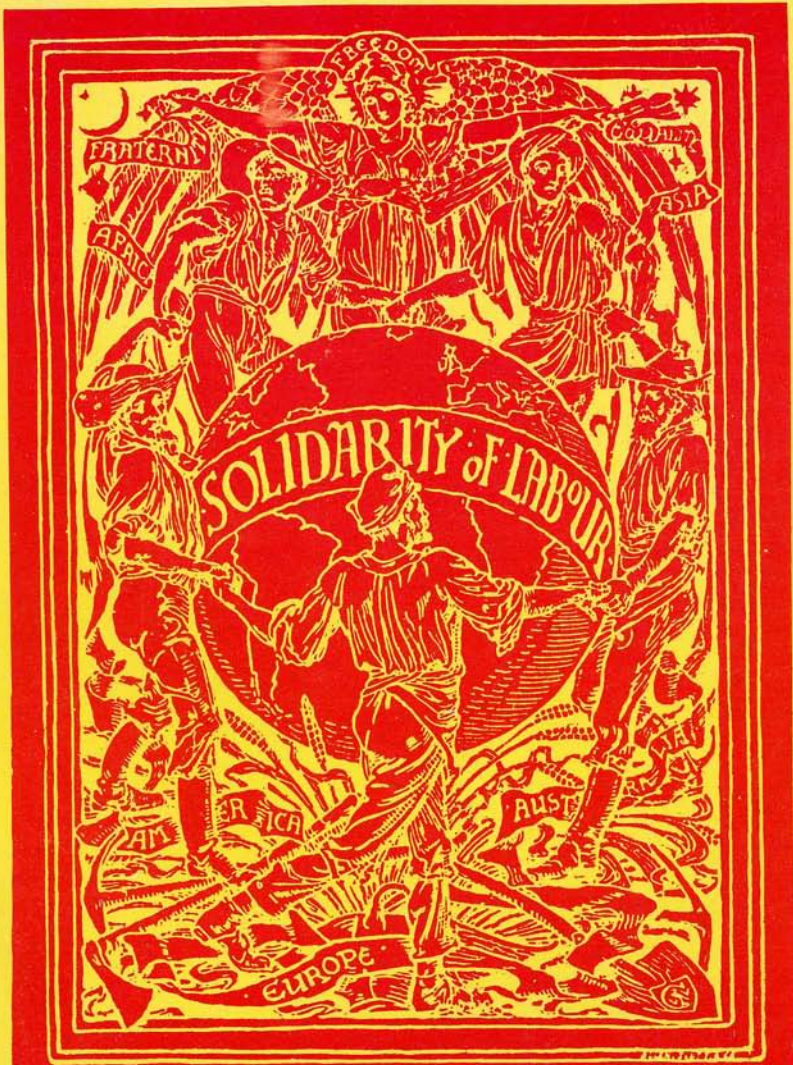


RADICAL AMERICA \$1



LABOUR'S MAY DAY
DEDICATED TO THE WORKERS OF THE WORLD

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RADICAL AMERICA

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EDITORS'

INTRODUCTION

Beginning with this number, the RA editors will provide introductory comments on the major articles of each issue. The purpose of these notes is not to "introduce" the reader to what is most important, but, through sketching larger themes, to offer a sense of the significance the contents have had for us.

In this issue a major group of articles reveals black self-awareness as a source of enormous power, long hidden from Western society (including the white radical movements) by imperial insulation. Despite the pleas of Third World thinkers over the last half-century, it has taken the post-World War II struggles of the Chinese, the Algerians, the Cubans, the Vietnamese, and the Black Americans to force this reality on an often-unwilling white Left. Now we face the task of rediscovering those voices ignored by society and the consequent historical legacy of mistakes, distortions, and tragedies from which we must proceed.

The interview with Aime Cesaire most-clearly identifies the overt cultural aspects of this isolation: Even Communists viewed blackness as a negative characteristic, not as a hidden resource for revolutionary energy. That only Cesaire and a handful of other poets and political writers have broken through with the message of cultural and political inspiration that Africa provides is in itself a revealing fact.

Mark Naison offers most directly the political implications for American radicalism. Even the best-intended struggles engaged in by white radicals for black rights tended to resolve themselves through doctrinaire formulas which served insufficiently when white Leftists faced other "priorities" (such as defense of the Soviet Union's foreign policy). Clearly, Naison shows, there is for the Left no easy way out, for what is in question is not good will or even obeisance to black radical organizations, but the nature of Western society — including most definitely the nature of the radicals themselves.

Another major article deals with the situation of industrial laborers in America, past and present. While the experiences of predominantly white-male workers discussed do not permit a full view of the class struggle, we may view through their experiences an aspect of the efforts by workers to push beyond the limits of bourgeois institutions.

The discussions arranged and edited by Staughton Lynd offer us an exciting historical insight into the great step forward made by the working class during the 1930s. The experiences which are recounted are experiences of active, spontaneous organization in the shops — clearly related in the memories of these men to the mass upsurges of the 1930s, mortgage foreclosures, hunger marches, and the daily reality of unemployment for most and overtime for others. Some men began talking union because the need was clearly manifested in the daily life of the shop. Others were aided by management's chronic wage reductions. Some knew about unions from their parents. In most cases they sought out the assistance of union structures after some initial organization. Thus the top-down relationship of professional organizers was for these men a late development and not always a pleasant one. The old-timers from the sitdown days recognize that many unions built at the cost of great sacrifice and danger have now become Agents of Order on factory floors as well as fundamental defensive institutions for the maintenance of living standards.

The accounts of rank-and-file activities of the 1930s are inseparable from their retelling in 1970. The connections which these men make between their battles and the strikes and demonstrations of the students and other young people in the 1960s; the sense of personal history that is evident in each account; and the symposium itself which uses history to develop historic awareness in the community — suggest important directions for the development of self-reliance and perspective in a working-class area.

We also publish here the first in a series of "Work" articles, based on current experiences in offices and on shop floors. Bill Watson's sense of workers' "counter-planning" is sharply limited by apparent irrelevance of sex to the struggles in this particular sector, but his analysis of shop creativity in meeting factory standards is highly suggestive.

Finally, we remind our readers that participation and response — whether through articles, book reviews, letters, or other media — are welcomed and appreciated.

The Editors

MARXISM & BLACK RADICALISM IN AMERICA: NOTES ON A LONG (and continuing) JOURNEY

MARK NAISON

At no time in modern history have revolutionaries been faced with a more-complicated problem of self-definition than in contemporary America. The New Left has grown, developed, and divided in the midst of enormous cultural and economic changes. Traditional notions of what it means to be a revolutionary have had to withstand the shock of a strong and independent black liberation movement, an increasingly powerful women's movement, and now a gay liberation movement, all possessing critiques of Amerikkkan society that speak directly to the anxieties of day-to-day living. In addition, these movements have occurred in the midst of vast shrinkage in the labor market, expansion of political repression, and transformation of mass culture which has made drugs and music a central part of the experience of millions of young people whose parents were wrapped up in work and family life. (1) For those of us caught in the middle of these currents, the experience has been as frightening as it has been liberating. With no stable links to our past, whether through a satisfying family life or through a solid tradition of revolutionary politics and culture, we have been vulnerable to freakouts — ecstatic but self-destructive escapes from the terrors of our daily lives. The Weatherpeople (mostly out of elite universities) and the hundreds of thousands of teen-age junkies (out of poor and working-class families) represent tragically-similar responses to the disintegration of the traditional social patterns — one "political" and collective, the other physical and individualistic. They dramatize a fate that threatens all of us unless we can apply a sense of stability and continuity to the revolutionary changes happening within and around us.

One of the major priorities of the moment is a re-examination of our history. As children of the 1950s, few of us were aware of the forces in our lives which made us radical, or very interested in where they came from. Many of us even seemed happy to be "born free" of the

ideologies of the past, able to build our movement out of the concrete experiences of the present. But when the Amerikkkan crisis reached genocidal potential in the late '60s (in both Vietnam and the ghettos), significant numbers of us embraced traditional Marxism with the same naive abandon with which we had once espoused liberalism or populism. Factional struggles took place over obscure points of Marxist theory in organizations which had once espoused "participatory democracy", and Old Left parties which we had once benignly mocked (the CP, the SWP, and PL) became major forces in the movement. Through the subsequent nightmare of splits, manifestoes, and purges, the dynamism of the mass movement was dissipated and its communal spirit was destroyed. We had learned the hard way the wisdom of an old saying: Those who do not know their history are destined to repeat it.

