prayer. Ask uh blessin' on dis town in uh most particular manner."

While Davis chanted a traditional prayer-poem with his own variations, Joe mounted the box that had been placed for the purpose and opened the brazen door of the lamp. As the word Amen was said, he touched the lighted match to the wick, and Mrs. Bogle's alto burst out in:

We'll walk in de light, de beautiful light
Come where the dew drops of mercy shine bright
Shine all around us by day and by night
Jesus, the light of the world.

They, all of them, all of the people took it up and sung it over and over until it was wrung dry, and no further innovations of tone and tempo were conceivable. Then they hushed and ate barbeque.

When it was all over that night in bed Jody asked Janie, "Well, honey, how yuh lak bein' Mrs. Mayor?"

"It's all right Ah reckon, but don't yuh think it keeps us in uh kinda strain?"

"Strain? You mean de cookin' and waitin' on folks?"

"Naw, Jody, it jus' looks lak it keeps us in some way we ain't natural wid one 'nother. You'se always off talkin' and fixin' things, and Ah feels lak Ah'm jus' markin' time. Hope it soon gits over."

"Over, Janie? I god, Ah ain't even started good. Ah told you in de very first beginnin' dat Ah aimed tuh be uh big voice. You oughta be glad, 'cause dat makes uh big woman outa you."

A feeling of coldness and fear took hold of her. She felt far away from things and lonely."

—*from* **Their Eyes Were Watching God**, *Zora Neale Hurston, University of Illinois Press, $3.95.*

in-cheek), and, least of all, a white person for being white. Which is, after all, if one is black, a clear and present calamity of the mind.

Condemned to a deserted island for life, with an allotment of ten books to see me through, I would choose, unhesitatingly, two of Zora's: *Mules and Men*, because I would need to be able to pass on to younger generations the life of American blacks as legend and myth, and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, because I would want to enjoy myself while identifying with the black heroine, Janie Crawford, as she acted out many roles in a variety of settings, and functioned (with spectacular results!) in romantic and sensual love. *There is no book more important to me than this one.*

Having committed myself to Zora's work, loving it, in fact, I became curious to see what others had written about her. This was, for the young, impressionable, barely begun writer I was, a mistake. After reading the misleading, deliberately belittling, inaccurate, and generally irresponsible attacks on her work and her life by almost everyone, I became for a time paralyzed with confusion and fear.

For if a woman who had given so much of obvious value to all of us (and at such risks: to health, reputation, sanity) could be so casually pilloried and consigned to a sneering oblivion, what chance would someone else—for example, like myself—have? I was aware that I had much less *gumption* than Zora.

Eventually, however, I discovered that I repudiate and despise the kind of criticism that intimidates rather than instructs the young; and I dislike fear, especially in myself. I did then what fear rarely fails to force me to do: I fought back. I began to fight for Zora and her work. for what I knew was good and must not be lost to us.

Robert Hemenway was the first critic I read who seemed indignant that Zora's life ended in poverty and obscurity, that her last days were spent in a welfare home, and that her burial was paid for by "subscription"; though Zora herself—as he is careful to point out in his book—*Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography*—remained gallant and unbowed until the end.

It was Hemenway's efforts to define Zora's legacy and his exploration of her life that led me, in 1973, to an overgrown Fort Pierce, Florida, graveyard in an attempt to locate and mark Zora's grave. Although by that time I considered her a native American genius, there was nothing grand or historic in my mind. It was, rather, a duty I accepted as naturally mine—as a black person, a woman, and a writer—because Zora was dead and I, for the time being, was alive.

Before her time

Zora was funny, irreverent (she was the first to call the Harlem Renaissance literati the "niggerati"), good-looking, and sexy. She once sold hot dogs in a Washington park just to record accurately how the black people who bought them talked. She would go anywhere she had to go—Harlem, Jamaica, Haiti, Bermuda—to find out anything she simply *had* to know. She loved to give parties. Loved to dance. Would wrap her head in scarves as black women in Africa, Haiti, and everywhere else have done for centuries. On the other hand, she loved to wear hats, tilted over one eye, and pants and boots.

With her easy laughter and her southern drawl, her belief in doing cullud dancing *authentically*, Zora seemed—among the genteel "New Negroes" of the Harlem Renaissance—*black*. No wonder her presence was always a shock. Though almost everyone agreed she was a delight, not everyone agreed such audacious black delight was permissible, or, indeed, quite the proper image for the race.

Zora was before her time—in intellectual circles—in the lifestyle she chose. By the sixties everyone understood that black women could wear beautiful cloths on their beautiful heads and care about the authenticity of things cullud *and* African. By the sixties it was no longer a crime to receive financial assistance, in the form of grants and fellowships, for one's work. By the sixties, nobody cared that marriage didn't last forever. No one expected it to.

And I do believe that now, in the seventies, we do not expect (though we may wish and pray) every black person who speaks to *always* speak *correctly* (since this is impossible); or if we *do* expect it, we deserve all the silent leadership we are likely to get.

