



THERE IS POWER IN A UNION: REVOLUTIONARY TRADE UNIONISM HISTORY AND PRAXIS

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What Is To Be Done?

By V.I. LENIN

II. The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Consciousness of the Social-Democrats

A. The Beginning of the Spontaneous Upsurge

In the previous chapter we pointed out how universally absorbed the educated youth of Russia was in the theories of Marxism in the middle of the nineties. In the same period the strikes that followed the famous St. Petersburg industrial war of 1896 assumed a similar general character. Their spread over the whole of Russia clearly showed the depth of the newly awakening popular movement, and if we are to speak of the “spontaneous element” then, of course, it is this strike movement which, first and foremost, must be regarded as spontaneous. But there is spontaneity and spontaneity. Strikes occurred in Russia in the seventies and sixties (and even in the first half of the nineteenth century), and they were accompanied by the “spontaneous” destruction of machinery, etc. Compared with these “revolts”, the strikes of the nineties might even be described as “conscious”, to such an extent do they mark the progress which the working-class movement made in that period. This shows that the “spontaneous element”, in essence, represents nothing more nor less than. consciousness in an embryonic form. Even the primitive revolts expressed the awakening of consciousness to a certain extent. The workers were losing their age-long faith in the permanence of the system which oppressed them and began... I shall not say to understand, but to sense the necessity for collective resistance, definitely abandoning their slavish submission to the authorities. But this was, nevertheless, more in the nature of outbursts of desperation and vengeance than of struggle. The strikes of the nineties revealed far greater flashes of consciousness; definite demands were advanced, the strike was carefully timed, known cases and instances in other places were discussed, etc. The revolts were simply the resistance of the oppressed, whereas the systematic strikes represented the class struggle in embryo, but only in embryo. Taken by themselves, these strikes were simply trade union struggles, not yet Social Democratic struggles. They marked the awakening antagonisms between workers and employers; but the workers, were not, and could not be, conscious of the irreconcilable antagonism of their interests to the whole of the modern political and social system, i.e., theirs was not yet Social-Democratic consciousness. In this sense, the strikes of the nineties, despite the enormous progress they represented as compared with the “revolts”, remained a purely spontaneous movement.

We have said that there could not have been Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have

to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labor legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. By their social status the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia. In the very same way, in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social-Democracy arose altogether independently of the spontaneous growth of the working-class movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of thought among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia. In the period under discussion, the middle nineties, this doctrine not only represented the completely formulated programme of the Emancipation of Labour group, but had already won over to its side the majority of the revolutionary youth in Russia.

But what was only part misfortune became full misfortune when this consciousness began to grow dim (it was very much alive among the members of the groups mentioned), when there appeared people—and even Social -Democratic organs—that were prepared to regard shortcomings as virtues, that even tried to invent a theoretical basis for their slavish cringing before spontaneity. It is time to draw conclusions from this trend, the content of which is incorrectly and too narrowly characterized as Economism.

III. Trade-Unionist Politics And Social-Democratic Politics

A. Political Agitation And Its Restriction By the Economists

The overwhelming majority of Russian Social-Democrats have of late been almost entirely absorbed by this work of organizing the exposure of factory conditions. Suffice it to recall Rabochaya Mysl to see the extent to which they have been absorbed by it — so much so, indeed, that they have lost sight of the fact that this, taken by itself, is in essence still not Social-Democratic work, but merely trade union work. As a matter of fact, the exposures merely dealt with the relations between the workers in a given trade and their employers, and all they achieved was that the sellers of labor power learned to sell their “commodity” on better terms and to fight the purchasers over a purely commercial deal. These exposures could have served (if properly utilized by an organization of revolutionaries) as a beginning and a component part of Social-Democratic activity; but they could also have led (and, given a worshipful attitude towards spontaneity, were bound to lead) to a “purely trade union” struggle

and to a non-Social-Democratic working-class movement. Social-Democracy leads the struggle of the working class, not only for better terms for the sale of labor-power, but for the abolition of the social system that compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich. Social-Democracy represents the working class, not in its relation to a given group of employers alone, but in its relation to all classes of modern society and to the state as an organized political force. Hence, it follows that not only must Social-Democrats not confine themselves exclusively to the economic struggle, but that they must not allow the organization of economic exposures to become the predominant part of their activities. We must actively take up the political education of the working class and the development of its political consciousness. Now that Zarya and *Iskra* have made the first attack upon Economism, “all are agreed” on this (although some agree only in words, as we shall soon see).

The question arises, what should political education consist in? Can it be confined to the propaganda of working-class hostility to the autocracy? Of course not. It is not enough to explain to the workers that they are politically oppressed (any more than it is to explain to them that their interests are antagonistic to the interests of the employers). Agitation must be conducted with regard to every concrete example of this oppression (as we have begun to carry on agitation round concrete examples of economic oppression). Inasmuch as this oppression affects the most diverse classes of society, inasmuch as it manifests itself in the most varied spheres of life and activity — vocational, civic, personal, family, religious, scientific, etc., etc. — is it not evident that we shall not be fulfilling our task of developing the political consciousness of the workers if we do not undertake the organization of the political exposure of the autocracy in all its aspects? In order to carry on agitation around concrete instances of oppression, these instances must be exposed (as it is necessary to expose factory abuses in order to carry on economic agitation). ...

Thus, the pompous phrase about “lending the economic struggle itself a political character,” which sounds so “terrifically” profound and revolutionary, serves as a screen to conceal what is in fact the traditional striving to degrade Social-Democratic politics to the level of trade union politics. Under the guise of rectifying the one-sidedness of *Iskra*, which, it is alleged, places “the revolutionizing of dogma higher than the revolutionizing of life,” we are presented with the struggle for economic reforms as if it were something entirely new. In point of fact, the phrase “lending the economic struggle itself a political character” means nothing more than the struggle for economic reforms. Martynov himself might have come to this simple conclusion, had he pondered over the significance of his own words. “Our Party,” he says, training his heaviest guns on *Iskra*, “could and should have presented concrete demands to the government for legislative and administrative measures against economic

exploitation, unemployment, famine, etc.” (*Rabocheye Dyelo*, No. 10, pp. 42-43). Concrete demands for measures — does not this mean demands for social reforms? Again we ask the impartial reader: Are we slandering the *Rabocheye Dyelo-ites* (may I be forgiven for this awkward, currently used designation!) by calling them concealed Bernsteinians when, as their point of disagreement with *Iskra*, they advance their thesis on the necessity of struggling for economic reforms?

Revolutionary Social-Democracy has always included the struggle for reforms as part of its activities. But it utilizes “economic” agitation for the purpose of presenting to the government, not only demands for all sorts of measures, but also (and primarily) the demand that it cease to be an autocratic government. Moreover, it considers it its duty to present this demand to the government on the basis, not of the economic struggle alone, but of all manifestations in general of public and political life. In a word, it subordinates the struggle for reforms, as the part to the whole, to the revolutionary struggle for freedom and for socialism.

Organize the Unorganized

By WILLIAM Z FOSTER

“Organization does not happen; it is made to happen.”

Chapter I

Importance of Organizing the Unorganized

The question of organizing the many millions of unorganized workers is the most vital matter now before the American labor movement. The future progress of the working class depends upon the solution of this great problem.

The organization of the unorganized is a life and death question for the labor movement. To bring the millions into the unions is necessary not only for the protection of the of the unorganized workers, and to further class ends in general, but also to safeguard the life of the existing organizations. Many of the trade unions are now under such heavy attacks from the employers that their very existence is threatened. These struggles can be resolved favorably to the workers only by drawing to their support the great mass of unorganized.

The Miners' Union is a case in point. The bituminous coal industry is shifting from the organized fields of Illinois, Ohio, Indiana and Pennsylvania, into the southern unorganized districts, with consequent heavy unemployment among the union miners. The coal operators are taking advantage of this fact by smashing the union in the organized districts. Unless the southern fields are unionized, the United Mine Workers of America is doomed.

Unions in Danger

To a greater or lesser extent similar menacing conditions exist among the unions of Railroad Workers, Metal Workers, Needle Workers, etc. They are not only seriously weakened, but they cannot even exist with such large sections of their industries working under non-union conditions,

The organization of the unorganized masses will mean a tremendous step forward to the general revolutionizing of the labor movement. At present the unions have only 3,500,000 workers out of a total of at least 20,000,000 who are organizable. Doubling or tripling the total number of organized workers will, merely by the increased weight of organized labor alone, enormously enhance its power and stimulate all its institutions.

But, bringing the masses into the unions means much more than simply to add them numerically to the number of organized workers. Par more important will be the consequent changing in the composition of the unions and the shifting of their centers of gravity into the heavy and key industries.

Will Create a New Spirit of Progress

The overwhelming bulk of the unorganized masses are semi-skilled and unskilled. They are the most proletarian and revolutionary section of the working class. Of the 3,500,000 organized workers, fully one-half are highly skilled. They dominate the whole movement and color it and restrict it with their craft prejudices and petty bourgeois conceptions. A great influx of the at present unorganized semi-skilled and unskilled workers will drown out these unhealthy tendencies and start the movement in the direction of revolutionary development. The newly organized workers, with no craft interests to preserve, will tend strongly in the direction of industrial unionism—the organization of the unorganized will mean a great surge forward towards the amalgamation of the existing organizations.

It will also mean a powerful development of the Labor Party movement, partly through the increased class consciousness given to the movement by the addition of the masses of semi-skilled and unskilled, partly because of the intensification of the class struggle accompanying the organization of the unorganized, and partly because the increased size of the labor movement will furnish a better foundation for the Labor Party—where the unions are only skeleton in form, the existence of a powerful Labor Party is almost out of the question.

Also, the very progress of bringing the millions of semi-skilled and unskilled into the unions will provoke a whole series of struggles against the employers and will enormously increase the militancy of the labor movement. The present epoch of militancy and class conscious development in the British movement was hastened very much by infusing into the old conservative skilled workers' craft unions many hundreds of thousands of semi-skilled and unskilled workers. And a similar result will be produced on the unions in the United States by bringing in the unskilled.

Into the Basic Industries

A further vital consideration is that the organization of the unorganized masses will tend to revolutionize the labor movement by establishing its foundations in the basic and other important industries. At the present time the trade unions are strongest in the lighter industries, such as building, printing, clothing, etc. Where they touch the basic industries, as on the railroads, in the coal mines, they are either confined largely to the skilled workers, or their hold on the masses in general is weak.

The big industries present a deplorable lack of trade union organization: railroads 35%, coal mining 40%, general metal 5%, general transport 10%, metal mining 5%, steel 3%, textiles 10%, leather 15%; while practically no organization exists at all in the meat packing, automobile, electrical supplies, lumber, agricultural machinery, etc. A trade union movement so weak in the big and basic in-

dustries of the country cannot possibly make an effective struggle against capitalism. The firm establishment of the unions in these industries by organizing the great masses will enormously increase the strength of the labor movement and throw it at the very heart of capitalism. It will imbue the entire organization with a new understanding and a new fighting spirit.