On no issue was our ignorance of history more destructive than in our efforts to create an alliance between black and white movements. When racial conflict emerged as a major contradiction in American society, black and white radical leaders tried desperately to define a strategy for revolution which took into account the central role of the black liberation struggle. Although much of the discussion dealt with contemporary events, the theoretical issues, especially in the white movement, were defined by Marxist-Leninist rhetoric that had not been seriously aired in America for over 15 years. Leaders of SDS factions, many of whom knew little or nothing of black history or culture, offered confident and competing versions of the "correct line" on the black struggle, based on the pronouncements of Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin. While black students rebelled, black ghettos were aflame, and black revolutionaries were jailed and assassinated, white radicals argued bitterly about whether nationalism was "bourgeois", whether the Black Panthers were the vanguard, whether the white working class was privileged, and whether "self-determination in the black belt" was a viable mass line.

The development of a fresh theoretical approach to this issue is essential. I believe Marxism may be helpful, but only if we recognize that it does not dictate a firm and scientific solution to racial tensions in the revolution, and if we maintain a healthy skepticism about the conclusions of the "theoretical giants". The history of the Left's involvement in the black community, which this essay seeks to summarize, is in large part a tragedy, and its dimensions must be honestly faced. For the barriers dividing black and white in America, both culturally and economically, have been so great and complex that they overwhelmed all efforts to define an effective response in Marxist terms. Whether that failure is inherent in the Marxist method or is a product of its historical misapplications is something of which I am not sure, but it certainly should discourage efforts (particularly by white radicals) to project firm "political lines" on the black struggle. The complexity of this issue must be dealt with and our efforts at theorizing

infused with new flexibility, new humility, and increased understanding of the connections between the cultural and economic dimensions of the revolutionary process.

Beginnings of a Critique: Marxism and Western Civilization

As Paul Richards points out in a recent article (2), one of the best places to begin examining the tensions between American radicalism and black aspirations is in the life and work of W. E. B. Du Bois. Du Bois was perhaps the most-important American thinker who was influenced by Marxism, but he remained alienated from Socialist and Communist parties most of his life. From his vantage point in the black community Du Bois saw serious limits in a vision of revolution that made the triumph of the working class and the expropriation of the capitalists its primary objective. In a country where the white working class as well as the rich acted to exclude black people from the mainstream of economic and social life, Du Bois concluded that the revolution had to be directed against capitalism as a civilization, and that "cultural" problems such as racism and the emptiness of life in technological society had to be dealt with as an integral part of the "class struggle".

Du Bois's vision of revolution, much ignored in his time, has recently emerged as a major political force in the non-Western world. Since World War II, a "Third World consciousness" has steadily grown in the former colonies of Europe that borrows much from Marxism, but is extremely critical of the ideology and practice of Western Marxist parties. The major theorists of this awakening (Fanon, Guevara, Césaire, et cetera) call for new theoretical forms to take into account both the peculiarities of colonial class structure and the psychological and cultural disorientation imperialism has imposed. They criticize Marxism for its Western cultural references (3), and project a vision of liberation that sees the restructuring of social relationships and social values as a part of the revolutionary process rather than as an aftermath of the seizure of state power.

The Third World awakening has had reverberations in Black America. Black radical thinkers of all persuasions — from Eldridge Cleaver to LeRoi Jones — have based their politics on a critique of America as a civilization and have called for a new humanism in the struggle for revolutionary change. Whether friendly or hostile to Marxism, they have concluded that revolution must come from the bottom up, and must address itself to the whole of human experience. "Liberation for blacks," Earl Ofari asserts, "will come out of the revolutionary culture, consciousness, and experience of Afro-America." (4)

This total vision of human liberation is not entirely new to Marxism. Marx's early manuscripts deal primarily with the alienation from labor and the loss of organic solidarity as mankind began to progress from communalism. The Communist Manifesto shows the System slashing

brutally through traditional life-styles, twirling humanity around the cash nexus. But from the publication of Capital through World War II, in both theory and practice, this philosophical focus in mainstream Marxism was so subordinated to questions of economic analysis and political strategy that people like Castro and Fanon and Guevara almost seemed to be speaking a new language when they wrote of "revolutionary culture" and "the new man". The alienation of Marxism from its humanistic roots took place with stultifying completeness in the West, and that process is of signal importance in understanding the historic tensions between American Marxism and the black community, and American radical history generally.

The beginnings of this process, I suggest, lie in the interpretations given Marx's and Engels's writings by the late Nineteenth Century Socialist movements. While Capital retained the philosophic framework of the early Marx, the "Marxist" apostles interpreted the expectations of scientific and material progress in such a way as to blunt Marx's critical edge. Such optimism was particularly paralyzing in the context of the increasing subjugation of the non-white peoples by European Imperialism. Thus, even by the 1870s, Socialists neglected the inner content of Marxist methods, seeing Marxism as a newer and more precise formula for understanding life than bourgeois economics or sociology. It was the pinnacle of rationalism, a philosophy that would bring the then-dominant civilization of the West to its highest stage and make the principles of science the dynamic of daily life, because it was the philosophy of a class (the proletariat) which had lost all illusions. Thus Marxism took hold in the universities and in the minds of skilled workmen (especially in Germany) as a civilizing philosophy — as the civilizing mission of the working class. Few asked: "Whose standards of civilization?"

But DuBois asked that question. There was no man of his era more committed to integrating scientific reasoning and modern technology with the struggle of the dispossessed. (5) But he felt acutely ill at ease in the company of most American Socialists. Not only was he disturbed by their ignorance of conditions in the black community and by their glorification of white workers who were filled with race hate, but he was uncomfortable with their economism — their tendency to reduce everything to a dynamic of economic growth and progress and their placid acceptance of middle-class standards of social and cultural life. Beneath their rhetoric of class struggle, most Socialist Party leaders accepted the political and economic hegemony of whites over non-white peoples, and the cultural superiority of white workers and farmers to the black American peasantry.

Some American socialists, to be fair, did show capacity for growth on this issue. As large numbers of blacks began to enter the industrial work force during World War I, the discussion of the race issue began to increase in the socialist press, and a few far-sighted spokesmen

(L. C. Fraina, I. M. Rubinow, W. E. Walling) began to demand a special organizing drive in the black community. (6) But the level of their discussion still did not often cut beneath the "economism" of their more-racist predecessors: They generally advocated the organization of black workers out of necessity to the labor movement. (Otherwise the black workers would break strikes.) No white socialist followed up Du Bois's seminal suggestion that the alienation of blacks from white American culture represented a positive phenomenon — that black people could make a significant contribution to revolutionary struggle by humanizing the process of technological growth and helping control the materialism that seemed inherent in Western culture (including Marxism). The few intellectuals on the fringe of the socialist movement who had a consciousness of black culture marked the whole phenomenon off as exotic — thereby absolving themselves of any responsibility to integrate it into the class struggle. Within their version of American Marxism was little questioning of the traditional Western conception that art and culture were entertaining rather than organic to social life.

The destruction of Debsian Socialism through government repression and internal splits ended even the potentiality of Debsian Socialism as a mass movement to deal with Negro problems. For more than a decade after 1919 the American radical movement consisted substantially of two small, isolated organizations, the Socialists and the Communists. Yet the formation of a different ethnic mixture within Communist ranks — Eastern European and particularly Jewish groups rather than the original basically old-immigrant Socialist base of strength — probably promoted the likelihood of Left radical understanding.

Enter the Communists

The Russian Communists and their American followers pushed the racial confrontation within Marxism to a considerably - higher level. Impressed by Marcus Garvey's ability to mobilize millions of blacks and by their own experience in winning subject nationalities to the Russian Revolution, Comintern leaders concluded that any revolution in America had to come to terms with the black community's race pride and sense of nationhood, and suggested to their American supporters that they give the organization of blacks top priority. This suggestion was strongly reinforced by Lenin's analysis of Imperialism as the major reason for the persistence of capitalism — a perspective which elevated the colonial struggle for national independence (that is to say, for self-determination) to a level of importance almost equal to that of the class struggle of the European proletariat. The American Party initiated from its inception a discussion of the race problem which placed the American black community in the center of a world-wide stage as both a key to the American revolution and a potential source of leadership for independence movements in Africa.

But there were enormous tensions and ambiguities that underlay the Communist emphasis on the black liberation struggle. The initiative for the Communist perspective came from the Comintern and a small group of black intellectuals who had become involved with it: Cyril Briggs, Harry Haywood, Otto Huiswood, and Claude MacKay. (7) The majority of white American communists went along with it not because they really approved it or even understood it, but because their Russian heroes had insisted on it. Their relationship with black "communists", who had come to the Party out of dissatisfaction with Garveyism and their own inability to create a viable movement, was often very tense, as both groups carried hostilities of a racially-polarized society. (8) At a time when black and white workers were locked in bloody race riots, when the dynamic of racial exclusion and strike breaking had crippled the industrial labor movement, and when millions of people were joining the Garvey movement and the Ku Klux Klan, the Comintern emerged as the arbiter of black-white unity in the American Party since it was the only group respected by revolutionaries of both races.