Being broke

During the early and middle years of her career Zora was a cultural revolutionary simply because she was always herself. Her work, so vigorous among the rather pallid productions of many of her contemporaries, comes from the essence of black folklife. During her later years, for reasons revealed for the first time in Hemenway's monumental work (as so much is!), she became frightened of the life she had always dared bravely before.

Her work, too, became reactionary, static, shockingly misguided and timid. This is especially true of her last novel, *Seraph on the Suwanee*, which is not even about black people, which is no crime, but *is* about white people who are bores, which is.

A series of misfortunes battered Zora's spirit and her health. And she was broke.

Being broke made all the difference.

Without money of one's own in a capitalist society, there is no such thing as independence. This is one of the clearest lessons of Zora's life, and why I consider the telling of her life a "cautionary tale." We must learn from it what we can.

Without money, an illness, even a simple one, can undermine the will. Without money, getting into a hospital is problematic, and getting out without money to pay for the treatment is nearly impossible. Without money, one becomes dependent on other people who are likely to be—even in their kindness—

Men gambling near Clarksdale, Mississippi, 1939.

erratic in their support and despotic in their expectations of return.

Zora was forced to rely, like Tennessee Williams's Blanche, "on the kindness of strangers." Can anything be more dangerous, if the strangers are forever in control? Zora, who worked so hard, was never able to make a living from her work.

She did not complain about not having money. She was not the type. Those of us who have had "grants and fellowships from 'white folks'" know this aid is extended in precisely the way welfare is extended in Mississippi. One is asked, *curtly*, more often than not: How much do you need *just to survive*? Then one is—if fortunate—given a third of that.

What is amazing is that Zora, who became an orphan at nine, a runaway at fourteen, a maid and manicurist (because of necessity and not from love of work) before she was twenty, *with one dress*, managed to become Zora Neale Hurston, author and anthropologist, at all.

For me, the most unfortunate thing Zora ever wrote is her autobiography. After the first several chapters, it rings false. One begins to hear the voice of someone whose life required the assistance of too many transitory "friends." A Taoist proverb states that *to act sincerely with the insincere is dangerous* (a mistake blacks as a group have tended to make in America).

And so we have Zora sincerely offering gratitude and kind words to people one knows she could not have respected. But this unctuousness, so out of character for Zora, is also a result of dependency, a sign of her powerlessness, her inability to pay back her debts with anything but words. They must have been bitter ones for her.

In her dependency, it should be remembered, Zora was not alone. For it is quite true that America does not support or honor us as human beings, let alone as blacks, women, or artists. We have taken help where it was offered because we are committed to what we do and to the survival of our work. Zora was committed to the survival of her people's cultural heritage as well.

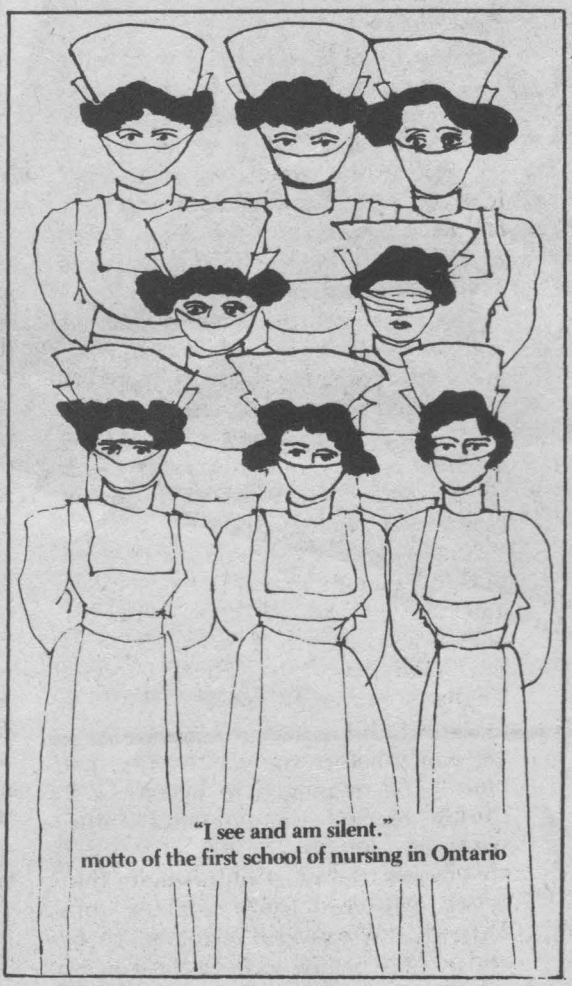
In my mind, Zora Neale Hurston, Billie Holiday, and Bessie Smith form a sort of unholy trinity. Zora belongs in a tradition of black women singers, rather than among the "literati," at least to me. There were the extreme highs and lows of her life, her undaunted pursuit of adventure, her passionate emotional and sexual experience, and her love of freedom. Like Billie and Bessie she followed her own road, believed in her own gods, pursued her own dreams, and refused to separate herself from "common" people.