The organization of the unorganized is of tremendous importance to the left wing. It tends to revolutionize the labor movement, to make it more responsive to left wing slogans, and to generally create a more favorable situation in which the left wing can operate. Moreover, in the organization process, by taking an active lead in the campaign, the left wing will win direct leadership over large sections of the newly organized masses, for whoever organizes the workers leads them. It will also give the left wing invaluable experience in mass work and leadership. We must realize the vital importance of the great campaign of organization and the leading role the left wing has to play in it.

The present period presents an exceptionally favorable time to bring the unorganized masses into the unions. Industry is going ahead at a relatively high rate. The workers are bitterly exploited, their standards of living are not advancing. In fact, in many industries such as textile, mining, shoe—in spite of the prosperity of the employers, the workers are facing wage cuts. There is much discontent in their ranks. The situation is ripe for a great drive for organization. The present period of “prosperity” cannot last indefinitely. Already there are signs of its weakening. We must take the fullest advantage of the situation now. The workers are in a mood to organize. We must take the lead and show them how.

A Favorable Opportunity

Failure of the union to strengthen their ranks now by the inclusion of vast masses of the unorganized, will expose them to the most deadly dangers in the slack industrial period that is not far ahead, when the employers will renew their “open shop” campaign of destruction against the unions with redoubled vigor.

The Trade Union Educational League is fundamentally correct when it places as “Point 1” in its Program of Action, the initiation of a general campaign to organize the millions of unorganized workers.

Chapter II

The Left Wing Must Do the Work

The organization of the unorganized millions of workers is primarily the task of the left wing. There is no other section of the labor movement possessing the necessary courage, energy, and understanding to carry through this basic work. This is a prime lesson that T.U.E.L. militants must understand.

The three general groups in the trade union movement play essentially the following roles in the gigantic task of organizing the unorganized masses: The left wing militantly leads, the progressives mildly support, and the right wing opposes.

The left wing alone has a realization of the tremendous social significance of the organization of the unorganized. It speaks primarily in the name of the unskilled and semi-skilled who make up the mass on the outside of the unions, and it habitually leads a militant struggle to unionize them. It is the champion of industrial unionism and the Labor Party, the fate of both of which is bound up in the general question of organizing the unorganized. It realizes that only when the great masses are mobilized in the unions can effective assaults be made against capitalism. Hence, it is the life of every organizing campaign, and it must be such, whether these campaigns are carried on through the medium of the existing trade unions, or by the launching of new organizations.

The progressives primarily represent the skilled, and, to a certain degree, the semi-skilled workers. They usually mildly favor and support general campaigns of organization. They have some appreciation of the importance of bringing the masses into the unions, but they haven't the necessary understanding and militancy to do the actual work. They must be stimulated into action by the left wing.

They lack the leadership to map out and carry through the broad, daring campaigns necessary for the organization of the masses in American industries. They fear the militant and desperate strikes which must accompany such campaigns. They are class collaborationists, they are afflicted with many of the craft prejudices and much of the conservatism of the right wing. But, under the pressure of the left wing, they can be pushed into doing effective organizing work.

The essential form of an organizing committee or movement under present conditions in the American labor movement is a united front between the left wing and the progressives, with the left wing functioning as the driving force.

Sabotage by the Right Wing

The right wing controlling bureaucrats are the real stumbling block to organization. They primarily represent the skilled workers. They fear that the organization of the unorganized masses of semi-skilled and unskilled will overwhelm the organized skilled workers. The bureaucrats want to maintain craft lines and craft interests, in wage scales, in organization forms, and in various other ways, and they know that the influx of the unorganized mass will tend to wipe out these special interests. They know that the struggle to organize the unorganized will compel the skilled workers to abandon their class collaboration policies, and they fear it will force them into

fighters against the employers that will jeopardize their craft organizations and preferred wage scales.

They know that with the mass organized, the skilled workers will not be able to trade so successfully at the expense of the unskilled workers, as, for example, the Railroad Brotherhoods and many other unions are now doing. The right wing bureaucrats fear the unskilled will flood the unions and capture them from the skilled. They dread the influx of the mass because it means a general disturbance of the equilibrium in the organizations, the rise of new leaders, and probably their own displacement. They sense the general revolutionizing effect of the influx of semi-skilled and unskilled workers into the unions, and they shrink from it.

Hence, the right wing bureaucracy is ordinarily opposed to the organization of the unorganized, except along their narrow craft lines, where they often display organizing activity. Their policy is to set up bars against apprentices, against helpers, and to develop their unions into job trusts. They concentrate in certain industries easy to organize, such as the Electrical Workers' Union, confining itself principally to the building trades; the Metal Trades Unions, specializing on the railroads, while they neglect other industries "hard" to organize.

Even when driven into organizing campaigns by pressure, the right wing bureaucrats refuse to lend them real support. At best they then only trail along. Their policy is one of sabotage. They are affected by a hundred petty craft considerations, and they raise innumerable technical and other objections in order to hinder the organizing work. Often they cooperate with the employers to prevent organization. They usually will accept mass organization if it is "handed to them on a silver platter" by the left wing organizers, but they will not go out and fight for it. They are lazy, unimaginative, corrupt and petty bourgeois. The left wing must consider and deal with them as a major obstacle in the work of organizing the unorganized.

Stimulating the Trade Unions Into Action

It would be a grievous error, however, to conclude from the foregoing that the right wing can block the organization of the unorganized by the trade unions and that nothing can be done in these bodies. A whole series of organization campaigns by the trade unions belie this pessimism. The impulse of the labor movement to expand into a real mass and class organization is very powerful. Where there is an insistent and intelligent demand from the combined left wing and progressives, the right wing can literally be driven into organizing campaigns. This is what was done to Gompers and the presidents of the various internationals in the steel and packing industry campaigns. And on the railroads the more progressive elements were responsible for the organization of hundreds of thousands of the unorganized during the war period.

The right wing bureaucrats find it exceedingly difficult to fight directly against the demand for organization. Their method is mostly indirect. They commonly adopt organization resolutions, presented by the more progressive elements, and then sabotage them to death. They do lip service to the organization of the unorganized and then prevent it in practice. The American Federation of Labor has adopted, from time to time, resolutions for the organization of every industry in the country, and immediately after the conventions has promptly forgotten all about them.

In the struggle against the right wing over the question of organizing the unorganized, two principal dangers confront the left wing, both of which must be guarded against. The first is a pessimistic conclusion that the trade unions cannot be stimulated to do organization work. The second, the other extreme, is a naive, over-optimistic belief that the right wing will put into effect the adopted resolutions calling for the organization of the unorganized.

Both of these tendencies block real organization work. The proper policy in the trade unions is for the left wing to enter into alliance with the progressive elements, to force the adoption of programs of organization, and then themselves to do the actual work of organizing, in spite of the sabotage of the right wing. The theme of this chapter is correct; upon the left wing rests primarily the burden of organizing the unorganized.

Chapter V

Organization and Strikes

The organization of the unorganized on any considerable scale in American industry inevitably precipitates hard-fought strikes. Organization campaigns are the first phase of bitter struggles between the workers and employers over questions of wages, hours, working conditions and the right to organize.

In most industries the acute phase of the struggle, the strike, comes quickly. Usually, when an organization campaign begins, the employers take the initiative and try to nip the movement in the bud by militantly attacking it. But even if they do not follow this course, the workers themselves will soon precipitate the strike struggle by raising their demands against the employers. This basic connection of strikes with organization movements is a foundation fact. All our strategy in the campaign to organize the unorganized turns around it.

The Question of Demands

The first consideration is to center our campaigns of organization around the economic demands of the workers. The unorganized workers have very little understanding of or desire for trade unionism as such. It is only the advanced elements who appreciate the real value of

organization. When the masses join unions it is in the hope of securing immediate satisfaction for their burning grievances. They want unions directly for what they can get through them from the employers, and usually they will not wait long for results. Therefore, we must make the fight for the workers' demands the basis of all our tactics in our organization work, bringing in our general left wing program as the struggle develops.

A glaring weakness of conservative trade unionists in attempting to organize the unorganized, is their failure to take into consideration this fact, that the mass of workers have organized themselves in order to fight immediately for their demands. The conservatives stress the purely organizational side too much and the struggle side too little. They ignore the urgency of the workers' demands. They assume that the mass of workers understand the general value of trade unionism as such. They proceed upon the basis that the workers can be brought into the unions slowly, man by man, and then held there and disciplined indefinitely until the great mass is organized, when, sometime in the distant future, possibly demands will be made on the employers for better conditions.

Such a theory is of course absurd. It always fails in practice, a case in point being the fiasco of the recent A.F. of L. organization campaign in the steel industry.

The future trade unions of the great unorganized industries will be born in the heat of the struggle against the employers over the demands of the workers. The organization campaign which does not voice the demands of the workers and envisage an early struggle in defense of them is doomed beforehand to failure.

The nature of the workers' demands are determined by the state of the industry and the moods of the employers and workers concerned. In periods of slackened industry, with the employers on the offensive, the fight of the workers in their present stage of ideological development will be to maintain existing standards, to struggle against wage cuts, lengthening of the work day, etc. In periods of "prosperity," the workers will fight for better wages, shorter hours, etc. But, in any event, in good times or bad, the struggle for organization must center around the defense of the workers' pressing demands. The workers are especially militant in fighting against reductions of their living standards. The fight against wage cuts is one of the very best issues upon which to organize the workers and to bring them into struggle against the employers.

Organization Strategy

Organization campaigns in American unorganized industries are preparations for strikes. They are a struggle for position between the employers and workers in the big battle that is soon to come, the strike over the establishment of better conditions. It is in this sense that such campaigns must be conceived and carried through.

To prevent the organization of their workers, the employers have a whole arsenal of weapons which they use with skill and ruthlessness. When modern employers cut wages they commonly slash one group of workers at a time, thus breaking up the solidarity of the workers; instead of using the old-time method of making broad-sweeping wage cuts in all departments simultaneously, which united the workers. This canny policy makes the work of the organizer difficult.

The employers also, fight the introduction of trade unions by setting up company unions. And when actually confronted with militant organizing campaigns, they try to break them up by granting wage increases, discharging active workers, forcing premature strikes, abolishing free assembly in their company towns, etc. In the steel campaign of 1918-19, for example, the steel trust, to head off the movement, conceded the workers several increases in wages and established the basic 8-hour day, while at the same time carrying on a policy of terrorism against the unions and the workers who joined them.

Plan, Scope, Spirit

The T.U.E.L. left wing militants must learn to defeat this anti-union strategy of the employers by the development of a thorough-going strategy of organization in support of the workers' economic demands. The very heart of this strategy is: (a) our organization work must be carefully planned; (b) it must embrace the widest possible scope of workers in each case; (c) it must be accompanied by an inspiring propaganda.

One of the greatest weakness of conservatives in trade union organization work is their policy of dabbling. They simply drift into their campaigns, haphazard and planlessly, wherever some local stir wakes them up a bit. Their efforts are mostly confined to a local and craft basis, with consequent failure. The method of the general office of the A.F. of L. itself is typical. It has never followed a thought-out plan for the organization of the workers. It simply sends its organizers around, hither and yon, wherever strikes happen to develop, and these organizers handle such strikes without regard to the situation in the industry as a whole. This is a policy of following the masses, not leading them.