The tragic qualities inherent in this relationship were not visible immediately to any of the participants. Given their lack of intimate knowledge of American life, the Russians played their role as racial intermediaries with considerable tact. Men like Claude MacKay — independent-minded black thinkers with no sentimentality about whites — found the Soviet leaders extremely sensitive to their analysis of the black situation and remarkably unpaternalistic. (9) But unbeknownst to them (or to most American communists) the Russian Revolution was transforming itself in a manner that would drastically reduce its flexibility on this and other issues. With the failure of the Revolution to spread to Europe, the economic crisis, and the growing restlessness of "unconverted classes" in Russian society, the Russian leaders gradually turned the Comintern from a vehicle to encourage indigenous revolutionary movements into a centralized instrument to protect the Soviet Union from capitalist aggression and internal revolt. And as it adjusted to this role, it became more hierarchical in structure, more secretive, and more willing to turn any analytical insight into formula. Insecure in their positions, the Soviet leaders wanted basic policy decisions to be made from the top down, and wanted to have all local strategic perspectives checked against Soviet national interests.

The ascendancy of Stalin greatly accelerated this trend toward formalism. As he solidified his personal dictatorship, Stalin turned Marxist ideology into a parody of bourgeois science. Party programs were no longer the experimental products of discussion and practice, but scientific formulas not to be questioned by the rank and file. (10) The Soviet position on the "Negro Question" followed this same pattern. Between 1926 and 1928, the dialogue on race gradually turned into a monologue concluding with Stalin's proclamation that blacks in America composed an oppressed nation which had the right to self-determination

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within the Southern "black belt". This position was proclaimed as the summation of years of study, and to challenge it was to question the "scientific validity" of the thought of Marx and Lenin and their newest interpreter, Comrade Stalin.

This new analysis was accepted by the American Communist Party with surprisingly-little opposition, because members hoped it would provide a new source of energy. For although the Party's work among blacks had been successful by Socialist standards (having attracted perhaps 500 black members via the American Negro Labor Congress), it had failed dismally to compete with Garvey for the allegiance of the black urban population. The Party's efforts to link black nationalism to working-class solidarity seemed awkward and mechanical at a time when capitalism was thriving and most labor unions excluded blacks, and its black cadre failed completely to touch the sources of black alienation that Garvey had successfully tapped. To most black people, the Party remained a curiosity, describing their sufferings and their aspirations in a language they failed to understand. As Saint Clair Drake described it:

Throughout the 1920s, the Black Metropolis had been hearing voices talking to the Negro people, voices that spoke strange words: proletarian, bourgeois, class struggle, revolution. They heard the old-line Negro politicians castigated as misleaders and reformists. They saw white men and women standing on street corners with Negro "comrades" handing out newspapers and leaflets that denounced the "fire traps" and "rent hogs" in Northern black belts.... They had a slogan "Black and White Unite!"....(11)

The Party's position on "self-determination in the black belt" did little to increase its mass appeal. The elaboration of a scientific base for black independence left most black people cold, since it said nothing about their day-to-day lives in a racist society. They had followed Garvey, according to CLR James, not because of the logic of Garvey's political theory, but because of a deep-seated desire to "support their own movement" and organize free of the domination of whites. (12) Garvey's genius lay in his ability to dramatize the historic mission of the African peoples, awaken feelings of black pride, and create an enormous framework of activities which put messages such as these into practice. His churches and fraternal orders, his cultural centers and business enterprises, his periodic parades and festivals, and his mass circulation newspaper The Negro World (none of which have been adequately treated by historians) brought motion, enlightenment, and pride into the drudgery of a segregated world. The Communists were totally unable to inspire the same "amazing energy and will to uplift" in black people. (13) Garvey touched something in the black experience

which lay beyond the terms of their analysis, and which the current generation of historians or radicals has yet to satisfactorily explain.

In their own way, however, the Communists were to make a decisive impact on black life. The group of black people they recruited prior to the Depression was small, but it included a number of exceptionally talented people. Cyril Briggs, Harry Haywood, Richard Moore, George Padmore, and William Patterson were brilliant theorists and publicists who joined the Communist Party in the 1920s. Their work helped set the stage for the Party's rapid growth during the Depression, when it emerged as the major political influence on the black intelligentsia.

This linkage between black intellectuals and the Communist Party has been bitterly criticized by Harold Cruse in The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual. Cruse argues persuasively that the participation of blacks in the Communist movement represented escape from responsibilities of group leadership, and that the Party's "integrationist ideology" cut black intellectuals off from the kind of community base that would have given them genuine social power. But Cruse underestimates the complexity of the black intellectual's dilemma. Bluntly put, there were problems in the black community to which neither Garvey nor Booker T. Washington and his successors addressed themselves, and which the Communists took up. Such issues were the isolation of black people from the labor movement — a significant source of power in America; the continuation of a discriminatory system of segregation in politics, education, and all areas of social life; and the involvement of millions of black people in a plantation economy that kept them in a state of extreme economic and psychological dependency. If the black community needed unity and solidarity (as Garvey sensed), it also needed to break free of the isolation imposed by Jim Crow and plantation agriculture and enter the mainstream of modern industrial life. In the Communist Party's formative years, its appeal to black intellectuals was that of a force for modernization — an appeal that was reinforced by the Soviet experience in developing a backward country. Langston Hughes's comments on the economic and social progress he observed in the colored Soviet republics of Central Asia are quite revealing:

....I visited several cotton kolkhozes, I studied charts, and I looked at statistics. The figures I've forgotten, but I shall always recall what the natives themselves told me: "Before, there were no schools for Uzbek children — now there are. Before, women were bought and sold — now no more. Before, the land and water belonged to the beys — today they are ours, and we share the cotton." (14)

One does not require much imagination to see the relevance of this experience (even if it were only partially true) to conditions of black sharecroppers in the American South.

However, the "modernizing" quality of life in the Communist Party offered black people opportunities to expand their horizons and make use of their talents in a way that went far beyond the normal range of possibilities in segregated America. An able black recruit would be encouraged to travel to other countries, write for Party publications, participate in Party study groups, and speak before integrated Party gatherings. There was an integrated "social life" which accompanied this activity, for the Party practiced "social equality" probably more than any other organization in America. But just as this experience could broaden a person's horizons it could also tend to set up a barrier between the person who went through it and the mass of black people who still lived under rigid segregation. Party ideology sometimes encouraged such a separation. There was a tendency for black and white Party leaders to see the mass of blacks as a "backward people" in need of socialism's enlightening influence. Moreover, the Party's assumption of the mantle of "science and progress" encouraged a highly-uncritical attitude toward Party doctrine by those who became involved with it. Angelo Herndon's description of the Party's impact on him sounds much like a religious conversion:

The education I longed for in the world and expected to find in it I surprisingly began to receive in my Communist circles. To the everlasting glory of the Communist movement, may it be said that wherever it is active, it brings enlightenment and culture Life had robbed me of my innocence and illusions, but I had found something even more satisfying — a realistic recognition of the world and the rational plan of scientific socialism with which to create order and harmony out of the human chaos. (15)

Black recruits were not the only ones affected this way. White leader George Charney looked back on his Party experience as a search for "a new spiritual center . . . more enthralling than any in the past since faith and science, deemed incompatible by the traditional church, were now finally and inextricably fused in the Marxist world-view." (16) But for black intellectuals, such experience had particularly-alienating possibilities. When Herndon spoke of how

My new white friends . . . gave me courage and inspiration to look at the radiant future The bitterness and hatred which I formerly felt toward all white people was now transformed into love and understanding. Like a man who had gone through some terrible sickness of the soul, I mysteriously became whole again.

he was projecting a vision of racial brotherhood that had roots in black

culture (for example the appeal of Martin Luther King) but was simply unrealistic for most black people in a racist society. (17) Cruse is thus correct to suggest that the Party drew black intellectuals into a social and cultural milieu that was remote from the nationalist dynamic of black life. Its modernizing ideology did seem to be accompanied by an assimilationist, Westernizing psychology.