It would have been nice if the three of them had had one another to turn to in times of need. I close my eyes and imagine them: Bessie would be in charge of all the money; Zora would keep Billie's masochistic tendencies in check and prevent her from singing embarrassingly anything-for-a-man songs, thereby preventing Billie's heroin addiction; in return, Billie could be, along with Bessie, the family that Zora felt she never had.

We are a people. A people do not throw their geniuses away. If they do, it is our duty *as witnesses for the future* to collect them again for the sake of our children. If necessary, bone by bone.

Alice Walker is a poet and novelist. This article is excerpted from her forward to Robert Hemenway's biography of Hurston, **Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography** *(University of Illinois Press, $15.00).*

For her own good—



"I see and am silent."
motto of the first school of nursing in Ontario

the making—and re-making—of the feminine ideal

FOR HER OWN GOOD:150 Years of the Expert's Advice to Women
by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English
Anchor Press/Doubleday
$10

By Judy MacLean

Did you ever ask yourself if your doctor's prescription might be the cause of some of your illness, or wonder if your own ideas about your life weren't better than your therapist's? If so, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* will confirm your worst suspicions. Barbara Ehrenreich, a member of Long Island NAM, and Deirdre English have traced the historical development of the expert gynecologist, psychologist, home economist, child-development specialist. They argue that the scientific basis of these authorities, whose pronouncements have meant life and death for women for a century and a half, turns out to be mostly hot air.

The authors begin with the pre-industrial, pre-capitalist era, which they term "The Old Order". Although literally ruled by Patriarchy, women in the Old Order at least had a defined, useful place. They made most of the food, drink, clothing, soap and other necessities of life from raw materials the men produced on the land.

As manufacture developed under capitalism (consistently referred to as The Market, presumably to make the argument more palatable to the average reader) women's work was removed from the home—to the textile mills, clothing factories and canneries. As this happened, the Women Question, or "What Will Women Do?" began to surface.

Conceding that this question largely revolved around white, middle class

women (since black, immigrant and poor women still had plenty to do) Ehrenreich and English describe the shifting battleground as male experts used economic and legal power, as well as emotional and moral appeals, to destroy women's traditional networks of healing, support and the general lore of life. They document 150 years of growing "expertise" in every area of women's life.

The locus of the experts' concern moves, from uterus to vagina to clitoris, from the herbal medicines women once manufactured to the mid-century germs they were charged with eradicating to the sex-roles they were supposed to inculcate in their children in the early fifties. But as Ehrenreich and English's sharp, lively prose lays bare, there is a nasty layer of woman-hating that consistently lies just below the surface of the romantic, chivalrous stance the experts have always taken.

An outstanding feature of the book is its cultural mapping of past misogyny. To many feminists, the past seems to be an endless, redundant round of identical oppression. Ehrenreich and English show how quickly the content of the oppression can reverse itself. For Patriarchal Man, women were morally inferior, and needed the firm male hand to interpret, with proper scriptural authority, the way to live.

As The Market began to pull all things into its grasp, moral justifications gave way to economic ones. Morality became marginalized by the mid-19th century, something to be realized outside the Market, at Home, Women, guardians of the home, suddenly became keepers of morality. Still inferior in the rough-and-tumble economic world, only woman in her innocence could preserve morality (and therefore had to stay home and do so.)

By the twentieth century, fads in woman-hating expertise changed almost every decade. The "rejecting mother" was the key to most social ills in the late 1930's and early 1940's. That era's description of the ideal mother was strangely similar to the dreaded "overprotective mother" of the late forties and early fifties.

Few skills

The history of each field shows it to be in every case based on a set of ideas that shored up developing capitalism. Ehrenreich and English assign a leading role in the process of creation of ideology to professional men who were neither capitalists nor workers, but sons of the small businessmen who were gradually disappearing as a class.

These men, with gentlemanly manners and not much else in the way of marketable skills going for them, managed to worm their way into the hearts of the emerging robber barons, and have got the bulk of the foundation money ever since to finance their "scientific" medicine and psychology.

The triumph of the male professional M.D. over the indigenous female healers and midwives paved the way for the other experts. (Much of this information has already appeared in Ehrenreich and English's earlier pamphlet, "Witches, Midwives and Nurses.") The men were given to drastic surgery, bleeding and literally poisoning of patients. They triumphed over the "herbal tea and sympathy" of the traditional women not because their remedies worked better; in fact, the opposite was true. They triumphed through sheer economic and political power.

Ehrenreich and English expose their connection with science as tenuous and at times comic—as when late 19th century doctors insisted study, or brain work of any kind, would prevent lactation in women.