The left wing must depart radically from such a primitive policy, which is totally unfitted for modern American industry. When we get into an organizing campaign in a given locality or industry, we must do so on the basis of a careful analysis of the whole situation. And we must make a determined effort for the utmost mobilization of our forces for the struggle. We must actually lead in the organization work.

Moreover, when the left wing undertakes an organization campaign it must be made as broad and sweeping as possible. Our aim must be for the organization of the whole industry, and all our strategy must go in that

direction. Craftism and localism are totally out of place and must be fought. In most cases, as at the present time in the railroad industry, we will, by analysis, ascertain the opportune time for the organization of the masses and we will work for the necessary nation-wide campaigns.

But where we are caught napping, so to speak, by sudden local strike movements of workers in national industries, we must immediately undertake to spread these movements out on a national scale. The trustified state of American industries prevents a successful fight being made on a local scale except in the most favorable and unusual circumstances.

It must be our special endeavor in all these campaigns to win over and develop the youth, who are the bridge to and uniting force between the masses of foreign-born workers and the American workers.

Strike Strategy

We must also accompany our organization work with a militant educational propaganda. We must yearn to raise not only the economic demands of the workers, but also learn to fire the workers with the spirit of revolutionary enthusiasm. Strikes offer ideal opportunities to point out to the workers the full political consequences of the class struggle and to awaken their class spirit and consciousness. One of the failures of conservative trade unionism is its almost total lack of idealism. It fails to arouse the fighting spirit of the workers, which can only be done by militant propaganda.

Successful trade union organizers must be masters of strike strategy. One thing they must know is how to deal a blow at the employers opportunely. The left wing must learn to hit the employers when they are least able to stand it, and to deliver the attack with a maximum force. The employers are wide awake to this danger and follow the counter policy of trying to force the workers into premature struggles.

This was the policy of the steel trust in the 1918-19 campaign. Gary tried to compel the steel workers to strike in certain localities before the national organization had been completed, by discharging thousands of them. His aim was to demoralize the movement before it got well started. We bitterly resisted this tactic, forcing the attacked points to stand fast under the severest pressure until we could mobilize the rest of the steel workers to support them. Thus we gained most precious time in which to organize. Nevertheless, Gary did succeed in precipitating the strike before we were fully prepared for it.

When and How

On the basis of a careful analysis of the state of the industry and of the condition of the workers' forces, the left wing must learn when to strike and when to organize. Nothing is more disastrous than ill-timed strikes and organization campaigns, which needlessly victimize the

workers and break their spirit.

Left wing organizers must learn every phase of the art of mobilizing effectively the masses in struggles against the employers. They must know how to dramatize their strikes and to make them spur the class instincts not only of the workers involved, but of the whole working class. They must understand how to mobilize public sentiment behind their cause, and especially to enlist the support of the trade union movement. They must be experts in the collection and distribution of relief. They must understand the technique of mass picketing and the application of the boycott. They must at all times display unflinching personal courage.

They must know how to build their trade unions among the inexperienced workers during the strike, and how to take advantage of such big struggles as that in Passaic by organizing the masses in surrounding industries and localities who are inspired by the struggle. In short, they must be practical strike leaders in order to be effective organizers, and to do this they must take an active part in all the struggles of the workers.

The question of organizing the unorganized becomes daily more pressing. The T.U.E.L. and the left wing generally, have a central part to play in the great developing movement for organization. This part we can play effectively if we will bear in mind the few general principles of organization elaborated above, namely, that the left wing must lead in and do the burden of the organization work, that we must avoid isolation from the organized masses and be prepared to utilize every form of proletarian organization in the "closed" industries to further the establishment of unions.

We must study carefully the state of the industry and the condition of the employers' and the workers' forces, base our organization campaigns upon the economic demands of the workers and at all times keep the fight focussed on these demands, plan our organization campaigns carefully and thoroughly mobilize all our forces to put them into execution, extend our scope of activity over the greatest possible extent of workers, strike the blow at the opportune time, demoralize the enemy, rouse public sentiment with our maneuvers, develop the utmost fighting spirit in our own ranks by our invigorating propaganda, and follow up our victories to the limit by organizing all the workers shaken into action by our big strikes and struggles.

The left wing must take the lead in the organization of the unorganized millions. This is an historic necessity of the situation. We must not falter or fail at our task. It is a time for intelligent, courageous, militant action.

Labor's Untold Story

By HERBERT J. MORAIS and RICHARD O. BOYER

In the Beginning

Labor's story, still untold and largely missing from textbook and conventional history, is more than an account of strikes, spies, and frame-ups, of organizing and building unions, of men and women fighting and dying for better lives in a better America. It is more than the grim drama of Big Bill Haywood shooting it out with hired gunmen in the mine wars of the Rockies; or of Parsons crying with his last breath as he stood on the gallows, "Let the voice of the people be heard!"; or of the sit-down strikers at Flint whose bravery fanned the flame of CIO sweeping across the land with the speed of a prairie fire.

Fundamentally, labor's story is the story of the American people. To view it narrowly, to concentrate on the history of specific trade unions or on the careers of individuals and their rivalries, would be to miss the point that the great forces which have swept the American people into action have been the very forces that have also molded labor.

Trade unionism was born as an effective national movement amid the great convulsion of the Civil War and the fight for Negro freedom. From that day to this the struggle for Negro rights has been important to labor's welfare. Labor suffered under depressions which spurred the whole American people into movement in the seventies, in the eighties, and in the nineties. It reached its greatest heights when it joined hands with farmers, small businessmen, and the Negro people in the epic Populist revolts of the 1890's and later in the triumph that was the New Deal.

For labor has never lived in isolation or progressed without allies. Always it has been in the main stream of American life, always at the very crux of American history, with none more concerned than it at the ever-increasing concentration of American corporate power. Labor's story, by its very nature, is synchronized at every turn with the growth and development of American monopoly. Its great leap forward into industrial unionism was an answering action to the development of trusts and great industrial empires.

Labor's grievances, in fact the very conditions of its life, have been imposed by its great antagonist, that combination of industrial and financial power often known as Wall Street. The mind and actions of William H. Sylvis, the iron molder who founded the first effective national labor organization, can scarcely be understood without also an understanding of the genius and cunning of his contemporary, John D. Rockefeller, father of the modern trust. In the long view of history the machinations of J. P. Morgan, merging banking and industrial capital as he threw together ever larger combinations of corporate

power controlled by fewer and fewer men, may have governed the course of American labor more than the plans of Samuel Gompers.

It is of all this, then, that labor's untold story consists. It is a story of great gains won and of labor's rank and file; of the sobbing desperation of Mrs. Munley as she shook the gates of Pottsville Prison where her husband and other Molly Maguires were being hanged as foreign agents because they had formed a trade union; of the railroad strike of 1877 and of how it was broken with the charge of Communist conspiracy.

It is the story of Eugene V. Debs running for the Presidency from a prison cell in his fight for world peace and of the movement for amnesty that grew until it freed him. It tells of the great love of Lucy Parsons and of her lonely fight for the life of her framed husband. In its pages are men and women, unknown to history but the very heart of the labor movement, distributing leaflets, arranging meetings, collecting dues, and spreading the word and the seed which built the trade union cause. It tells of the millions of immigrants arriving in steerage on a strange American shore; of the singing Wobblies, a union on wheels, the iron wheels of speeding freights; of the bloody struggles of the unemployed which were climaxed by the triumph of the CIO and New Deal.

It is a long story and an exciting one. In the beginning there was the country-shaking struggle of the Civil War. Out of its fat war contracts labor's untold story for the instruments of mass killing came the great American fortunes and the beginnings of monopoly. Out of its hardships on the civilian front, out of the poverty, starvation, and exhausting labor fastened on the North's working class, came the first successful national trade unions and, in 1866, the National Labor Union, the first effective nationwide federation of labor.

A People's Art History of the United States

By NICOLAS LAMPERT

Artists Organize

"The Public Works of Art Project 'professional wage' was not food fallen from above. It was won by the persistent demands of organized artists."

—Boris Gorelick, Artists' Union organizer

None of the relief programs that employed artists during the Great Depression—the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) or the Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project (WPA-FAP)—were gifts from a benevolent government. Instead, artists demanded that these programs be created, and when they were, they lobbied to protect them. The Artists' Union—established in New York City and later expanded to other cities—was the leading voice for unemployed artists during the Great Depression. It was comprised of a militant group of artists organized into a trade union of painters, printmakers, and sculptors. Together, they advocated for more positions in the federal art projects, better pay, and better working conditions; as well, they organized against funding cuts and layoffs.

In 1933, a small group of around twenty-five artists and writers in New York City began meeting at the John Reed Club—named after the late journalist, founder of the American Communist Party, and the only American ever buried at the Kremlin—and drew up a manifesto. It read, in part, "The State can eliminate once and for all the unfortunate dependence of American artists upon the caprice of private patronage."

The group settled on the name the Unemployed Artists Group (UAG) and began lobbying and demonstrating for federal and state jobs for artists. In September, they petitioned Harry L. Hopkins, one of Roosevelt's closest advisers and one of the architects of the New Deal, and called upon him to create opportunities for muralists, sculptors, graphic artists, and other visual artists to decorate public buildings and to work on public art projects. This call helped create the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP)—a temporary relief program that was established in November 1933 and ended less than six months later.

The PWAP was flawed from the start. The selection process for the six-hundred-plus artists was left in the hands of Juliana Force, the director of the Whitney Museum, and much to the objection of the Unemployed Artists Group, she selected established gallery artists—many of whom were not in need of assistance. In response, the Unemployed Artists Group—renamed the Artists' Union—staged

a total of nine demonstrations outside the Whitney that spurred a change in this procedure. Afterward, artists were called to work in order of their registration number. Eventually, 3,800 artists were assigned to projects, typically lasting from six weeks to three months, and that paid between \$27 and \$38.25 per week. And when the PWAP was left to expire, the Artists' Union helped lobby for a new program—the WPA-FAP.

In 1935, the Federal Art Project would launch a new era of temporary relief programs, albeit at a reduced wage—\$24 per week for most areas of the country. That same year the Artists' Union drafted the framework for a Federal Art Bill designed to make government funding of the arts permanent. The Artists' Union felt that only the federal government had the resources to employ large numbers of artists. In addition, they believed a Federal Art Bill would help promote and distribute visual art throughout all corners of the nation. Artists' Union organizer Chet La More summarized, "We contend that painting, literature, and theaters do not belong to a top group; that they do not belong to people who can pay \$1000 for a painting, and who can pay Broadway prices to see a play. The finer things in life belong to all the people in a democracy." This vision—a permanent arts program—would not arise, but temporary relief programs under the banner of the WPA-FAP would.

The Artists' Union

"Art has turned militant. It forms unions, carries banners, sits down uninvited, and gets underfoot. Social justice is its battle cry!"