The Onset of the Depression: Relevance and Power

The integrationist quality of the Communist Party's internal life did not prevent it from playing a major role in the black community during the early years of the Depression. When the economic crisis drove millions of blacks to the edge of starvation, the Party's theoretical clumsiness seemed less important than the effectiveness of the Party organizers in helping people to survive. For if Garvey's genius was as a publicist of race pride and black self-sufficiency, the Communist genius lay in the organization of mass protest. The Party's cadres were small, but they were highly disciplined and had unique experience in organizing across racial lines. In almost every city in which there was a large black community — Atlanta, Birmingham, Detroit, Chicago, Richmond, New York — black and white communist organizers went to the black unemployed, organized them into unemployed councils, and fought to get them on relief. Spouting a strange ideology that combined "black and white unite and fight" with "self-determination in the black belt", the communists startled civic authorities by bringing thousands of people into the streets and crossing racial boundaries in both North and South. For the Communists not only organized blacks, but also brought whites into the same mass organizations without sacrificing a public commitment to racial equality. Young Angelo Herndon was stunned when he attended an interracial meeting of the unemployed league in Birmingham, Alabama (!!!) and heard a white organizer tell those assembled why he believed in social equality:

You have been told that Reds are dirty foreigners and nigger lovers, but why have you come to this meeting today? Is it because you have been told that you must love somebody, or is it because of your desire to improve your living conditions? That's why we Reds fight for political, economic, and social equality for Negroes: not because we must hypocritically express our love for anyone, but because the bosses have our backs against the wall and all of us alike will be threatened with the same danger of pestilence, hunger, untold misery. (18)

The Party's willingness to challenge white racism in the course of its mass organizing left a deep impression on many black people. Herndon told his friend: "He's right. He does nothing but tell the truth. He's the



Eight of the nine Scottsboro Boys

first honest white man I've ever seen. (19)

The Communists reinforced this initial feeling of trust in Black America with their legal defense work, particularly their handling of the Scottsboro Case. While much has been written about how the Communists "used" the Scottsboro Boys and their parents, my own interviews with people active at the time suggest that the Communists' handling of this case did more than any other single event to make them respected by black working people. (20) The Communists not only organized rallies throughout the black community, but also brought thousands of white workers and intellectuals out in defense of the Scottsboro Boys and made the case a subject of world-wide indignation. According to Adam Clayton Powell, this had a decisive impact. It was the first time since Populism that masses of white people showed their willingness to demonstrate to protect a black victim of injustice: "Coming at the very beginning of the Depression, it served as a great bulwark to hold the hungry, poverty-stricken mass together. (21) It gave concrete meaning to Communist appeals for black-white unity and brought thousands of black people into Party circles (if not actual Party membership) in large Northern cities.

Through 1934 the Communist Party expanded this popular base. It linked its work with the unemployed leagues with massive campaigns to protect evicted tenants and victims of police brutality. It began a major cultural program in Black America, publishing a newspaper

known as the Negro Liberator, encouraging young black writers to write for its impressive array of publications (the New Masses, the Communist, and the Daily Worker), and combining artistic events in the black community with its politics. Although it continued to push its line on self-determination rather crudely along with indiscriminate attacks on non-communist black organizations, day-to-day organizing remained relatively free of sectarianism. In the course of its practical campaigns, Party workers allied themselves with almost every group active among the black poor, from Father Divine to the UNIA, and also showed themselves willing to follow as well as lead the revolutionary impulses of black people. When Party organizers around the Southern Worker received a letter from a group of black sharecroppers in Alabama threatened with eviction, they helped them to organize a union even though virtually no white tenants were willing to join. (22) This organization, the Alabama Sharecroppers Union, enlisted almost 5,000 members around a program that called for extensive Federal relief, redistribution of land, and total racial equality. It engaged in several major gun battles with local authorities which were instrumental in publicizing the crisis in cotton agriculture and the growing militancy of the black tenant farmer. Such activity, generated by local conditions, was symbolic of the Party's work in the early years of the Depression; black and white organizers recall a climate of deep emotionalism and a relationship with the people marked by mutual respect.

By 1935, however, forces at work in the Party were to undermine much of this organizing. Russian leaders concerned about the growing fascist threat to their security instructed national CPs to subordinate their revolutionary appeals to the building of an alliance with social democrats (the United Front) and the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie (the Popular Front). American Communists campaigned against Landon in 1936, or in effect for Franklin Roosevelt; and before the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939, they enthusiastically supported New Deal anti-fascist or "progressive" measures at home and abroad.

In the black sections of the Party, this shift was reflected in an effort to tone down the "nationalist" elements in the Party's organizing. The Southern work of the Party, which had appealed primarily to black people, was significantly played down: The Sharecroppers Union was disbanded because it posed the threat of a race war, and its members were encouraged to join the more-interracial National Farmers Union. (23) In the North the Negro Liberator was discontinued as a paper, and Party workers were instructed to present themselves to the community primarily through the regular Party publications. And organizers in all parts of the country were told to make sure that whites were present in all meetings and demonstrations in the black community and in all black organizations in which the Party had influence. (24)

These changes did not immediately cut the Party's black following, but they helped change its base. Whereas in the early years of the

Depression the Party consciously geared its appeal to the poor and alienated in Black America, the Popular Front Party made its primary appeal to the (professional) black middle class and the stable working class, subordinating revolutionary principles to a vision of assimilation and reform.

The People's Front in Harlem: Struggle with the Nationalists

From 1935 to 1939, the Party's work in the black community closely paralleled its efforts to form a responsible Left wing of the New Deal. Within the Harlem community, which Party leaders viewed as the key to black-white unity, Party leaders helped to organize a "reform" electoral coalition which linked the black community to its Irish, Italian, and Puerto Rican neighbors. The major product of this activity, the Harlem Legislative Conference, functioned as a mediator between the often-hostile neighborhoods and helped elect Vito Marcantonio and Adam Clayton Powell to office. It took strong stands on many important community problems, issuing demands for more black schools and more black teachers, better recreation facilities, more public housing, and an end to police brutality. (25)

The Party's activity in the field of labor also reflected its politics of coalition and interracial unity. Throughout the middle and late 1930s the Party was engaged in a bitter struggle with local nationalists over the direction of the "Jobs for Negroes" campaign that the nationalists had initiated. This activity, begun by Sufi Abdul Hamid in 1934, focused on the numerous stores in Harlem that refused to hire blacks. It had won much support among unemployed youth and had brought a great deal of latent anti-white and anti-Jewish feeling to the surface. After spending a great deal of energy trying to discredit the movement... labeling Sufi Abdul Hamid a Harlem Hitler... the Party finally launched a competing campaign which directed its energies mainly against large enterprises rather than small merchants. Allying itself with a number of influential journalists and ministers (including Adam Clayton Powell) the Party tied its job campaign to the organizing drive of the CIO. The campaign won a dramatic victory when Powell and Transit Workers Union head Mike Quill forced the Fifth Avenue Bus Company to hire Negro drivers. (27)

The local nationalists, however, were not easily discouraged. Some of the stores conceded to their demands, and they united into a single body called the Harlem Labor Union (which still exists) to continue to apply pressure. The ideological war with the Party persisted, with the nationalists attacking the CIO as a "white union" which refused to upgrade black workers, and the Party calling the Harlem group a bunch of "labor racketeers". (Both charges contained an element of truth. (28) Each group finally established its own domain, with the nationalists organizing the small stores which the CIO disdained, and the Party

trade unionists organizing the larger enterprises. "Negro-Labor Unity" had thus been maintained, but on a rather-limited basis. The Party's labor allies had no place for the thousands of unemployed and marginal black laborers who could not be organized within the framework of an industrial union. (29) Culturally isolated from white society, disdained by the Left as being unorganizable, they remained a fertile base for nationalist agitation. (30)

In the course of these conflicts (described in depth by Claude MacKay in Harlem, Negro Metropolis), the Party maintained an excellent reputation with "respectable" people in the Harlem community. The Harlem section had several thousand members in the late 1930s and was able to hold its meetings in the most-prominent churches and assembly halls. (31) Whites were active in all section affairs, and their presence generated both enthusiasm and tension. Many of the more educated blacks, according to MacKay, welcomed the "integration". They saw it as living rejection of Jim Crow. But the mass of the black people were more suspicious. One white organizer recalled that he "could never walk the streets of Harlem as if it were my community or stand on the outskirts of a meeting as another member of the throngI could speak from a platform with passion and feel momentarily a part of the people; but once the meeting was over, the sense of unease returned....I could sense the glowering looks, the suspicion, the crowding of hostile faces." (32) The Party's insistence on the presence of whites in black community organizations (such as the black caucus in the Federal Writers Project) kept this tension alive, as did the large number of interracial marriages (black man, white woman) among the section leadership. (33) Claude MacKay spoke for a good many poorer Harlemites when he complained that "Negro intellectuals imagine that they can escape the problems of their group by joining the whites as individuals." (34)

The Popular Front Party in Harlem thus had a mixed record. Its coalition for reform did achieve results: Blacks were organized into new unions and found openings in new job categories; reform candidates were elected to office; new schools and playgrounds were constructed; and progress was made in integrating blacks in city government. These gains produced substantial gains in black membership. But when one balances this against the Party's campaign to discourage independent black organization and its failure to organize the most-alienated and most-potentially-revolutionary people in the community, one realizes how far even the best Party work came from meeting the community's needs. MacKay's summary of Party faults was apt and prophetic: "Communists and Socialists prefer to agitate about Segregation and Race Prejudice in General...and avoid the fundamental issue...the stupendous task of engineering new jobs for Negroes....It is this realization that has given form and drive to the comparatively-recent movement of the Negro people toward greater self-development and

community autonomy." (35)

The Destruction of the People's Front: Party Organizations and the Approaching War

The Popular Front policy, with both its limits and its achievements, proved to be the high point of Party influence in Black America. As the war in Europe approached, international questions intruded on Party organizing in a highly-destructive way. The Party's dependence on the Soviet Union proved to be so deeply rooted and so mechanical that it allowed two of its most-significant Popular Front projects in the black community — its campaign against the Ethiopian invasion and its work in the National Negro Congress — to be undermined by the direct imposition of Russian diplomatic imperatives.