Laughable? Yes, but no more so than the assertion by two psychoanalysts in 1970 that "mothering behavior is regulated by a pituitary hormone." And the frightening description of "heroic medicine" where doctors bled, poisoned and tormented 19th century patients to produce a strong reaction and therefore justify high fees echoes in the obstetric wards of the 1970's, where the birth rate is down and the rate of expensive Caesarian deliveries has mysteriously tripled.

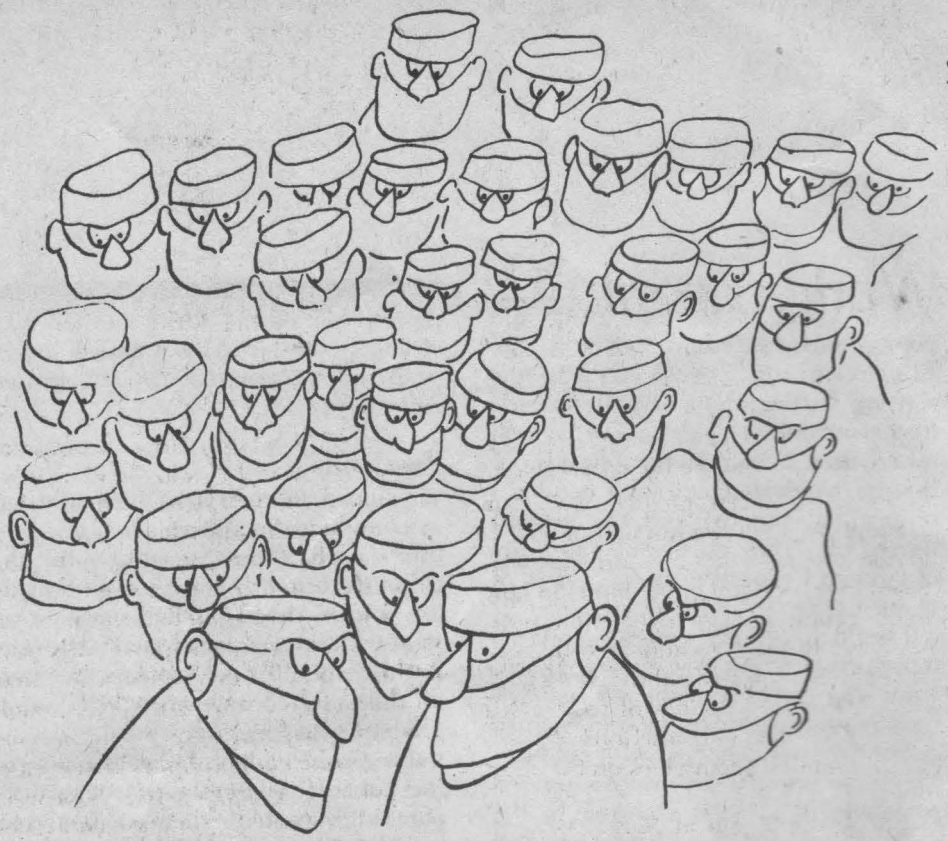
But if medicine's development had a lot to do with the need of middle class men for money and status, the scientific basis of "domestic science", psychoanalysis and child development is even shakier. It all begins, according to Ehrenreich and English, as the prejudice of the day dressed up in scientific language. Lucrative careers result for professional men and a few token women; misery, confusion and even disease and death for masses of women.

Racism has also gone hand in hand with this kind of sexism. Middle class white women took to bed en masse in the late 19th century. It was a response, say the authors, to a culture that glorified female invalids, dressed women in 40 pounds of constricting clothing, and gave them nothing to do. The scientists declared black women (and Irish women, too) had not evolved high enough on the evolutionary ladder to be as perfectly feminine as their white Anglo-Saxon sisters. So they should be expected to keep working during crises, such as menstruation, when wealthier white women needed complete bed rest.

During the "libidinal mothering" stage of the mid-twentieth century, black women were thought to be the placid ideal by the experts. After Sputnik, when mothers were exhorted to provide all the stimulation young Johnny needed to grow up smarter than Ivan, black women were seen as deficient.

Strange romance

Because women often willingly gave up their old kinship and healing networks and began to rely on experts, Ehrenreich and English term the 150 year long relationship a "romance." They call it romance because its aim has always been to perpetuate a realm outside the market, where all is harmonious and peaceful—the Home.



drawing by Buitoul

'It's been impossible, of course, to really separate what goes on at Home from the larger society outside. To the extent that women have pulled it off, it has been by lying. In one sense, this is a book about the history of changing lies women have been forced to tell. They said they had no interest in sex in one century, that they had vaginal orgasms in another.

Ehrenreich and English contrast this "Romance" to the Rationalist solution, the only other possibility in what they term a masculinist society. (Sometimes masculinist seems synonymous with the Market in this book; sometimes it seems that there are other masculinist, though non-Market, societies.)

The rational solution was that of early American feminists. Accepting the male world of commerce as where it was at, the rationalists argued women should be brought into it on an equal footing, and that childcare and domestic work should follow canning and spinning into the industrial system.