—Mabel Dwight, WPA-FAP printmaker

Prior to the start of the WPA-FAP, the Artists' Union in New York City was already a well-developed organization, and by the end of 1934 it had upward of seven hundred members. Meetings were held every Wednesday night, and attendance often fluctuated between two and three hundred people; crisis meetings would draw upward of six hundred.

Locals were also formed across the country, in Philadelphia, Boston, Springfield (Massachusetts), Baltimore, Woodstock (New York), Cedar Rapids, Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, St. Louis, Los Angeles, and elsewhere.

By 1936, the WPA-FAP employed more than five thousand artists and well over a thousand of these artists were Artists' Union members, spread out across eighteen states. Many of the Artists' Union members, though not all, were also affiliated with CP USA and Communist campaigns. Others were fellow travelers, sympathetic to communism and socialism and the movement against war and fascism. The Artists' Union, however, distanced itself from direct Communist ties, stating that it would not align itself to any political party. Instead, its primary role was economic—helping unemployed artists obtain

work in federal and state art programs, and advocating for the arts to reach all Americans. In short, the Artists' Union became the mediators between artists and PWAP (and then WPA-FAP) administrators, settling grievances between workers and administrators and threatening to take direct action if needed.

On November 30, 1936, more than 1,200 artists, writers, actors, and actresses gathered in protest in New York City over WPA funding cuts and layoffs. Two days later, on December 1, more than four hundred Artists' Union members gathered outside the WPA administration offices on Fifth Avenue and Thirty-ninth Street while 219 demonstrators stormed the offices and occupied them. The administration's response was to call in police, who proceeded to assault them. Twelve Artists' Union members were badly injured and taken away in ambulances, including Philip Evergood and Paul Block (who had led the demonstration), and all of the demonstrators were arrested.

In jail, some gave fake last names to the authorities, claiming to be Picasso, Cézanne, da Vinci, Degas, and van Gogh. A couple days later, the 219 individuals arrested were arraigned in court on December 3, found guilty of disorderly conduct, and given a suspended sentence.

More protests would follow. On December 9, some 2,500 WPA workers orchestrated a half-day work stoppage of all art projects to protest pending dismissals. Three days later, artists joined in with 5,000 other WPA workers in a picket at the central WPA office. The January 1937 cover of Art Front—the Artists' Union's official publication—documents their capacity to demonstrate. Visualized is a street packed with protesters; prominent among them are Artists' Union signs and red banners with the "AU" letters. Also held up high are cutout images of pigs with top hats—a likely reference to bankers.

These demonstrations produced results. The street protests, the police brutality at the WPA offices, and the resulting press caused Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia to make an emergency trip to Washington that resulted in funds not being cut. Gerald M. Monroe writes, "While average employment on the WPA as a whole decreased 11.9 percent from January to June 1937, employment on the four Arts Projects increased 1.1 percent."

However, this temporary reprieve was short-lived. In April 1937, President Roosevelt and Congress pushed through a 25 percent cut of all WPA funding that did not spare artists. In late June, WPA-FAP employees began receiving their pink slips, setting off another wave of sit-ins by the Artists' Union and others—writers, musicians, actors, and actresses—who occupied the WPA offices in Washington, DC. In New York, six-hundred-plus demonstrators occupied the Federal Arts Project Office and held Harold Stein, a New York City Art Project administrator, captive for fifteen hours. There, he was ordered to call his superior

in Washington, DC, and relay the strikers' demands that all cuts should be rescinded. Eventually, Stein signed an agreement that the layoffs would be delayed, but in reality Stein had no power in stopping the cuts from eventually going through.

These actions alone represented a new militancy among artists as they began to realize their collective strength. Stuart Davis, the first editor for Art Front, wrote:

Artists at last discovered that, like other workers, they could only protect their basic interests through powerful organizations. The great mass of artists left out of the project found it possible to win demands from the administration only by joint and militant demonstrations. Their efforts led naturally to the building of the Artists' Union.

Others were less apt to pay compliments to these tactics, or to the Artists' Union. Olin Dows, an artist and the director of Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP), believed the actions were counterproductive: "It was grotesque and an anomaly to have artists unionized against a government which for the first time in its history was doing something about them professionally." And Audrey McMahan, head of the New York City Art Project, argued that the Artists' Union, along with other radical art groups, tarnished the image of the entire WPA-FAP, for it led the public and conservative members of the government to see all artists as radicals. But, the Artists' Union represented the workers' perspective, not management's. They held little faith in the sincerity of government bureaucrats and believed that it was the artists' ability to organize that had led to artists being included in the WPA programs in the first place.

Fight Like Hell

The Untold History of American Labor

By KIM KELLY

“NO RED-BAITING, NO RACE-BAITING, NO QUEEN-BAITING!”

While unions were welcome allies in the fight with Coors (and the ILWU had already committed to organizing across racial and social barriers well before the Teamsters got the memo), there was another transport union whose members had already cut their teeth on the front lines of earlier battles for liberation. The San Francisco-based Marine Cooks and Stewards Union (MCS) was formed in 1901 to represent the workers who served the well-heeled guests aboard the era’s hulking luxury liners and merchant ships. It was a grueling occupation characterized by low wages, poor sanitation, spoiled food, entitled passengers, and working conditions that gave rise to the ships’ nickname: “floating tenements.” Many of the cooks and stewards were Black or Asian; following the opening of Angel Island as an immigration hub, an influx of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino immigrants joined San Francisco’s maritime workforce, and were met with racism and naked hostility from entrenched labor organizations, MCS included.

Until the 1930s, the MCS accepted only white men as members; in 1921, the Colored Marine Employees Beneficial Association of the Pacific (CMBA) was formed to represent those workers the MCS rejected, and the two unions engaged in bitter competition over jobs and control of the waterfront. It would take the momentous impact of the Great Waterfront Strike of 1934 to illustrate how crucial it was for the labor movement to unite and organize across racial lines. As more leftists rose to power in the organization, the MCS embarked on an ambitious project to integrate its membership. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was formed that same year by UMWA leader John L. Lewis, with a goal to compel the AFL to organize along industrial lines; the two groups’ paths diverged considerably over the decades, especially as the Red Scare heated up, but in 1935 at least, the CIO represented a promising new vision of progress. Leftists were having a moment, and Communists in particular became deeply entwined with the more radical sectors of the movement. As Revels Cayton, a Black Communist MCS leader, later recalled, “Union leadership was reactionary, but the rank and file... fought to make it a democratic union, one in which discrimination did not exist.”

In the MCS’s case, that struggle for a united union explicitly included LGBTQIA workers, self-identified “queens” who composed a significant portion of the workforce at

every level. Queer workers, from sailors to longshoremen to stewards, were drawn to the waterfront by an atmosphere of sexual freedom that was absent on land, and seafaring culture allowed space for intimate contact between men at sea, chipping away at the sexual binary that dominated on land. The MCS secured workplace protections for LGBTQIA workers decades before the gay liberation movement went mainstream or enshrined those rights in union contracts. As Allan Bérubé, a pioneering social historian on the lives of working-class lesbians and gay men who had extensively researched the MCS prior to his death in 2008, told *New Socialist* magazine in 1988, “You couldn’t be fired for anything except for not doing your job—you had to violate something in the contract. So being gay was not a reason for being fired.”

The MCS emerged as a beacon of interracial solidarity and a haven for LGBTQIA workers, who would occasionally raise money for union benefits by putting on drag shows and musicals. The playful, campy side of gay culture was also expressed in the union’s newspaper, the *MCS Voice*, which mixed radical militancy and Marxist analysis with images of queer and interracial solidarity. Manuel Cabral, a ship’s janitor known as the “Honolulu Queen,” decorated the MCS union hall with flowers and hung up lace curtains; when the ILWU and other maritime workers gathered each year on the remembrance of Bloody Thursday, Cabral arranged the flowers at the sidewalk memorial. The union adopted the slogan “It’s anti-union to red-bait, race-bait, or queen-bait,” and during World War II provided a useful outlet for queer workers who wished to participate in the war effort but were barred from military service due to their sexuality.

The MCS continued to practice what it preached for the rest of its existence, even as the rising fear of Communist influence on the movement began to cause problems for its members. By 1949, the union’s overwhelmingly white leadership had realized it did not accurately reflect its predominantly Black and Asian membership; within a year, that old guard stepped down to make room for a more diverse set of new leaders. Its membership remained overwhelmingly male, but the union went to bat for other genders as well. In 1950, when the Matson Navigation Company refused to allow Luella Lawhorn, a Black woman, to work on its luxury liner *Lurline*, to Hawai’i, all 311 stewards on board walked off in protest. The union held firm and saw to it that Lawhorn became the first ever Black stewardess on a U.S. passenger ship in the Pacific.

Unfortunately, after World War II, the MCS got caught up in the same web of fear-mongering and repression that kneecapped so many other more radically inclusive and politically leftist unions during the Red Scare (especially those affiliated with the CIO, which refused to force its members to take an anti-Communism pledge). Shortly thereafter, in the 1950s, the union was kicked out of the CIO alongside the ILWU and other allegedly “Communist-dominated” unions, and absorbed into the more

conservative Seafarers International Union. The now-defunct organization's multiracial, queer, leftist history would have been lost without the efforts of chroniclers like Bérubé. "What many of you younger people are trying to do today as queers—what you call inclusion and diversity—we already did it 50 years ago in the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union," Stephen "Mickey" Blair, a gay white MCS member who had served as the MCS's vice president, told him in the 1990s. Blair's partner, Frank McCormick, was a vice president of the California CIO, and they were both involved in the 1934 waterfront strike. "We did it in the labor movement as working-class queens with left-wing politics, and that's why the government crushed us, and that's why you don't know anything about us today—our history has been totally erased."

An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!

By CLAUDIA JONES

Negro Women in Mass Organizations

This brief picture of some of the aspects of the history of the Negro woman, seen in the additional light of the fact that a high proportion of Negro women are obliged today to earn all or part of the bread of the family, helps us understand why Negro women play a most active part in the economic, social and political life of the Negro community today. Approximately 2,500,000 Negro women are organised in social, political and fraternal clubs and organisations. The most prominent of their organizations are the National Association of Negro women, the National Council of Negro Women, the National Federation of Women's Clubs, the Women's Division of the Elks' Civil Liberties Committee, the National Association of Colored Beauticians, National Negro Business Women's League, and the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses. Of these, the National Association of Negro Women, with 75,000 members, is the largest membership organisation. There are numerous sororities, church women's committees of all denominations, as well as organizations among women of West Indian descent. In some areas, NAACP chapters have Women's Divisions, and recently the National Urban League established a Women's Division for the first time in its history.

Negro women are the real active forces – the organizers and workers – in all the institutions and organisations of the Negro people. These organizations play a many-sided role, concerning themselves with all questions pertaining to the economic, political and social life of the Negro people, and particularly of the Negro family. Many of these organizations are intimately concerned with the problems of Negro youth, in the form of providing and administering educational scholarships, giving assistance to schools and other institutions, and offering community service. The fight for higher education in order to break down Jim Crow in higher institutions, was symbolised last year by the brilliant Negro woman student, Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher of Oklahoma. The disdainful attitudes which are sometimes expressed – that Negro women's organizations concern themselves only with "charity" work – must be exposed as of chauvinist derivation, however subtle, because while the same could be said of many organizations of white women, such attitudes fail to recognise the special character of the role of Negro women's organizations. This approach fails to recognise the special function which Negro women play in these organizations, which, over and above their particular function, seek to provide social services denied to Negro youth as a result of the Jim-Crow lynch system in the US.