The Ethiopian Crisis was one of the most-decisive examples of the incompatibility of American Communist practice with black nationalist aspirations. When Italy invaded Ethiopia, blacks in the American Communist Party saw an excellent opportunity to mobilize anti-fascist sentiment in the black community. James Ford made a speech at the Seventh Party Congress (1935) suggesting that the Party place its top priority on organizing against the Ethiopian invasion because it had aroused more emotion among Negroes than any event in his memory. (36) What Ford didn't know, however (one hopes), was that the Soviet Union was selling guns and supplies to Italy at less than market prices. As the CP plunged into demonstrations through the United Aid to Ethiopia Committee, it was embarrassed by this disclosure at the same time that it was fighting with local nationalists about whether whites should be in the Committee parades. Worse yet, only one year after it had campaigned against sending Negro troops to fight against Italy in Ethiopia on the grounds that their energies could be better used in America (37) it was actively recruiting Negro soldiers for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain. Such actions left many principled nationalists (such as George Padmore) with the feeling that the struggle against European imperialism was only a secondary Communist priority. In 1939, CLR James found many radicals in Harlem "individually and in the mass profoundly suspicious of whites. The CP Negroes are looked on as touts for Negro converts in exactly the same way the Democratic and Republican Parties have touts for Negro votes." (38)

In their long-term significance, however, the Party's unprincipled actions within the National Negro Congress, the major focus of its black organizing nationwide from 1926 through 1939, far outweighed the Ethiopian Affair. The Congress had been organized by a group of black intellectuals at Howard University who believed that existing organizations in the black community (the NAACP, the Urban League) failed to represent the interests of black workers or the black rural population, and had underestimated the significance of the labor

movement as a vehicle of black advancement. (39) They called together a broad coalition of groups in the black community — including heads of fraternal organizations, ministers, editors, representatives of farm and labor organizations, and members of radical parties — to create the new organization. Within this coalition the Communists, who brought white representatives as well as black, emerged as the most-powerful group. They saw this as the perfect opportunity to put their Popular Front politics to work by unifying the more-“enlightened” sections of the black bourgeoisie with radical forces in the black working class and the labor movement.

During the first three years of the National Negro Congress, the Communists played at least a partially-constructive role. Although they failed to encourage the Congress to become a critical, autonomous force within the working class and the Left, they did prove effective in getting large segments of the black community to work closely with the CIO. The Congress held conferences of black union members in Chicago, Detroit, and Pittsburgh at which black clergymen, social workers, and politicians joined with CIO leaders to develop a working relationship between labor and the Negro movement. (40) Conferences like these, virtually unprecedented in American history (in which black labor and black community leadership were traditionally at odds with one another), helped pave the way for the organization of black workers in the major industrial unions and were a training ground for developing black trade-union leadership. Yet the Party's success in forging such connections between two once-hostile leadership groups reflected its effectiveness as a machine for reform rather than as a genuine social movement. The Congress did not develop any educational or cultural programs that reached the mass of black people, and it largely ignored the possibilities for black co-operative action in the South and in the ghettos. (41) Like most Party work in that period, it appealed less to the majority of black workers who lay beyond the pale of industrial unionism (sharecroppers, domestics, service workers, day laborers, the unemployed) than it did to black intellectuals and the minority of black workers in the mainstream of the industrial economy.

Nevertheless, the National Negro Congress deserved far better treatment than it received at Party hands during its 1939 meeting. As part of a campaign to justify the Nazi - Soviet Pact, black and white Party members packed the Congress and tried to unite the group behind a massive denunciation of Roosevelt's war preparations and of British and French imperialism. Criticizing all who suggested that there were issues of more relevance to the black community to be discussed, they railroaded their positions through the conferences and told the minority that they could conform or leave. Although their reflections concerning imperialism were not completely off-base, their selective failure to mention Nazi imperial aims and their use of Party whites to influence Congress policy made it clear that the Party would destroy any black

organization it was in as soon as the organization threatened to function independently of immediate Soviet interests. Most independents in the Congress, including President A. Philip Randolph, left in disgust, and the Congress quickly lost its credibility and influence.

Decline and Fall

From this point on, the Party's Negro work steadily degenerated. Throughout World War II, at a time when the black community was mounting a massive campaign against all forms of discrimination, the Party tried to tone down protest for the sake of "national unity". By polemicizing against the March on Washington Movement, soft-pedaling protest against Jim Crow in the Army, denouncing participants in the Harlem rebellion of 1943 as "fifth columnists", and trying to break strikes and discourage the formation of independent black caucuses in the labor movement, the Party decisively cut itself off from the major currents of militancy in Black America. In 1946, Party leader Doxey Wilkerson sadly concluded that the Party had been guilty of "rank opportunism" on the Negro question and had lost much of its black following:

Tens of thousands of Negroes who instinctively rejected our illusions remained entirely without our influence. And many thousands of those who entered our ranks failed to find the answers they sought and thereupon produced the "fluctuating Negro membership problem" which practically all districts report. (42)

The Party's power in the black community did not immediately vanish. In spite of its history, the organization continued to attract black intellectuals and notables into its orbit. Party spokesman Benjamin Davis was elected to the New York City Council from Harlem in 1943, and the Party's legislative coalition in that community lasted well into the late 1940s. The Party press maintained an active discussion of the Negro question; Party scholars did some pioneering research in black history; and Party members played an influential (if not always healthy) role in black activity in the arts. With the media and the universities still shut to black people, the Party was able to enlist the energies of some extremely-talented and extremely-independent-minded people, from an aging and crusty W. E. B. Du Bois to a young and ambitious Harold Cruse. Thoroughly middle-class in its membership and appeal, it became a weird amalgam of a political machine, a temporary home for black rebels, and a training ground for the black elite.

This persistence raises some difficult questions. Why did people of undeniable seriousness and ability — such as Benjamin Davis, William Patterson, and Paul Robeson — remain committed to such an unreliable

political instrument? Much of the answer lay in the uniquely-insulating qualities of Party leadership. Those who rose in the ranks, according to George Charney, tended to gradually transfer their allegiance from the "people" to the Party and lose their ability to distinguish between their moral commitments and their enjoyment of power. The Party's "possessive" social world enmeshed their lives to the point at which "every judgment on every question, from high politics to family matters, issued from this source". (43) For black Party leaders, this attachment may have been especially intense because it involved a recognition of their abilities that had been so much denied them in the outside world. "In what other organization, political or otherwise," Abner Berry wrote in 1938, "is a Negro entrusted with the job of shaping basic principles and policies? In what other Party is a Negro elected an authoritative spokesman on general problems? It is well known that even when Negroes serve in executive capacities in non-Communist organizations, they are at best considered specialists in the limited field of race relations, and not leading individuals in molding fundamental programs and tactics." (44) To its black leaders and supporters, the post-war Party retained the sentimental appeal of its pioneering struggles against racism and its steady and often-unpopular commitment to "social equality". Their speeches referred to it as the "Grand Old Party" and the "Champion Fighter for Negro Rights".

But the question of political alternatives also was important. For all the limitations of the Party, where else could a radical black intellectual go in post-war America? The Trotskyist movement was critical and independent, but had much of the ideological rigidity of the CP, without its organizational power. The nationalist groups were close to the black community, but were fragmented, parochial in their perspectives, and dominated by religious mysticism. And the black socialists, who had been militant during and immediately after the War, were rapidly turning into "domestic militants" who sought to attain internal political gains by defending American foreign policy. The fates of those black intellectuals who left the Party and sought to remain critical were not very pleasant (for Ralph Ellison, isolation and political ostracism; for Richard Wright, a life in exile). Others with less independence found themselves pressed into testifying before House and Senate committees, becoming informers, or merely sinking into a comfortable bourgeois life in the Affluent Society. It is therefore not entirely surprising that the Party maintained some support even through the early 1950s, since of the political options for black radicals it was probably not the worst.