The problem this solution posed, this book claims, was that all of life would come to resemble the Market, devoid of human warmth, spontaneity and love. So capitalism, with a big boost from the men who created professionalism, chose the romantic solution, to avoid ever having to face, as a society, the human destruction our system had created.

Until today, that is. Because Ehrenreich and English say the romance is over. The experts changed their minds too many times, The women's movement undermined their "scientific" basis. And the way capitalism itself developed—the influx of women into paid employment and decline of the nuclear family—has destroyed the Home as a place where women have the time to listen so faithfully to endless experts.

A pluralism of experts remain. The neo-romanticists are the anti-equal rights movement and Total Woman courses. The neo-rationalists are the pop-psychology "How to Be Your Own Best Friend" approaches. They posit a world where each of us is responsible for our own life and where children and other dependents seldom appear, except as a burden to be avoided.

Feminism could provide new answers, say the authors. Yet "we hang back because there are no answers but the most radical ones." The solution lies not in women becoming like the men of the world of industry and business, nor in clinging to "an archaic feminine ideal." Instead, we must "frame a moral outlook which proceeds from women's needs and experiences" and bring the "'womanly' values of community and caring" to "the center as the only *human* principles."

After the exciting march through our history guided by Ehrenreich and English's wry commentary, the end of the book is a strange letdown. Questions arise. Is the romance *really* over? Just because there are so many experts, saying different things, will that stop them from going on like this for years, or regrouping after a decade?

But the real question that cries out is this: what *are* those most radical answers that are the only ones left? Perhaps feminists hang back because they don't *know*. If Ehrenreich and English know, they should tell us.

How do we "frame a moral outlook which proceeds from women's needs and experiences?" When experts ushered in "the century of the child" in 1900, they seemed to be focussing all their intellectual, scientific, and, increasingly, manufacturing skill on woman's traditional sphere, home and family. Yet women still lost out.

Ehrenreich and English don't say so explicitly, but some kind of socialism is implied in the society based on human needs they mention at the book's end. Existing socialist contries would, I suspect, still be open to the charge of masculinism. But they are too sketchy about the social alternative to the present dilemma, and they've completely left out any clue as to how we get from here to there.

Still, the book does two vital things. It unmasks the authorities who still tower over beds, cribs, kitchen tables and prescription bottles for many of us. And it describes the dilemma of women today. If we accept only the given framework, we can either be a selfish atom like Market Man, or accept the outmoded Romantic role of all-giving woman. The alternative course is still evolving, but all of the history presented in this book suggests that its emergence is essential to human possibilities.

Judy MacLean is Organizational Secretary of the New American Movement.

Workers control—

from page 10.

and where do you see the union going?

Perkins: I've been pleased with our attempts to involve a number of people in the union structures and in social issues. But there are upper limits to how many people you can involve that way. We have to begin to address who controls the workplace and the work process. There are all kinds of frustration every day—the contradictions of capitalism manifest themselves on the shop floor.

For example, out at Mayview State Hospital, we have a resocialization program to help chronic institutionalized patients get back in the community and live decent lives. The administration wants to replace it with a discharge program with no therapeutic content. The workers in that program are meeting and talking and they've developed an alternative proposal that does include therapeutic content.

We've had one meeting with the administration to present the idea and we argued openly about the need to democratize the workplace. It's surprising, but the administration has paid lip service to this idea, though I'm sure they think of it just as our having some kind of input. We're waiting for the administration's answer; from there we'll escalate our activities to get that program implemented if we can.

It's important that the workers themselves have seen something they don't like and come up with a proposal that does what they think needs to be done. And actively trying to implement that is a primitive attempt at workers' control. That's the direction the union, and the public sector as a whole, has to move in.

Fruendt: You know, at times it's easy to get wrapped up in inner union politics, to think only about what would be best in the short term. But you have to keep a vision of the future, and of socialism. That's why its important to have a place, and an organization like NAM, where you can discuss where it is all leading.

Ronaele Novotny is the convenor of the labor committee of Pittsburgh NAM. Judy MacLean is NAM's organizational secretary.

The steel industry takes a dive

from page five

strategy for collective bargaining and legislation to fight for the future of steel workers and communities.

The precondition for the transformation of the union into an effective fighting force for the needs of the 1980's is a strong rank-and-file movement that would build on the efforts of the Steelworkers Fight Back campaign. In addition to internal demands like rank-and-file ratification and staff acountability to the membership, such a movement would need to look to a larger strategy for union survival. It would need to confront such issues as:

- the fight for a shorter work week (which Belgian workers just won in a successful strike);
- hard bargaining with the companies on job security issues, and
- fighting for state and national legislation on plant relocations. with the objectives of compelling companies to modernize and expand production at existing sites, while simultaneously cleaning up air and water pollution that blight steel communities;
- resisting speedup in the guise of productivity, thus reducing work accidents;
- tieing any tax concessions or government-guaranteed loans to the steel industry to guarantees to steelworkers on job security and occupational health and safety;
- cooperation with community activists on the above issues, as well as on community-worker control of plants where companies have abandoned production or refused to meet reasonable demands;
- a policy of solidarity of all steelworkers regardless of seniority, thus overcoming racial, age, and sex divisions that hurt the Union.