The Negro Woman Worker

The negligible participation of Negro women in progressive and trade-union circles is thus all the more startling. In union after union, even in those unions where a large concentration of workers are Negro women, few Negro women are to be found as leaders or active workers. The outstanding exceptions to this are the Food and Tobacco Workers' Union and the United Office and Professional Workers' Union.

But why should these be exceptions? Negro women are among the most militant trade unionists. The sharecroppers' strikes of the 1930s were sparkplugged by Negro women. Subject to the terror of the landlord and white supremacist, they waged magnificent battles together with Negro men and white progressives in that struggle of great tradition led by the Communist Party. Negro women played a magnificent part in the pre-CIO days in strikes and other struggles, both as workers and as wives of workers, to win recognition of the principle of industrial unionism, in such industries as auto, packing, steel, etc. More recently, the militancy of Negro women unionists is shown in the strike of the packing-house workers, and even more so, in the tobacco workers' strike – in which such leaders as Moranda Smith and Velma Hopkins emerged as outstanding trade unionists. The struggle of the tobacco workers led by Negro women later merged with the political action of Negro and white, which led to the election of the first Negro in the South (in Winston-Salem, NC) since Reconstruction days.

It is incumbent on progressive unionists to realise that in the fight for equal rights for Negro workers, it is necessary to have a special approach to Negro women workers, who, far out of proportion to other women workers, are the main breadwinners in their families. The fight to retain the Negro woman in industry and to upgrade her on the job, is a major way of struggling for the basic and special interests of the Negro woman worker. Not to recognise this feature is to miss the special aspects of the effects of the growing economic crisis, which is penalising Negro workers, particularly Negro women workers, with special severity.

The Domestic Worker

One of the crassest manifestations of trade-union neglect of the problems of the Negro woman worker has been the failure, not only to fight against relegation of the Negro woman to domestic and similar menial work, but to organise the domestic worker. It is merely lip service for progressive unionists to speak of organizing the unorganized without turning their eyes to the serious plight of the domestic worker, who, unprotected by union standards, is also the victim of exclusion from all social and labor legislation. Only about one in 10 of all Negro women workers is covered by present minimum-wage legislation, although about one-fourth of all such workers are to be found in states having minimum-wage laws.

All of the arguments heretofore projected with regard to the real difficulties of organizing the domestic workers – such as the “casual” nature of their employment, the difficulties of organizing day workers, the problem of organizing people who work in individual households, etc – must be overcome forthwith. There is a danger that social-democratic forces may enter this field to do their work of spreading disunity and demagoguery, unless progressives act quickly.

The lot of the domestic worker is one of unbearable misery. Usually, she has no definition of tasks in the household where she works. Domestic workers may have “thrown in”, in addition to cleaning and scrubbing, such tasks as washing windows, caring for the children, laundering, cooking, etc, and all at the lowest pay. The Negro domestic worker must suffer the additional indignity, in some areas, of having to seek work in virtual “slave markets” on the streets where bids are made, as from a slave block, for the hardiest workers. Many a domestic worker, on returning to her own household, must begin housework anew to keep her own family together.

Who was not enraged when it was revealed in California, in the heinous case of Dora Jones, that a Negro woman domestic was enslaved for more than 40 years in “civilized” America? Her “employer” was given a minimum sentence of a few years and complained that the sentence was for “such a long period of time”. But could Dora Jones, Negro domestic worker, be repaid for more than 40 years of her life under such conditions of exploitation and degradation? And how many cases, partaking in varying degrees of the condition of Dora Jones, are still tolerated by progressives themselves!

Only recently, in the New York State Legislature, legislative proposals were made to “fingerprint” domestic workers. The Martinez Bill did not see the light of day, because the reactionaries were concentrating on other repressive legislative measures; but here we see clearly the imprint of the African “pass” system of British imperialism (and of the German Reich in relation to the Jewish people!) being attempted in relation to women domestic workers.

It is incumbent on the trade unions to assist the Domestic Workers’ Union in every possible way to accomplish the task of organizing the exploited domestic workers, the majority of whom are Negro women. Simultaneously, a legislative fight for the inclusion of domestic workers under the benefits of the Social Security Law is vitally urgent and necessary. Here, too, recurrent questions regarding “administrative problems” of applying the law to domestic workers should be challenged and solutions found.

The continued relegation of Negro women to domestic work has helped to perpetuate and intensify chauvinism

directed against all Negro women. Despite the fact that Negro women may be grandmothers or mothers, the use of the chauvinist term “girl” for adult Negro women is a common expression. The very economic relationship of Negro women to white women, which perpetuates “madam-maid” relationships, feeds chauvinist attitudes and makes it incumbent on white women progressives, and particularly Communists, to fight consciously against all manifestations of white chauvinism, open and subtle.

Chauvinism on the part of progressive white women is often expressed in their failure to have close ties of friendship with Negro women and to realize that this fight for equality of Negro women is in their own self-interest, inasmuch as the super-exploitation and oppression of Negro women tends to depress the standards of all women. Too many progressives, and even some Communists, are still guilty of exploiting Negro domestic workers, of refusing to hire them through the Domestic Workers’ Union (or of refusing to help in its expansion into those areas where it does not yet exist), and generally of participating in the vilification of “maids” when speaking to their bourgeois neighbours and their own families. Then, there is the expressed “concern” that the exploited Negro domestic worker does not “talk” to, or is not “friendly” with, her employer, or the habit of assuming that the duty of the white progressive employer is to “inform” the Negro woman of her exploitation and her oppression, which she undoubtedly knows quite intimately. Persistent challenge to every chauvinist remark as concerns the Negro woman is vitally necessary, if we are to break down the understandable distrust on the part of Negro women who are repelled by the white chauvinism they often find expressed in progressive circles.

“We Will Not Be Part of this Unjust, Immoral, and Illegal War”: Remembering the Fort Hood Three

By DEREK SEIDMAN

Fifty years ago today, on June 30, 1966, dozens of people assembled in the basement auditorium of the Community Church in midtown Manhattan for a big announcement. Journalists and photographers were there, and so were key leaders of New York’s antiwar left, such as A.J. Muste and Dave Dellinger. Stokely Carmichael, the chairperson of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) who had recently begun to popularize the phrase “Black Power,” also showed up. All of them gathered to hear the words of three soldiers, Privates David Samas and Dennis Mora, and Private First Class James A. Johnson. The trio had been stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, and they had just been informed they were going to Vietnam. They were given a 30-day leave before they had to embark. The G.I.’s convened the press conference to perform a bold act: they intended to refuse their orders to go fight.

By June 1966, the U.S. had already been entangled in Vietnam for close to two decades, but its military aggression had taken a turn towards major escalation when President Lyndon Johnson began to send hundreds of thousands of ground troops beginning in 1965. This was accompanied by the onset of a three-year bombing campaign in the north. Antiwar protest grew almost right away, with two mass demonstrations in 1965. By mid-1966, it was clear to many that the war wasn’t going away, and antiwar organizers, mostly long-time pacifists, students, and old radicals, began to deepen their commitments and try to broaden their coalition to include new constituencies.

One of these constituencies was soldiers. Antiwar organizers in New York had consciously sought out refusers and veterans to speak at their events. The most famous antiwar veteran up to that point was probably Donald Duncan, who served as a Green Beret in Vietnam. But civilian organizers saw military personnel mostly as moral symbols whose presence in the movement could help disarm hawkish, pro-war opponents who red-baited protesters and criticized them as being against the troops. The notion that the antiwar movement might actually organize soldiers, or that they could help soldiers organize themselves, was yet a faint idea. It would take the actions of the troops themselves, of G.I.’s like Samas, Mora, and Johnson, to crack open the possibility for a G.I. movement.

The three G.I.’s had prepared a statement to read to the assembled crowd in the church auditorium. “We have decided to take a stand against this war, which we consider immoral, illegal, and unjust,” they declared. They planned to report to the Oakland Army Terminal, “but

under no circumstances” would they embark for Vietnam, even if their refusal resulted in courts-martial. They spoke not only for themselves. “We have been in the army long enough to know that we are not the only G.I.’s who feel as we do. Large numbers of men in the service do not understand this war or are against it.” They explained how the soldiers around them became resigned to going to Vietnam. “No one wanted to go,” they said, “and more than that, there was no reason for anyone to go.”

They criticized U.S. support for the government and military of South Vietnam, and they questioned the entire purpose of the war itself. In the army, they said, “No one used the word ‘winning’ anymore because in Vietnam it has no meaning. Our officers just talk about five or ten more years of war with at least half-million of our boys thrown into the grinder.” The three young men agreed on one thing: “The war in Vietnam must be stopped.” The time for talk was over. They ended their statement: “We want no part of a war of extermination. We oppose the criminal waste of American lives and resources. We refuse to go to Vietnam!”

The three G.I.’s first met at Fort Gordon, Georgia, where they were stationed before they were reassigned to the 142nd Signal Battalion of the 2nd Armored Division at Fort Hood. They bonded over their shared critique of the war. They all had opposed the war before entering the army, but now, with shipment to Vietnam looming, the stakes were much higher.

All three came from working-class backgrounds, and they all had some college education. Mora was Puerto Rican, Samas was Lithuanian and Italian, and Johnson was African American. “We represent in our backgrounds a cross section of the Army and America,” they said. Mora was from Spanish Harlem and was a member of the Du Bois Club, a youth group connected to the Communist Party. He had participated in protests against U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam, Guatemala, and Puerto Rico. A classmate described him as “a socialist who’s interested in the Marxist way of thinking.” Mora’s links to the New York left proved helpful when the three troops decided to act on their consciences.

After being ordered to Vietnam, the soldiers decided together that they would refuse. During their leave they hashed out a strategy and reached out to a lawyer. With Mora’s connections to the antiwar left, they sought out civilian allies. They contacted leaders of the Du Bois Club and the Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee. Antiwar leaders Dave Dellinger and Fred Halstead met with the G.I.’s, and together with famed pacifist A.J. Muste, they all agreed to use the Parade Committee, perhaps the most important antiwar coalition at the time, to mobilize support for the three. They also agreed to use their refusal as a call to organize more G.I.’s against the war.

This was the beginning of a civilian-soldier alliance that

would help sustain the wave of G.I. protest to come. The organizers in New York worked to mobilize broad, national support for the soldiers. They formed the Fort Hood Three Defense Committee and sent out fact sheets to their contacts across the nation. They lined up support for the G.I.'s on the west coast, and they reached out to luminaries like Carmichael.