But all of this had very little to do with the development of a mass revolutionary movement, an autonomous black culture, or a dynamic relationship between black intellectuals and the mass of black people. The issues the Party avoided at the height of its influence — exclusion of millions of blacks from positions in the economy in which organized labor could help them, and alienation of most black people from white

American culture — remained pressing in the 1950s. Even the Party's appeal as the vanguard of reform vanished, as liberals mobilized the power of government, business, and organized labor against legal segregation, and the universities and media offered new opportunities to black intellectuals. By 1959 the Party's influence had become so minimal that only a few noticed its abandonment of the historic line on "self-determination in the black belt", or its weak flicker of approval for the civil-rights movement, for the Democratic Party, and for Walter Reuther.

The black liberation movement of the 1960s thus owed very little to Communist influence. It grew out of the historic well-springs of frustration in Black America that had fed Garvey and Sufi Abdul Hamid, contradictions that had been vastly increased by the disintegration of plantation agriculture, the migration to the cities, and the elimination of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. The Muslims, the black student groups, and the millions of youths involved in ghetto rebellions were moving far beyond the politics of the "Negro-Labor Alliance". They were rebelling against racism, police violence, and the absence of meaningful work. For theoretical guidance, they have looked to writers in both the Third World and their own communities who have struggled to make a connection between the multiple levels of their oppression. At the moment of this writing, they remain divided as well as angry, some of them remaining religiously anti-white, others joining the Black Panthers, others becoming Pan-Africanists, others trying to link black nationalism with labor radicalism, and still others affirming their blackness while trying to "make it" in the System.

This explosion of black energy, with its accompanying theoretical innovation, has been a terrifying phenomenon to whites of orthodox sensibilities. The refusal of the black liberation movement to seize a single formula for revolution has driven significant numbers of white radicals back into the past to seek a "correct line" on the race issue. In the last few years, at least two influential groups (PL and the SDS Labor Committee) have espoused the orthodox communist line on black-white unity, and yet another (RYM II and its spinoffs) has reaffirmed its commitment to self-determination in the black belt.

But the majority of white radicals have fortunately rejected simple solutions. We have looked on the black liberation movement with fear, but have also seen the unfolding of a creative process in which a people are building a revolutionary culture out of the materials of their own experience. The process does not follow a straight line, but we are coming to accept that. For if we have learned anything in this brutal century, it is that revolution/liberation can come only from a process of criticism and growth in which the heritage of revolutionary thought is continuously tested against the reality of our daily lives. A thorough understanding of political economy and the class forces in the struggle is essential, but it can no longer be separated from our vision of total

human liberation. We are talking about building a new civilization, and our objectives must be as sweeping as the oppression that we hope to transcend. As Fanon said:

It is a question...of starting a new history of Man, a history which will have regard to the sometimes-prodigious theses which Europe has put forward, but which will also not forget Europe's crimes, of which the most horrible was committed in the heart of man, and consisted in the pathological tearing away of his unity. And in the framework of the collectivity, there were the differentiations, the stratifications, and the bloodthirsty tensions fed by classes, and finally, on the immense scale of humanity, there were racial hatred, slavery, and exploitation....

So, comrades, let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions, and societies which draw their inspiration from her....

...If we want humanity to advance a step further....then we must invent and make discoveries.

...For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf; we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man. (45)

Footnotes

1. There have ever been subcultures in Twentieth Century America which centered around drugs and music (bohemians, jazz musicians, et cetera), but at no time in American history did they cut across class, racial, and ethnic lines as they do today.

2. See Paul Richards: "W. E. B. DuBois and American Social History: The Evolution of a Marxist", Radical America, Volume 4 (November-December 1970).

3. Aime Césaire: Speech at a black writers' conference quoted in Earl Ofari: "Marxism, Nationalism, and Black Liberation", Monthly Review, Volume 22 (March 1971), Page 31.

4. Ofari, op. cit., Pages 32-33.

5. The Autobiography of W. E. B. DuBois, Pages 205-207. About the time DuBois became a socialist, he was sponsoring social scientific studies of the black population in the South through Atlanta University:

"I was going to study the facts, any and all facts, concerning the Negro and his plight.... I entered this primarily with the utilitarian object of reform and uplift, but nevertheless I wanted to do the work with scientific accuracy."

6. Oakley C. Johnson: "Marxism and the Negro Freedom Struggle: 1876-1917", Journal of Human Relations (Spring 1965), Pages 21-29; Claude MacKay: A Long Way From Home, Pages 41-43. Recruitment of black socialists took place almost exclusively in New York City, on the initiative of Jewish socialists in the garment trades. The first important black recruit was Hubert Harrison, a West Indian whom the socialists "reassigned" from his soapbox on Wall Street to Harlem. Harrison later quit the socialists to become the editor of the Garvey newspaper, The Negro World.

7. See Theodore Draper: American Communism and Soviet Russia, Pages 315-353, for a good discussion of the role that black communists played in the development of the Comintern's position on the Negro question.

8. Speech by Claude MacKay in Fourth Congress of the Communist International Abridged Report, as quoted in "Marxism and the Negro Problem", a discussion article by F. Forest (Raya Dunayevskaya) for the Workers Party, 1949. MacKay warned the Communists to pay more attention to race: "The reformist bourgeoisie have been carrying on a battle against discrimination and racial prejudice in America. The Socialists and Communists have fought very shy of it because there is a great element of prejudice among the Socialists and Communists of America."

9. MacKay: A Long Way From Home, Pages 206-214; Draper, op. cit., Pages 315-353.

10. See George Charney: A Long Journey (New York, 1968), Pages 31-32, on the stultification of Party ideology.

11. Saint Clair Drake and Horace Cayton: Black Metropolis, Volume 1, Page 86.

12. J. R. Johnson (CLR James): "Preliminary Notes on the Negro Question" (prior to a meeting with Trotsky), May or June 1939, and "Discussion with Trotsky" from the Socialist Workers Party Documents on the Negro Struggle, 1954. James's understanding of the Garvey movement, in my opinion, far surpasses that of any other contemporary historian. Within his letters, speeches, and private memos (of which I have only seen a small amount) lies a wealth of immensely-significant criticism of the American Communist Party's activities in the black community and of the political and philosophical forces behind them. (They should be reprinted as soon as possible.)

13. Claude MacKay: Harlem, Negro Metropolis (New York, 1940), Page 177.

14. Langston Hughes: I Wonder as I Wander, An Autobiographical Journey (New York, 1956), Page 176. Hughes took this trip in 1933-34.

15. Angelo Herndon: Let Me Live, Pages 87-88.
16. Charney: A Long Journey, Page 31.
17. Herndon: Let Me Live, Pages 88-89.
18. *Ibid.*, Pages 76-77.
19. *Ibid.*, Page 77.
20. My personal interviews with black and white radicals active in the Depression, whether Party members or not, all affirm the notable significance of the Scottsboro Case in the formation of a black-white coalition for social reform. This does not mean that manipulation of the Case (financially or morally) was justified, but means only that people perceived it as a pivotal event at the time, and perceived it positively.
21. Adam Clayton Powell, Junior: Marching Blacks, Page 64.
22. Dale Rosen: "The Alabama Sharecroppers Union", Harvard Radcliffe Senior Thesis, Pages 40-56. This essay, completed from interviews as well as traditional sources, is the best source on the Alabama Sharecroppers Union.
23. James: "Preliminary notes on the Negro Question".
24. See MacKay: Harlem, Negro Metropolis, Pages 182-261, for a detailed unfolding of this process.
25. James Ford: The Negro and the Democratic Front, Pages 120-129; Charney: A Long Journey, Pages 105-115.
26. MacKay: Harlem, Negro Metropolis, Pages 198-203.
27. Charney: A Long Journey, Pages 99-100.
28. MacKay: Harlem, Negro Metropolis, Pages 212-216.
29. See Mark Naison: "The Southern Tenant Farmers Union and the CIO", Radical America, Volume 2 (September-October 1968) for another example of how CIO organizing strategy failed to meet the needs of a significant segment of the black population, and how the Party tried to undermine independent unionism that existed outside such a framework.
30. MacKay: Harlem, Negro Metropolis, Page 216. The following passage is indicative of the Party's unwillingness to deal with "lumpen" and marginal workers: "Once I mentioned to Mr. Manning Johnson the fact of hundreds of Negroes working in the innumerable coffee shops, sandwich shops, fish and potato shops et cetera in Harlem. Mr. Johnson is a college graduate and an efficient organizer of the cafeteria union, and is prominent in the Communist hierarchy. I said I thought it would help the community if those workers were welded into a General Union of Negroes or some such organization. But at the places I mentioned Mr. Johnson sneered as stink-pots."
31. Interview with Mr. Samuel Coleman, former organizer in the Harlem section.
32. Charney: A Long Journey, Pages 103-104.
33. Charney: A Long Journey, Pages 102-103; MacKay: Harlem, Negro Metropolis, Pages 204, 233-237.
34. MacKay: Harlem, Negro Metropolis, Page 218.