Job losses are draining the lifeblood of steel communities and of the USWA, and the attrition threatens to become a hemorrhage. It is no longer sufficient to win high wages and fringe benefits for fewer and fewer workers. The fate of the union depends on its revitalization as a genuine force for its members rights and needs.

Paul Garver is a member of Pittsburgh NAM and a local union activist.

We get letters...

Immigration attack

While the Mexican communities both here and in Mexico continue their struggle for fair immigration laws and practices, both Congress and the Administration have launched strong efforts to make legal immigration even more difficult. Readers of MOVING ON should be aware of these latest actions.

On July 19 the House of Representatives passed house bill 12443 (the Eilberg bill), combining the immigration waiting lists for visa numbers of the Western and Eastern Hemispheres into one worldwide pool. This bill would foreclose any special consideration for Canada, Mexico, Central or South America, ignoring the long-standing economic and social relationship among the countries of this Hemisphere, particularly between the U.S. and Mexico.

It ignores, for example, the 3,000 mile long border that bounds the U.S., Mexico, and Canada—and which it is next to impossible to control. By barring legal immigration within this area, the law produces a steadily growing number of immigrants without documents who are subject to terrible exploitation, and are then used to undermine the demand of U.S. workers for a better standard of living.

In what was clearly a coordinated and parallel move to this Congressional action, the Administration took legal action during July to cancel most of the existing visas for Mexico. The Administration is also gearing up to cancel the temporary residence permits given to Mexican people in the United States who are here without documents and who are on the waiting lists of various American Consuls for immigrant visas.

This attack by Congress and the Carter Administration will be difficult to counter because of the lack of public awareness of these new moves. It is important that all concerned people help to spread the word and respond as quickly as possible.

Write to Senators Eastland and Kennedy urging Senate opposition to the Eilberg Bill. And write to President Carter, Attorney General Bell, and Immigration Commissioner Leon Castillo protesting Administration plans to take away Mexican visas and deport those who are here on temporary permits.

DelFino Varela
Los Angeles, CA

Cultural concerns

The last two issues of MOVING ON have particularly impressed and pleased me. As a member of the New American Movement's Culture Commission, I find it exciting to see such writing as Michelle Russell's "Letter from the Mountains" (MO, September, 1978). She pointed out political realities by unveiling the character of everyday life in Appalachia.

Whenever I read this kind of personal, emotional, and creative writing, and am moved by the immediacy of its impact, I want to outlaw the dry, dispassionate writing that the Left is so often fond of.

People are often moved to make changes because of writing or speaking that hits at their guts. It can be a more powerful tool than facts or figures.

In the October MOVING ON the poem by Sara Heslep and the new section, "Other Voices" were well-chosen, emotionally powerful writings.

I also enjoyed Laurie Alexandre's film reviews in the September issue. They are some of the few that I've seen the really try to analyze what kind of audience the film could effectively educate. And they avoid the tendency of some radical reviewers to try to remake the film with all contradictions and ambiguities erased.

The Culture Commission believes that NAM can fill a void on the Left (and in society as a whole) and attract new people to our movement by: 1) providing a network for the often-isolated radical cultural workers; 2) using cultural forms extensively in our work; 3) writing about culture and politics.

We'd like to see more writings in MOVING ON that spark the Left to give a higher priority to culture in theory and practice. We'd also like to encourage people to subscribe to the Culture Commission's publication, THE CULTURAL GAZETTE (available through NAM, 3244 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60657).

Robin Lakes
Chicago, IL

Correction: In the October, 1978 issue of **Moving On**, we credited the article, *Smashing the State* to James Weinstein. The article was actually written by Marty Sklar, associate editor of **In These Times.**

NAM News&Views

by Marilyn Katz

Hardly a month passes in which we are not asked to join a committee or demonstration to support one of the struggles for freedom around the world. And, despite our political commitment to working against imperialism, the requests invariably bring up conflicts and questions. Conflicts about the use of time and resources. Questions about the effect and purpose of such political work.

Such questions and many diverse answers have been bandied about the Left for decades. They continue to arise with dramatic regularity today as country after country is shaken by the tremors of battles for a new social order.

At this moment there is probably no more politically urgent and morally compelling battle than that being waged against apartheid in Southern Africa. And this is a time when our active support can make a difference in U.S. policy. In addition, it can aid the presently complicated and troubled movement to fight racism in our own country.