All this represented an important turning point in the antiwar movement. Dellinger wrote that the peace movement had been "slow" in the past to "carry its message to the soldiers." David Samas echoed this point. "It often seems that the peace groups are united against the soldier," he wrote. "The G.I. should be reached somehow. He doesn't want to fight. He has no reasons to risk his life. Yet he doesn't realize that the peace movement is dedicated to his safety." The three G.I.'s and their antiwar allies were heeding Samas' words and showing the potential for a new path: soldiers and civilians, in alliance, working together to take the peace movement into the army's ranks.

It was opposition to the war that drove the three soldiers to act, but their critique of racism and support for the Civil Rights Movement were also major motivations. They were some of the earliest antiwar protesters to really connect opposition to the war abroad to the fight for racial equality at home. "We know that Negroes and Puerto Ricans are being drafted and end up in the worst of the fighting all out of proportion to their numbers in the population," they said at their press conference, "and we have firsthand knowledge that these are the ones who have been deprived of decent education and jobs at home." In a speech he was scheduled to give, Johnson discussed the "direct relationship between the peace movement and the civil rights movement," and he drew a connection between the Vietnamese and African-American struggles. "The South Vietnamese are fighting for representation, like we ourselves," he wrote. "[T]he Negro in Vietnam is just helping to defeat what his Black brother is fighting for in the United States."

Johnson also highlighted the contradiction for Black soldiers who were asked to fight abroad while being denied equal rights at home. "When the Negro soldier returns, he still will not be able to ride in Mississippi or walk down a certain street in Alabama," he wrote. "His children will still receive an inferior education and he will still live in a ghetto. Although he bears the brunt of the war he will receive no benefits." Nor was it just these three G.I.'s who were connecting the dots between racism and the war. Their act of protest occurred within months of Muhammad Ali's draft refusal and the rise of the Black Panthers, who connected colonialism abroad to racial oppression at home. Martin Luther King Jr. would soon speak out against the war. "We were taking the Black young men who had been crippled by our society," King would later declare, "and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia

which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem."

After that June 30th day when the G.I.'s publicly declared their refusal to go to Vietnam, they were transformed into a cause célèbre. But it wasn't just sympathizers in the peace movement who were paying attention to them. The police went to Samas' home and urged him to retract his statement, and they spoke to his parents to try to pressure him to back down on his refusal. Samas stood firm in his decision. "They have attempted to intimidate the three of us in one way or another," wrote Samas. "But we have not been in the least shaken from our paths."

On July 7, 1966, the three G.I.'s were once again scheduled to speak to supporters at the Community Church. Nearly 800 people turned out to the event. On their way there, however, Samas, Mora, and Johnson were stopped by the police and swooped away to Fort Dix, New Jersey. Unable to give their speeches, members of their families stepped in. James Johnson's brother read his talk, and Dennis Mora's young wife read her husband's statement. Meanwhile, the army fretted over how to handle the detained G.I.'s. Fort Dix Commanding General J.M. Hightower told the army's chief of staff that he had "sufficient evidence" to charge the three with "uttering disloyal statements with intent to cause disaffection and disloyalty among the civilian population and members of the military forces." He decided, however, to issue movement orders to the soldiers to leave for Saigon on July 13. This would be their last chance at avoiding punishment. "Should orders be disobeyed," Hightower wrote, "appropriate action will be taken."

The orders to ship out actually came down on July 14, 1966. The young men were told they must go to Vietnam. They refused. In doing so, they became one of the very first examples of active-duty G.I. refusal during the Vietnam War, and certainly the most visible to date. They also became something more than just three soldiers. To the antiwar movement, they were now the "Fort Hood Three."

The Fort Hood Three were court-martialed in September of 1966. In defense of their refusal, the soldiers argued that the war in Vietnam was illegal. The military refused this argument, and all three were convicted for insubordination. Samas and Johnson each received five years in prison at Fort Leavenworth. Mora received three years. All appeals would fail, including one to the Supreme Court, though the army would later reduce Samas' and Johnson's sentence to three years.

The Fort Hood Three Defense Committee continued to mobilize support for the G.I.'s after their conviction. They raised funds, spread awareness of the case, paid for newspaper ads, and circulated petitions. Sponsors of the defense committee included Tom Hayden, Stokely Carmichael, Harvey Swados, Noam Chomsky, Floyd

McKissick, and others.

Some in the labor movement also rallied behind the soldiers. James Johnson's father was a steward with the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Workers Unions (RWDSU). District 65 of the AFL-CIO had a Peace Action Committee that mailed a leaflet to members with the headline: "Jimmy's Son Needs Your Help." The flyer explained that "Jimmy Johnson is a 65er" who "takes his job and his union seriously," and asked for readers to contribute to the G.I.'s defense fund and write to them with letters of support. Al Evanhoff, Assistant Vice President of District 65 of the RWDSU, put out a supportive statement. "As a trade unionist," he wrote, "long ago I learned the fact that an injury to one is an injury to all." Evanhoff criticized the war and pledged to form a defense committee for the Fort Hood Three.

This support from sections of the labor movement is worth noting, because it flies in the face of the conventional narrative that pits workers against the antiwar movement. While some union leaders and members were certainly pro-war, others opposed it. Major unions like the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), and powerful labor leaders like Walter Reuther criticized the war. Many locals and rank-and-file members were antiwar, and working-class people overall were more likely than the college-educated affluent to be against it. G.I. and veteran dissent would soon become one example of working-class antiwar protest to make a mark on history.

The support for the soldiers was translated into song by Pete Seeger, the famous Old Left troubadour. In his lyrics, Seeger paraphrased David Samas:

We've been told in training that in Vietnam we must fight / And we may have to kill women and children, and that is quite all right / We say this war's illegal, immoral, and unjust / We're taking legal action, just the three of us.

We'll report for duty but we won't go overseas / We're prepared to face court martial, but we won't fight for Ky / We three have talked it over, our decision now is clear / We will not go to Vietnam, we'll fight for freedom here.

When the three soldiers were finally released after serving their time, the Hunter College Du Bois Club hosted a celebratory homecoming for them. It was called "Salute the Ft. Hood Three," and Pete Seeger, Ossie Davis, Dave Dellinger, and others attended. The G.I.'s came out of prison, still, as supporters of the antiwar movement.

They also came out of prison to see a rising G.I. movement flourishing all around them. Hundreds of active-duty service members had joined the antiwar movement by the late 1960s. Some, like the Fort Hood

Three, refused to go to Vietnam. Underground G.I. newspapers circulated throughout the military, and off-base coffeehouses were springing up around the nation. Antiwar soldiers marched, protested, petitioned, and formed their own groups to try to organize their fellow troops. Civilian support networks and legal defense organizations were aiding this rising tide of soldier dissent. And the G.I. movement had not yet reached its peak.

Little of this was true when David Samas, Dennis Mora, and James Johnson refused to ship to Vietnam on June 30, 1966. But a few years later, it was a reality. The Fort Hood Three set an example that others followed, and David Samas, Dennis Mora, and James Johnson emerged from their time in prison to see firsthand the G.I. movement that they helped to create.

Let Them Tremble: Biographical Interventions Marking 100 Years of the Communist Party, USA

Chapter 5: Judith LeBlanc

By TONY PECINOVSKY

LeBlanc returned to a familiar theme in a July-August 1983 Political Affairs article. “Indian reservations with rich resources are a prime target of the energy monopolies,” which pipeline developers confirm by their continuing actions. LeBlanc proposed a strategic alliance between labor unions and Native tribes throughout the 1970s and 1980s; some unions, though, ignored the concerns of American Indians for the promise of jobs. LeBlanc wasn’t deterred, urging fellow Communists and their allies to “encourage the trade union movement to fight for jobs with affirmative action for Native American Indians.” “The protection of reservations and their natural resources from monopoly plunder needs to be a major point of struggle for the U.S. working class,” she argued. Communists needed to highlight the “sharper anti-monopoly character emerging” from within the struggle for sovereignty and natural resources — a precursor to the contemporary movement for environmental sustainability.

LeBlanc saw the struggle for Native rights as having a “fundamental interconnection” to the Party’s strategic focus of “the developing antimonopoly struggle,” and she criticized her comrades who viewed the plight of Indigenous people as a “side issue.” In some Districts, the party “had very little relationship to native leaders on the ground,” she recalled. LeBlanc wasn’t deterred, though. “This was part of the dialog and of being a Native American in the Communist Party,” she added. To her, regardless of its shortcomings, the party “recognizes the role of various liberation struggles. Native, Asian, Puerto Rican, Mexican, and African American activists were brought into the leadership of the party. The party mentored and educated in special ways. This was one of the biggest contributions it made. It was fully wide-open.”

Regardless, LeBlanc argued that demands for good jobs could unite Native tribes with unions. We need to strengthen and expand” Native resistance in collaboration with unions, she emphasized. “The central issue in cities and [in] reservations is jobs. We can not [sic] talk about protection and further development of [Native] culture, language, and religion without a major emphasis on the fight for jobs with affirmative action,” including for Native Americans. “We must work for multiracial class unity in a way which convinces Native American Indian workers that their natural allies are to be found in the working class.” To LeBlanc, “The Communist Party had a healthy political strategy of building the unity of the

working class, of the various people of color communities. It recognized the fact that there was special problems and needs and ways that the working class could move together in a more unified way despite racism,” LeBlanc recalled.

LeBlanc, and other women Communists — Evelina Alarcon, Carole Marks, and Mildred Williamson — appeared on the popular Sally Jesse Raphael syndicated TV show in spring 1986. Communists were seen as a curiosity to some, not necessarily a force to be taken seriously. Regardless, Party members were energized when 700 reds attended a special conference on the midterm elections just a few months later. At the conference members were urged to “step up their involvement in electoral forms such as Political Action Committees (PACs) in the unions and elsewhere.” It was emphasized that “local Party clubs [should] work on voter registration and mobilization.” Emergency “membership mobilization meetings to discuss the final stages of Congressional elections were also encouraged and a “goal of building new party shop clubs” was adopted. LeBlanc, now national cadre director, called for an “all out push to increase the circulation of the PDW [People’s Daily World] to 100,000,” which was an ambitious goal.

To LeBlanc, building the movement for Indigenous rights and working class power complimented building the Communist Party and the PDW. In a spring 1987 pre-convention report, LeBlanc said, “We are a minority party with majority ideas and the potential for great growth.” “In every area [of struggle] there is tremendous flux, tremendous possibilities to influence the development and the thinking of masses, and tremendous opportunities to initiate Left forms, new coalitions and alliances... Objective developments dictate that we must grow rapidly. Life is making this a necessity,” she added. This “necessity,” however, was made considerably more difficult by Reagan-era anticommunism. LeBlanc had a response for the critics, though. “The bottom line on anti-communism,” she told a conference at Harvard University in fall 1988, “is that it has always been used to derail unity in the people’s movement, disarm their militancy, and undermine the struggle against capitalism,” a sentiment then born out of nearly 70 years of struggle. “It is essential for Americans to hear straight from the horse’s mouth, so to speak, about communism. Then they can make up their own minds about capitalism, socialism and communism,” LeBlanc added. Anticommunism “attempts to camouflage the existence of the class struggle. It has taken its toll on the labor movement, on every progressive movement,” she concluded.