35. Ibid., Pages 197-198.

36. James Ford: "The Struggle for Peace and Independence in Ethiopia", speech delivered at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International in Moscow (August 1935) on behalf of the Harlem Section of the Communist Party.

37. James: "Preliminary Notes on the Negro Question", Page 2; James Ford: "Build the People's Labor Party", speech delivered at an emergency meeting of the Harlem Section of the Communist Party (May 5, 1936). Ford's speech describes the trouble the Party has had with its organizing around Ethiopia because local nationalists are violently opposed to having whites in the demonstrations. James (three years later) notes the disillusioning effects of the Ethiopian Affair: "That Russia sold oil to Italy made a disastrous impression on blacks. Yet many Negro Party members remained. What seems to have been a decisive factor was the activity of the CP in regard to Spain. 'Every day it is only Spain, Spain; but nothing was done for Ethiopia except one or two meager processions around Harlem.' . . . The contrast with Spain has been too glaring, and the Negroes became finally conscious that they were once more the dupes of 'another white party'."

38. James: "Preliminary Notes on the Negro Question", Page 4.

39. See Ralph Bunche: "The Programs, Ideologies, Tactics, and Achievements of Negro Betterment and Interracial Organizations" (unpublished manuscript — Myrdal study), Pages 319-355.

40. See Horace Cayton and George Mitchell: Black Workers and the New Unions, Pages 415-428; and James Ford: The Negro and the Democratic Front, Pages 107-113.

41. MacKay: Harlem: Negro Metropolis, Pages 223-224, 230-232. The Party cracked down on a movement for co-operative enterprises within its own ranks in Harlem, led by a Mrs. Grace Campbell.

42. Speech by Doxey Wilkerson at the plenary meeting of the National Committee of the CPUSA in New York (December 3-5, 1946), Pages 620-621.

43. Charney: A Long Journey, Pages 33, 116-117.

44. Abner Berry: Introduction to James Ford: The Negro and the Democratic Front, Pages 9-10.

45. Frantz Fanon: Wretched of the Earth, Pages 315-316.



AN INTERVIEW WITH AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

Translated & Introduced by Dale Tomich

I

The name of Aimé Césaire, black intellectual from Martinique, is most-often associated with the idea of Negritude, a conception of black racial and cultural identity which he and his comrades Léopold Sédar Senghor and Léon Damas first formulated in Paris in the 1930s. The concept of Negritude, however, has most-often been understood through the work of Léopold Senghor, and has been identified with such mystical associations as "the Negro essence" and "the African personality". This development has obscured the revolutionary content of Césaire's work. For Césaire Negritude has always maintained its relationship to colonialism and to the concrete conditions of the Negro's existence, rather than becoming a universal philosophy of man as it has become for Senghor. "The problem of black culture," Césaire has written, "cannot be posed at the present time without simultaneously posing the problem of colonialism, because all black cultures are now developing under the particular condition of the colonial, semi-colonial, or para-colonial situation." (1) The imposition of colonial rule has, in Césaire's view, disrupted the historical continuity of African society. The possibilities for its development have been destroyed: Its science, philosophy, art, and literature have become folklore. The elements which structured its cultural life have been shattered, the economy and society have been demolished, the family has disintegrated, and the traditional ties have been weakened. Indigenous culture has become marginal and has lost the ability to renew itself. A political and social regime which suppresses the self-determination of a people kills the creative power of that people at the same time. For Césaire, the struggle for a national culture and the struggle for national liberation are one and the same.

As a native of the Caribbean island of Martinique, Aimé Césaire was subject to the alienation and sense of inferiority which are best known

to us through Frantz Fanon's Black Skins, White Masks; and it is against the background of the French colonial policy of assimilation that the origins of Negritude can be understood. French culture is assumed to be universal, and men (in principle) are valued in relation to merit and intelligence rather than race or nationality. Selected individuals are turned from their environments and are encouraged to "assimilate French culture". They ascend into a black elite who have opportunities open to them that are denied to others of their race — such as an education in France or a career in teaching or in civil service. This status is an obstacle to racial and cultural identification. The assimilation policy is based on the assumption that the indigenous cultures are primitive and backward, and that progress consists in becoming more and more like white men, whose culture is seen as the pinnacle of human achievement. The problem is compounded in the West Indies, where the original Indian culture was completely destroyed and the bulk of the population is descended from slaves torn from their traditional societies. With nothing national to be aware of, the natives of Martinique have sought to escape from their colonized condition by assuming the language and the manners of French civilization. "The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards," writes Fanon. "He becomes white as he renounces his blackness, his jungle." The Negroes of Martinique have thought of themselves as "Frenchmen with black skins".

Negritude grew out of the struggle against this alienation. For Aimé Césaire black liberation was doomed to failure unless consciousness was decolonized. Negritude, from this perspective, can be seen not as a philosophical concept but as a cultural and political movement closely related to African nationalism and black liberation struggles. Against the marginality, dependency, and inferiority which characterize life under colonial rule, Césaire has declared that "It is good and right and glorious to be a Negro." He has affirmed not only the African roots which lie beneath the veneer of assimilation in the West Indies, but also the unity of the race and its historical experience. He has also sought to reevaluate Africa and its role in the world in order to free blacks from the stigma of "savagery" that the European colonizer stamped on that continent and its people. But always Negritude is a recognition of social realities for Aimé Césaire. He does not seek a noble lineage to legitimize his race. "No," he shouts in his great poem Return to My Native Land (Cahier d'un retour au pays natal), "we have never been amazons of the king of Dahomey, nor princes of Ghana with 800 camels, nor wise men in Timbuktu under Askia the Great, nor architects in Djene, nor mahdis, nor warriors. Under our armpits, we do not feel the itch of those who bore the lance." (3) Such claims on the part of blacks who have been subjugated by Europe can only transform the real accomplishments of Africa into a myth of a Golden Age. Furthermore,

Africa is a necessary step in establishing the identity of the Negro in the New World; but it alone is not enough, for he is an outsider, cut off from his African sources; his existence is linked to the ultimate degradation of the race, slavery. In the Age of Colonialism and Imperialism, the dignity of black people is borne out of suffering and struggle. Césaire finds his Negritude in the depressed sub-proletariat of the Caribbean, the descendants of slaves. It is upon the complex reality of their history, the debasement and alienation as well as the resistance, that their identity must be forged that they may become the masters of their destiny. "THIS SCANDAL MUST COME TO AN END!" Césaire cries.

As the poet of black revolt, Césaire affirms a new humanism. The humanism of Europe, as he details in his Discourse on Colonialism (*Présence Africaine*, Paris, 1955), is a lie. Humanism cannot be based on the exploitation of human beings. Europe would like to think that history has stopped with its ascendancy, and that its accomplishments represent a universal humanity. But Europe can only think this way because what it calls Reason has blinded it to the existence of the colonized, whose exploitation it profits from, but whose humanity it denies. It is in the name of these oppressed and exploited that Césaire denies Europe's claim to represent all humanity, and it is through their rebellion that he declares history has not yet run its course. Césaire proclaims the solidarity of the oppressed.

As there are hyena-men and leopard-men, I would
be a jew-man
a kaffir-man
a hindu-man-from-Calcutta
a man-from-Harlem-who-doesn't-vote

Negritude as Césaire conceives of it is an affirmation of a new humanism: a humanism which will not deny his race, but will accept it and allow it free expression in a community of men. He calls for a new humanism which will be universal because all men will contribute to it, but which will allow for their diversity.

for it is not true that the work of man is finished

that we have nothing to do in the world
that we are parasites in the world
that we have only to accept the way of the world

but the work of man has only begun

and it remains for man to conquer all prohibitions
immobilized in the corners of his fervor

and no race has a monopoly of beauty, intelligence, strength
and there is room for all at the rendez-vous of conquest....