It is not coincidental that the flowering of the civil rights and anti-racist movements of the sixties followed close on the heels of the decolonization struggles of the late fifties and early sixties throughout Latin American and Africa. While the domestic movement against racism had gone on for decades, this changing world picture, particularly in Africa, provided inspiration and added fuel to the movements of Black America. The emergence of free African countries cut through (for both blacks and whites) the white supremacist myths of the colonial regimes—myths that had their echoes in the segregationist policies of the United States. Black-ruled countries were a vivid example of the essential equality and ability of Black peoples once they were freed from illiteracy, poverty, and armed colonial force.

Within this context, the civil rights movement was strengthened here. By the mid and late 1960s the challenge to racism and genocide abroad was increasingly being related to those policies within the United States as well.

It was during this period that great strides against racism in the U.S. were made. The combination of a strong anti-imperialist movement opposing genocide in Africa, Latin America and Asia, a strong black movement combining the lessons and the spirit of Third World liberation movements with its experiences in this country, and a new culture of black equality, pride and power affected the entire social face of the U.S.—and ultimately affected its laws and practices.

Today we face a somewhat different situation. The anti-imperialist movement is weak. The black movement is fragmented. Many of the anti-racist reforms of the sixties are being threatened. Reaction seems to be on the rise. Yet, rather than causing us to retreat from internationalist work, this situation may be all the more reason to stress work around South Africa, in a new, more thoughtful way—particularly around its challenge to racism.

In a few cases such links are already being made.

In Santa Cruz, the Committee Against Racism, of which NAM is a part, fought against racist admissions policies and discriminatory tuition structures at the University at the same time—and with some of the same allies—that it was building opposition to U.S. policies in Southern Africa.

At the University of Chicago, the NAM chapter campaigned against the University's racist land development schemes in the surrounding neighborhoods at the same time that it fought to end the University's investments in South Africa.

NAM members active in a public employees' union convinced the union to pass a resolution calling for divestiture of South African investments held by their Pension Funds while they worked on issues of union democracy and budget cutbacks.

The Chicago Coalition on Southern Africa has linked its work around banks who have holdings in South Africa to the 'redlining' policies of the same banks.

This type of work should and must continue if we are to build a movement that is useful to the Southern Africans and the U.S. Left. However, it will not be easy.

Racist ideology and the seeming benefits of imperialism continue to be a consistent stumbling block to the development of class consciousness among U.S. workers. In the absence of a public and powerful black movement, anti-racist work is even more difficult.

Nonetheless, there is no possibility of defeating the current onslaught of anti-labor, right-wing forces without building a viable anti-racist sentiment and force in this country. Active support for freedom in Southern Africa is an integral part of building that movement.

The existence of liberation movements that combine political strength and a more just social vision stands in stark contrast to the racist ideology that still exists in this country. As socialists we should bring this into relief by making connections between the world-shaking battle in Southern Africa and the less visible but vital battles at home.

Marilyn Katz is Political Secretary of the New American Movement.

Left turn

All the news...

MOVING AND SHAKING

Trying to keep the City of Chicago affordable for working people, **Chicago South Side NAM** members have joined with neighborhood residents to protest the conversion of rental units into condominiums. If successful, the housing coalition would be the first group to brake the rapid conversion of Chicago's rental apartments to high cost condos which is forcing people out of the city... NAM members throughout the country are gearing up their attempt to defeat Proposition 6 on California's November ballot. Prop 6, the Brigg's initiative, would prohibit the hiring and require the firing of anyone who opposes discrimination against homosexuals. While the major anti-Briggs activity is centered in Cal., NAM chapters and friends in other states are working on the campaign. Blazing Star NAM in Chicago is part of a state-wide coalition against Prop 6... **Philadelphia NAM** held a highly successful benefit for striking farmworkers from Northwestern Ohio. The farmworkers are part of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee's drive to organize the tomato fields that supply Campbell soups and others. Farmworkers there face the same intransigence that caused the California farmworkers so many years of struggle... Philly NAM is also part of the city's Stop Rizzo Coalition. Rizzo, who's campaigning as the "white" candidate, and who is notorious for his racist and repressive regime as Philly police chief, is being opposed by five different coalitions in the city. We wish them success... Missouri's proposed right-to-work law, slated for the Nov. ballot, is being opposed by **St. Louis NAM** in coalition with environmentalists, labor unions, women's groups, academics, and citizens' action groups. Together they have formed the Citizen's Committee to Fight the "Right-to-Work." Current coalition plans include literature campaign, a speakers bureau, and participation in a voter registration drive... Members of NAM from Dayton, Pittsburgh, Detroit and Buffalo joined hundreds of other reproductive rights activists in Akron, Ohio on September 10 to call for an overturning of the Akron City Ordinance that severly restricts the availability of abortion in that city. The ordinance is currently being reviewed by the courts. "The Akron Ordinance not only denies women the right to control our sexual and reproductive rights," said Liz Weston of Buffalo NAM, "it denies us privacy and integrity as people capable of making a responsible decision." Rick Kunnes of Detroit NAM and the National Interim Committee commented, "The gathering of NAM people from nearby states was important for our NAM strategy of not letting each abortion struggle be localized, but rather using each battle to build a national movement for reproductive rights."... **Portland NAM** members and local chapter of the Gray Panthers have joined together to prevent Portland General Electric and the State Public Utilities Commission from burdening Oregon tax payers with the costs of the Trojan Nuclear Power Plant shutdown. Trojan has been declared unsafe and has been shut down for redesign. Portland Electric is trying to raise rates to cover the operating costs of the Trojan plant during the shutdown. The new Coalition spawned plans to fight PGE in the courts, in the hearing rooms, and wherever else they can.