At a spring PDW picnic in Los Angeles attended by 200 people, LeBlanc took aim at President Reagan and Reaganomics. She asked, “what the country would be like if Reaganism were defeated in November,” if the country “turned around,” turned away from the policies of the right-wing then exemplified by the coming George H. W.

Bush presidency. “What would life be like if you could organize without government interference,” she asked? What if “the government stopped funding contra wars... [and] all children were guaranteed daycare...All this is possible with mass struggle,” concluded, calling on Communists to “bring together Democrats, independents, and first-time voters for mass action.

Like other Communists, LeBlanc rooted her political activism in international solidarity. While in Managua, Nicaragua in fall 1988, she and party leader James Steele, along with representatives from 130 other political parties from Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas, demanded that the U.S. government end its “aggressive and interventionist” policies through the CIA backed Contras and “pay for damages it [has] inflicted on the Central American nation.” LeBlanc and the other delegates were attending the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, which had won state power in 1979 after overthrowing the dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza DeBayle. Unfortunately, with the former CIA director and Reagan vice president on his way to the White House, Reagan era domestic and international politics were continued. LeBlanc told her comrades in Detroit in late November 1988, “Reagan’s voodoo economic dreams are about to explode into our very worst nightmare.” She predicted that “economic problems will become the key battleground for the people’s movement in coming months.” She also called capitalism an “economic time-bomb” and noted that the National Economic Commission, a bipartisan U.S. deficit reduction commission headed by corporate elites, had already drawn up “battle plans” for “austerity economics,” which was akin to “asking bears to refrain from eating honey.” The nightmare was beginning; 80,000 farmers were served foreclosure notices, 7,000 GTE middle management workers were laid off, cuts to Social Security were proposed, while 2,000 state workers in New Jersey were laid off shortly after the elections. More “layoffs are in store for autoworkers after the holiday break,” she predicted. Monopoly capitalism is in trouble,” she added. The only way out of the impending crash is to tax the rich and cut the military budget.” LeBlanc’s call would not come to fruition even after the collapse of socialism; U.S. imperialism soon embarked on military adventures in the Middle East with horrific consequences.

LeBlanc said the formation of a “people’s party” was not on the agenda, arguing instead that “the most effective way to end corporate rule on Capitol Hill is for the trade unions, the Afro-American community and the peace, women’s, and environmental movements to run their own candidates,” Further, she argued that “there is a newly developing understanding of the limitations of Democratic Party and the role of the media in trying to influence and manipulate the fears of the people.” LeBlanc would reflect more on the role of media in democracy in the coming decade. Despite the outcome of the presidential elections, LeBlanc urged Communists to organize

“independently of the Democratic Party -- politically, financially and organizationally.”

Though LeBlanc’s focus was frequently on immediate demands, she viewed the world through a Marxist-Leninist lens and articulated a world-view that centered on broad-based unity. In a spring 1989 article titled “The Communist Party and Its Ideology,” LeBlanc wrote, “We help build coalitions so that the people’s movement can win reforms. This energizes the movement and sharpens the class struggle.” She articulated a working class focus, a collaborative endeavor with the party seen as a part of a larger mass movement. “Communist participation adds working-class direction, solidifies and unites... We never attempt to take over coalitions. We never try to go it alone...We know that neither the Communist Party, nor the working class, nor the people’s movements can, on their own, separate and apart, make fundamental long-lasting changes.” To LeBlanc, this was a time tested sentiment born out of years of experience. “Our work in coalitions is a critical and decisive element of our Party’s contribution to raising the level of class-consciousness in the democratic movements.” For LeBlanc, organizing and ideology were inseparable.

Unlike some other Marxist groups, the Party has often shunned the public spotlight. Whether out of fear of repression and anticommunism, or as activists focused on specific issues within broad coalitions — something LeBlanc would exemplify throughout her career — the “Party [often] makes important contributions for which it cannot take credit.” In LeBlanc’s words, “There is no better way to fight anti-communist stereotypes than through our presence and our participation in struggle” even when membership was often relegated to one-on-one discussions. Fear of Communists, she added, “relies on a lack of knowledge,” on a stereotyped caricature. Communists must engage, build trust and demonstrate their commitment to struggle because anticommunism doesn’t just affect the party, “It affects how the left is organized.” To LeBlanc, anticommunism weakened the entire movement for social and economic justice, while isolating movement leaders from their natural allies. The demise of the party-led CAA and CRC are just two examples.

To LeBlanc, the party’s influence could not “be measured with a gauge or a computer” and remained larger than its formal membership. Demonstrable contributions, “in people’s day-to-day struggles, armed with, and creatively applying, our ideology,” would not only shape and influence political discourse, but would also help build the party. For LeBlanc, this was the articulation of a class analysis situated within the context of world historical forces competing for power, a context that would be dramatically reshaped in the coming years with socialism’s retreat. “Our future as a Party is tied to the fate of that most important class in the history of civilization,” the working class; its ascendance or decline impacted the party’s ability to influence, recruit, and grow. “We have

projected the building of a mass Party with its ideological and numerical foundation in the working class because only such a party can lead political struggles.”

Largely absent from the party’s analysis was an understanding of the ongoing and precipitous decline of those traditionally seen by Communists as constituting the key link in the chain of the working class, industrial workers. Only belatedly did they begin to see the larger shifts in the economy away from industrial production and towards service sector and tech jobs as necessitating a shift in concentration. The party’s “industrial concentration” policy marred Communist organizing and tied its recruitment to an ever-smaller section of workers, a section that would become increasingly insecure about its future.

“Our Party is shaped by objective circumstances, by the dynamics of the class struggle,” LeBlanc emphasized. “On the positive side, we are involved in many of the most important struggles of the day,” including the fightback against factory closures. “On the negative side, we are not big enough and we are not growing fast enough.” Focusing their still considerable energies on a declining sector of the economy with a shrinking workforce isolated some party leaders from the emerging movements then springing into action as the economy continued to change. Unsurprisingly, growth suffered. Reflecting on these conditions in 1992, LeBlanc noted, “We cannot be a working class party in the abstract; it is not an academic question. We cannot build a mass Party without concentrating on the majority class, the working class. We must be a Party of, by, and for the working class.” “Our Party must inspire people to take matters into their own hands; to fight for what is needed, not simply what is possible,” LeBlanc added. “We must work on three levels; we must work in our own name, in a public, visible way as a political Party; we must help to build coalitions to support this initiative; and we must organize the victims of the crisis at the grass roots,” which they did. “We must spark a national movement that fights for jobs and equality.” Communists were still searching for a return to the Popular Front. However, unlike in the 1930s, industrial workers were now a sector of the working class increasingly in decline.

N.Y. Transit Workers Authorize Strike

By GARY BONO

Some 7,000 New York City transit workers packed a cavernous hall at the Javits Convention Center Dec. 10 to hear a report from the leadership of Transit Workers Union Local 100 on the status of contract negotiations.

By a unanimous vote, the workers authorized a strike at 12:01 a.m. on Dec. 16 if the executive board deems it necessary.

Three days earlier the Metropolitan Transit Authority-New York City Transit (MTA-NYCT) had proposed a two-year contract, including demands for health care and pension givebacks for new hires. The proposal included a wage increase of 3 percent in the first year followed by a conditional increase of 2 percent for the second year. The second year increase was conditioned on a sharp reduction in sick leave usage. Local 100 President Roger Toussaint characterized the proposal as an “insult.”

Just prior to the membership meeting, the union’s executive board voted to direct union negotiators to seek a three-year contract with an 8 percent raise each year.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson and prominent labor leaders were on hand to lend support. Brian McLaughlin, president of the New York City Central Labor Council, pledged that NYCCLC unions will fill the street in solidarity with Local 100. He announced that he has called on the 1.5 million workers represented by CLC-affiliated unions to contribute \$1 each to a strike solidarity fund. Dennis Hughes, president of the New York State AFL-CIO, Larry Hanley of Amalgamated Transit Union and Norman Brown of the Machinists Union Railroad Division all stressed Local 100’s commitment not to fund a contract by sacrificing the wages and benefits of new hires as an example of worker solidarity.

Jackson recalled Dr. Martin Luther King’s visit to Memphis, Tenn. to support striking African American sanitation workers. He said that he was now coming to stand in solidarity with workers facing a similarly difficult contract struggle.

Jackson noted the national significance of the current struggle, equating workers’ security and job security to national security. Public transportation is the key to economic security, he said. Through its intransigence, he added, the MTA was “striking” against workers’ security.

Jackson pointed out that the U.S. is spending \$10 million an hour on a war in Iraq. He said an agency like the MTA, which is running a billion-dollar surplus, should be able to afford a fair settlement for workers.

Toussaint reported on the status of talks. He hammered

away at what he characterized as examples of the employer’s “bad faith.” MTA has denied past productivity gains, he said. It has attempted to force the union to accept binding arbitration, refused to abide by prior arbitration decisions and used intimidation tactics to put members on the defensive.

TWU members have already earned the wage and benefit improvements they have, Toussaint said, and would not pay for them again. The union will not pay for the contract by taking from new hires, he vowed.

Toussaint also detailed efforts the union has made to reach out to the broader public, including briefings to legislative, community and business groups, and a media campaign.

In the days before the contract’s expiration, TWU is planning to hit the streets. Toussaint announced plans for a mass rally on the afternoon of Dec. 13 outside the site of the final negotiations, New York’s Grand Hyatt Hotel.

In related developments, TWU-represented transit workers at five New York City bus lines, covered by separate contracts, have declared that in case of a strike they will walk out in solidarity. In addition, unions representing some workers on the Metro-North commuter rail line have hinted at the possibility of a solidarity walkout. The New York Taxi Drivers Alliance has directed its members not to pick up multiple fares during a transit strike.

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Anti-Communism really began to flourish in the CIO once World War II was over and the tide of anti-Communist hysteria, held in check during the war, mounted under the impetus of the cold war policies of the Truman Administration. It was clearly evident during "Operation Dixie," which got under way in 1946.

Both the AF of L and the CIO launched campaigns after the war to organize workers in the South. The AF of L opened its drive in May, 1946, with announcements by William Green, George Meany, and other officials stressing that the CIO was "Communist-dominated." Green openly appealed to Southern industrialists to recognize AF of L unions, urge their workers to join them, and, in general, cooperate with the federation "or fight for your life against Communist forces." Meany declared that Southern workers faced a choice between the AF of L, which followed "the principle that you cannot be a good union man unless you are first a good American," and "an organization that has openly followed the Communist line and is following that line today."⁶

The AF of L, of course, had been voicing such charges since 1935. In the past, the CIO had in most cases succeeded in convincing unorganized workers that to swallow the anti-Communist line was to play into the hands of the bosses. This time the approach was different. The CIO threw tremendous resources into the Southern organizing campaign, which Philip Murray declared in 1946 was "the most important drive of its kind ever undertaken by any labor organization in the history of this country."⁷ But instead of moving into the South with the alliance of center-left forces that had made possible the great victories of the 1930's and early 1940's, the CIO now made it a practice from the outset to eliminate all Communists and Communist sympathizers from any connection with the drive. Van Bittner of the steelworkers, director of the CIO drive—whom *Fortune* called a "leading CIO right-winger"⁸—announced at the outset that no Communists would participate in the campaign and filled most of the organizing staff positions with implacable anti-Communists. He rejected offers from internationals associated with the left to send experienced organizers, black and white, to aid in the drive. Finally, he turned down volunteers from any organization with a left-wing tinge, depriving the campaign of forces that had been crucial in the earlier organizing drives of the CIO.

These actions may have started as a response to the AF of L-employer charge that the CIO was made up of "Communists," but actually the Southern organizing campaign was immediately exploited by anti-Communist forces in the CIO to eliminate Communists and their allies from the movement. The absence of the dedicated and tireless organizers of the left who had contributed to so many previous drives was particu-

larly apparent in attempts to reach black workers in the South. To be sure, Communists in 1946 had less influence among black workers than ten years before, but that influence, particularly for the Communist and left-wing forces in the CIO unions, was still considerable.

The background of the left-wing appeal for blacks requires analysis. When the World War II began in 1939, the Communists labeled it the "Second Imperialist War" and launched a "The-Yanks-Are-Not-Coming" campaign. (The CIO took a similar position; it went on record at its 1940 convention as opposing "any foreign entanglements" by the United States "which may in any way drag us down the path of entering or becoming involved in foreign wars.") Slogans like "Yanks Are Not Coming," particularly "The Black Yanks Are Not Coming," won the support of many black Americans, who saw little distinction between German fascism and British colonialism and resented the call to defend democracy abroad when it was not a reality at home.⁹ Although A. Philip Randolph quit the Socialist Party in 1940 because of its anti-war stand and became an active member of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, many blacks agreed with the black columnist George S. Schuyler that "our war is not against Hitler in Europe, but against the Hitlers in America."¹⁰

But blacks also saw the enormous rise of government defense spending in 1940-41 as an opportunity for black employment; their objection was not so much that defense contracts were dragging the United States closer to war, but that everything was being done to reserve defense work for whites. Consequently, they joined the March on Washington Movement in the thousands to secure a place for blacks in the Arsenal of Democracy. But the Communists, adhering to the position that the defense industries were part of "imperialist war preparations," opposed any movement to increase the number of workers, black or white, in those industries. Moreover, since Randolph was now a leading advocate of American aid to the Allies, Communists viewed the MOWM as a plot to persuade blacks to support the war.

As the MOWM grew to a mass movement among blacks, the Communists adopted a less hostile attitude. Even though Randolph rejected Communist support, the *Daily Worker* began to feature news about the march and on June 19, 1941, called upon "all fair-minded citizens" who believed in "both peace and job equality" to "throw their full weight behind the Job March to Washington in July." Although their last-minute efforts probably helped build support for the march, the Communists undoubtedly lost prestige in the black community because of their earlier hostility to the MOWM and the time they took to come out in its favor.

On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union, and the U.S.S.R. entered the war. From then until the end of World War II, the Communists and many left-wing leaders of CIO unions put the objective of winning the war first on the agenda. They continued to urge an end to Jim Crow practices and race discrimination in general in industry, labor organizations, and the army, but there was a tendency to

frown upon any struggles that might interfere with the war effort. "We cannot temporarily stop the war until all questions of discrimination are ironed out," Ben Davis, a leading black Communist, explained, urging the "Negro people to be ready to sacrifice."¹¹ Of course, victory over fascism was most intimately related to the future welfare of all workers, black and white—a fact that many critics of the Communist position conveniently overlook—but it is also true that the Communist and left-wing union leaders were accused, not always unjustly, of putting the objective of winning the war ahead of the workers' interests in general and those of black workers in particular. It did not improve Communist prestige among blacks when the *Daily Worker* exhorted them to keep labor's "no-strike pledge" under all circumstances, lest they deliver a blow to the war effort. Nor did it help Communist prestige when that newspaper attacked the blacks involved in the Harlem riot of August, 1943, as "fifth columnists and pro-fascists"¹² who were not representative of the "good people" of Harlem—"good people" who would not allow their grievances to cripple the unity required to win the war. Frustrated blacks often failed to see how the Communists' approach was preferable to that of traditionally anti-Negro white forces.

It was to be exceedingly difficult for the Communists to overcome the resentment among blacks created by the Party's wartime policies. The Communists never completely erased the feeling in sections of the black community that they had placed the Soviet Union's survival above the battle for black equality. Veteran anti-Communist black leaders had a field day pointing this out. Frank Crosswaith, in a widely publicized article, wrote in November, 1943:

To the average man of normal intellect with an ordinary sense of observation, the American Communists can be described literally as having their feet in America and their heads in Russia. As long as they continue to occupy this unrealistic posture, they will remain the outstanding force of destruction and confusion they have thus far been in the American labor movement, and will continue to hamper the progress of the Negro people toward ultimate equality and justice.¹³

Although the Communists defended their commitment to the war effort with the argument that, even as Crosswaith was writing, millions in the Soviet Union were sacrificing their lives to halt a threat to the rights and the very lives of all people, the argument was not very persuasive in the Negro community.

Communist prestige among blacks declined further when the Party in California failed to protest the government's unjust treatment of Japanese-Americans and when, at its twelfth convention in 1944, the Communist Party was dissolved and the Communist Political Association created in its stead. The dissolution of the Party ensued from General Secretary Earl Browder's insistence that the objective of continued national unity after the war required laying aside the idea of class struggle and cooperating with all sections of the population, including the monopoly capitalists, for the benefit of the nation as a whole. In such a postwar world of class

harmony and peaceful relations between capitalist and socialist nations, Browder argued, there would be no need for the Communist Party as previously constituted. At the convention that dissolved the party, no resolution was adopted on the black question.

Despite the decline of the Communists' prestige among blacks, and despite their tendency to subordinate the grievances of black workers to the interests of winning the war, the left-wing unions had the best record in the fight against racial discrimination during World War II. As we have seen, such unions as the International Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers, the NMU, the United Packinghouse Workers, the United Public Workers, and the United Office and Professional Workers were quick to form their own committees against racial discrimination. Leftist unions like the UE, the International Marine and Shipbuilders, the Packinghouse Workers, the International Fur and Leather Workers Union, the NMU, the National Union of Marine Cooks and Stewards, the ILWU, and the TWU fought most vigorously during the war to open jobs for blacks and to upgrade black workers. They also took a firm and unequivocal stand against "hate strikers." "It is significant," Ray Marshall observed, "that almost every organization that adopted special equalitarian racial machinery [during the war] either was Communist-dominated or had a strong Communist faction contending for leadership."¹⁴ Early in 1942, a reporter asked Robert C. Lee, executive vice-president of the Moore-McCormack Lines, about the employment of black seamen together with white seamen on the company's ships. Lee answered that the company would employ blacks if the whites did not object. Confronted with evidence that white seamen, members of the NMU, did not object, Lee said he was not surprised: "They're all Commies."¹⁵

All this was well known to black Americans. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., wrote in 1945, "There is no group in America, including the Christian church, that practices racial brotherhood one-tenth as much as the Communist Party."¹⁶ The prestige of the CIO among black workers at the end of the war stemmed in no small degree from the record of the so-called Communist-dominated unions. But none of those unions was allowed to become involved in the CIO's Southern organizing drive launched after the war.

The CIO's generally more favorable record on Negro rights stood it in good stead in the early stage of the campaign, enabling it to win several NLRB elections in competition with the AF of L where, as in

the Masonite Corporation at Laurel, Mississippi, the Negro vote made the difference between victory and defeat. But, while the CIO thereafter rested on its reputation with the blacks, the AF of L, stung by its early defeats, began to pay special attention to black workers. The CIO rejected organizers from unions with a record of struggle for equal rights for blacks. It even refused to employ Miranda Smith, the dynamic leader of United Tobacco Workers, Local 22 of the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural, and Allied Workers Union (FTA), because she was a Communist. The AF of L on the other hand added seventeen Negro organizers and declared itself for "equal employment opportunities for the Negro worker and full participation in American Federation of Labor Unionism."¹⁷ (To be sure, the 1946 AF of L convention was to reveal how little that posture actually meant.) The federation relied heavily on the anti-Communist theme in its appeals to black workers, claiming that twenty-one of thirty-six CIO unions were dominated by leaders who followed the Party line. But its major stress was that it could do more for the black worker than the CIO. *Pie in the Sky*, an AF of L pamphlet widely circulated among black workers during the Southern campaign, concluded: "The AF of L. offers you results now—not hot-air promises of pie in the sky by and by."¹⁸ The very use of the words of Wobbly Joe Hill's famous song indicates that the AF of L was not afraid of a radical association in its appeal to blacks.* The CIO could have countered the pamphlet by telling black workers what had been accomplished for Negro members of CIO unions. But the most persuasive exponents of such an argument were Communists and left-wingers, and the CIO was taking the greatest pains to erase the impression that Communists exerted any influence in the organization.

Neither the AF of L nor the CIO, for all the resources they threw into the drive, accomplished what it had hoped for in the Southern campaign. The AF of L's campaign, which aimed at enrolling a million new members, ended on July 31, 1947, with a reported new enrollment of 425,000. The Taft-Hartley law, passed by Congress in June, 1947, "right-to-work" laws passed in several Southern states, and other anti-labor legislation made "a continued successful drive" impossible.¹⁹ The CIO had even less to report in membership growth. It claimed 400,000 organized by January, 1948.

The CIO professed to be determined to continue the Southern drive "regardless of how long it takes."²⁰ But the bitter attacks launched by the CIO leadership against the left-wing unions overshadowed the drive. Indeed, the leadership devoted more attention after 1948 to destroying unions than to organizing the South,† and one of its earliest targets was the United Tobacco Workers, Local 22, affiliated with the left-wing Food, Tobacco, Agricultural, and Allied Workers Union.

In the summer of 1947 Local 22 was engaged in a strike for a new agreement with R. J. Reynolds in Winston-Salem, employing 11,000 workers about equally divided between black and white. The House Un-American Activities Committee (the Dies Committee, later HUAC) began investigating the leaders of Local 22 on the ground that it was a "Communist-dominated union." The investigation made headlines in the Winston-Salem press, but the tobacco workers were not intimidated. On July 1 Paul Robeson, the militant black performer, spoke and sang at a mass meeting of 12,000 in Winston-Salem at which the theme was "full support for Local 22." The strike was won, and in the agreement between Reynolds and Local 22 wages were increased and working hours reduced. Shortly thereafter, as a result of Local 22's campaign to register its members to vote, Winston-Salem became the first Southern city in the twentieth century to send a black (the Reverend Kenneth Williams) to the City Council.

The CIO leadership picked up where the Dies Committee had left off. With funds provided by the CIO Executive Council, Willard Townsend, black President of the United Transport Service Employees, came into Winston-Salem in 1949 to challenge Local 22 in an NLRB election. At the same time, a campaign financed by the company was launched to persuade white members of Local 22 that they owed it to their country to quit a union dominated by Communists. The mayor of Winston-Salem went on the radio to read extracts from the report of the Dies Committee.²¹