SPEAKING

National Political Secretary, Marilyn Katz and Long Island NAM member Barbara Ehrenreich addressed the Women and Multinational Corporations Conference in Des Moines Iowa October 6—8. Katz, also head of the Reproductive Rights Task Force spoke on the New Right and its role in the current attack on women. Ehrenreich was part of a panel concerning Corporate Power and how to attack it... Judy MacLean, Organizational Secretary of NAM went to Lexington Kentucky in October to speak to a group of activists interested in NAM on a "Socialist Response to Social Decay."

RESOURCES

• NAM has a number of commissions open to activists in various arenas of struggle. Socialist-Feminism Commission c/o Graff, 7125 McPherson, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15206. Anti-Racism Commission, c/o Rotkin, 123 Liberty, Santa Cruz, Ca. 95062. Campus Commission, c/o Pappas, 317 E. 31st St., Baltimore, MD. 21218... The Fall issue of the Reproductive Rights Newsletter is available now. It contains important updates on abortion rights activity around the country. Single Issues are $1.00, Subs. (four issues) are $3.00. Bulk orders (10 or more) are available. Order from RRN, 3244 N. Clark, Chicago, IL 60657.

NATIONAL MEETING

• NAM's National Interim Committee met in Chicago in late September to begin to implement the plan of work established by the 1978 Convention. At the top of the agenda was discussion of how to strengthen our participation in the labor movement. Specific proposals were adopted for a one-week training school for labor activists, the development of literature on union democracy, and a newsletter to improve communication among NAM members active in unions...The NIC also adopted a special campaign to carry out a common organization-wide political education program over the course of the coming year... A discussion of unity on the left produced a strong commitment to cooperate with those groups that share our democratic approach to organizing, but little sentiment for formal ties with any other organization at present.

NAM in Brief

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

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

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

- **NAM** is committed to working toward a socialist society in which material resources and the decision-making process are democratically controlled by all people.
- We are committed to a socialism that has equality and respect for all people at its core–one that carefully balances the need for collective planning, ownership, and decision-making with a high regard for individual rights and freedom.
- The development of a movement for socialism in America will require the growth of socialist consciousness within the working class–all those who have to sell their labor power (even if they are not directly paid) in order to survive. For it is only a broad-based movement representative of the diversity of the American people that can fundamentally challenge the power of capital.
- American capitalism is a powerful and entrenched system. Yet is is also rife with contradictions. Organization is key to changing power relationships and exposing these contradictions. We are commited to the development of a socialist party than can carry out these tasks, as well as to the growth of the most strong and progressive possible popular organizations.
- Democracy is central to the process of building a movement for socialism. Only as working people become active, organized and begin to take control over their lives can a new society take shape.
- **NAM** sees the struggle for the liberation of women as integral to a socialist movement. We value the contributions of the women's movement in showing how revolutionary change must deal with all aspects of people's lives. And we defend now, and in the socialism we project, the liberation of gay women and men.
- Racism cripples national life–it denies the humanity of minorities and thwarts the potential of the working class as a whole. **NAM** is committed to fighting against racism and national oppression in all forms.
- The fate of socialism in the United States is tied to the rest of the world. We support struggles for national liberation and human freedom wherever they occur.
- **NAM** supports the positive achievements of the existing socialist countries. However, we are also critical of various aspects of their policies, and see no one of them as a model for our own efforts.

drawing by S.B. Sowbel, Baltimore

Other Voices

Most working people never make it into magazine articles or onto TV shows. They are seldom interviewed and rarely quoted. Yet throughout history it has often been the buried voices of such people that provide the most dramatic and moving picture of how capitalism damages our lives–and that suggest alternative ways to live. Each month we hope to feature on this page the words of those whose voices are rarely heard. We will include both historical and current quotes. We welcome contributions from our readers–things you've read, heard, or said.

I could've got a job as a domestic. But I didn't want to leave the union. But I guess I got to take it now. Women are being pushed around, back into the kitchen. During the war domestics got $25 a week. Now they get them cheap.

In our community today, women can't send their kids to school. Some of them go without food themselves to get shoes so the kids can go to school.

And they won't give you relief in Winston-Salem unless you tell them where you were born, where you're going to die and who your pallbearers are going to be.

Luanna Cooper, a tobacco worker who was fired from her job (1949). As quoted in **Black Women in White America** by Gerda Lerner.

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