Césaire's vision is of a regenerated world and a brotherhood of men created in revolutionary struggle — "earth where all is free and fraternal, my earth". (4)

This new humanism is a task and is in no way a reflection of existing society. A humanism such as Césaire envisions cannot exist while there is exploitation of man by man, but can be created only out of struggle to end oppressive relations. For Césaire, Negritude is a weapon in the Negro's struggle for liberation from economic exploitation and racial oppression. In his eyes, black liberation can only be a revolutionary struggle. He has written: "Decolonization will be revolutionary or it will not be." (5) Césaire's conception of Negritude does not deny Marxism, but attempts to complement and refine it. In his view it is necessary to complete Marxism and adapt it to the conditions and needs of black people, as he has pointed out in his letter of resignation from the French Communist Party, the celebrated Letter to Maurice Thorez:

I deny neither marxism nor communism, but it is the use that certain people have made of marxism and communism that I reject. I wish to see marxism and communism put at the service of black people, and not black people at the service of marxism and communism. The doctrine and movement should be made for men, and not men for the doctrine or for the movement. (6)

For Césaire the questions of black culture and black identity cannot be posed outside the context of colonialism and the actual struggles for liberation from colonialism. His perspective is echoed by his comrade and his former student at the lycée in Martinique during World War II, Frantz Fanon: "No one can truly wish for the spread of African culture if he does not give practical support to the creation of the conditions necessary to the existence of that culture; in other words, to the liberation of the whole continent." (7)

The following interview with Aimé Césaire was conducted by Haitian poet and militant René Depestre at the Cultural Congress of Havana in 1967, and appeared in *Poesias*, an anthology of Césaire's poetry which was published by Casa de las Americas.

Dale Tomich

FOOTNOTES

1. Aimé Césaire: "Culture et colonisation", in *Présence Africaine*,

8-9-10 (June-November 1956), Page 190.

2. Frantz Fanon: Black Skins, White Masks (New York, 1967), Page 18.

3. Aimé Césaire: Return to My Native Land, translated by Emile Snyders (Paris, 1968), Page 81.

4. Ibid., Pages 37, 41, 125.

5. Aimé Césaire: "L'homme de culture et ses responsabilités", in Présence Africaine, 24-25 (February-May 1959), Page 119. (original emphasis)

6. Aimé Césaire: Lettre à Maurice Thorez (Paris, 1956), Page 12.

7. Frantz Fanon: Wretched of the Earth (New York, 1963), Page 189.

II

René Depestre: Césaire, the critic Lilyan Kesteloot has written that the Cahier d'un retour au pays natal was an autobiographical book. Is this opinion well founded?

Aimé Césaire: Certainly. It is an autobiographical book, and at the same time a book in which I tried to take possession of myself. In a certain sense it is more than my biography. It must not be forgotten that it is a book of my youth. I wrote at the moment when I had just finished my studies and was returning to Martinique. These were the first contacts with my country after 10 years of absence, and I really found myself assaulted by a sea of impressions and images and at the same time very anguished over the prospects of Martinique.

RD: At what age did you write this book?

AC: I must have been 26.

RD: What strikes me about the Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, nevertheless, is its great maturity.

AC: It is my first published work, but in reality it is a work that was accumulated, or done progressively. I remember having written only a few poems before the Cahier.

RD: But these poems have never been published.

AC: They have not been published because I wasn't very happy with them. The friends to whom I showed them found them interesting, but they didn't satisfy me.

RD: Why?

AC: Because I think I had not found a form that was my own. I was still undergoing the influence of the French poets. In short, if the Cahier d'un retour au pays natal has taken the form of a poem in prose, it has been truly by chance. I wanted to break with the French literary traditions and literally was not able to liberate myself until the moment that I decided to turn my back on poetry. In reality, if you like, I have converted myself into a poet by renouncing poetry. Do you see what I mean? Poetry was for me the only means of breaking with the regular French forms that strangled me.

RD: In her introduction to the selection of your poems published by Seghers, Lilyan Kesteloot cites among other French poets who have influenced you Mallarmé, Claudel, Rimbaud, and Lautréamont.

AC: Lautréamont and Rimbaud were the great revelation for many poets of my generation. I must also say that I don't deny Claudel. His poetry, for example Teste d'Or, impressed me very much.

RD: There is no doubt that it is great poetry.

AC: Yes, truly great poetry. It is very beautiful. Naturally there are many things in Claudel that have irritated me, but I have always viewed him as a great craftsman of the language.

RD: But your Cahier d'un retour au pays natal bore the stamp of a personal experience — your experience as a young Martinican. This book also deals with the itinerary of the Negro race in the Antilles; and are not French influences decisive in it?

AC: I don't deny the French influences. Whether I want to be or not, I am a poet in the French language, and it is evident that French literature has influenced me. But what I insist strongly is that there has been... aside from the elements that French literature brought me... there has been in me, at the same time, an effort to create a new language capable of expressing the African heritage. To say it another way, for me French was an instrument that I wanted to bend into a new expression. I wanted to make an Antillean French, a Black French, that even while being French would carry the Negro mark.

RD: Has surrealism been an instrument that has helped you in your effort to develop a new French expression?

AC: I was ready to receive surrealism because I had advanced only by taking my departure from the same authors as the surrealists. I had reflected departing from the same authors as them. Surrealism has given me what I searched for confusedly. I have received it with joy because I have found in it as much a confirmation as a revelation. It was an instrument that dynamited the French language. It made everything jump. It shook literally everything. That was very important because the traditional forms, the burdensome forms, already made crushed me.

RD: This was the interest that the surrealist movement presented for you....

AC: Surrealism interested me in the sense that it was an element of liberation.

RD: You were, then, very sensitive to the notion of liberation which was contained in surrealism. Surrealism issued a call to profound forces and to unconscious forces.

AC: Exactly. And I have reasoned in the following manner: I said, well, if I apply surrealism to my particular situation I can appeal to the unconscious forces. For me, it was the call to Africa. I said to myself: It is true that superficially we are French; we are marked by French customs. We have been marked by cartesianism and by French

rhetoric. But if all this is broken, if you go down to the depths, what you will find is fundamentally Negro.

RD: It was, then, an operation of disalienation.

AC: Yes: That is how I have interpreted surrealism.

RD: That is how surrealism has manifested itself in your work: as an effort to recover your authentic personality, as a way of recovering your African heritage.

AC: Absolutely.

RD: It functions as a priest who purged you of your intoxication with Europe.

AC: A dive into the depths. It was a dive into Africa for me.

RD: And a way of emancipating your consciousness.

AC: Yes, beyond social being, a profound existence over which all kinds of layers and ancestral alluvium have been deposited is found.

RD: Now I would like to go back to the period in your life in which you collaborated in Paris with Léopold Sédar Senghor and Léon Damas on the little journal L'Étudiant Noir. Was the first stage of Negritude expressed in the Cahier d'un retour au pays natal?

AC: Yes, it was Negritude as we conceived of it then. There were two groups among us. On the one hand men of the Left, communists of that time, such as J. Monnerot, E. Léro, René Menil, and the like, who were communists and had our sympathy for that. However, what I have to reproach them for — and perhaps I owe this to Senghor — is that they were French communists. There was nothing to distinguish them from either the French communists or the French surrealists. To put it another way, they were color blind.

RD: They were not undertaking the task of disalienation.

AC: In my opinion they bore the mark of assimilation. At that time Martinican students assimilated either with the French of the Right or with the French of the Left. But always it was assimilation.

RD: At bottom what separated you from the Martinican communist students during this period was the Negro question.

AC: Yes, the Negro question. At that time I reproached communists who neglected our black characteristics. They acted like communists, which was good; but they acted like abstract communists. I maintained that the political question would not eliminate our condition as Negroes. We are Negroes, with numerous historical peculiarities. I suppose that I have felt Senghor's influence in this. Then I didn't know Africa in the absolute. Very soon I met Senghor, who spoke much of Africa. And this impressed me enormously. I owe the revelation of Africa and African particularity to him. And I tried to conceive of a theory that would take all of my reality into account.

RD: You have tried to particularize communism....

AC: Yes, it is a very-old tendency in me. The communists used to reproach me for what they called my racism, because I spoke of the Negro problem. For my part, I said to them: Marx is good, but it is

necessary to complete Marx. I thought that the emancipation of the Negro could not be only a political emancipation.

RD: Do you see a relationship between L'Étudiant Noir and the Negro Renaissance in the United States, the movement of La Revue Indigène in Haiti, and Cuban Negrismo between the two world wars?

AC: I was not influenced by them because I did not know them. But they are without a doubt parallel movements.

RD: And how do you explain the appearance in the years between the two world wars of these parallel phenomena — of the recognition of African cultural particularities in Cuba, Brazil, Haiti, Martinique, the United States, et cetera?

AC: I believe at that moment in the history of the world there was a coming to consciousness among Negroes that manifested itself in movements that had no relationship to each other.

RD: There was the extraordinary phenomenon of jazz.

AC: There was the phenomenon of jazz. There was the movement of Marcus Garvey. I remember very well that when I was a child I heard of Marcus Garvey.

RD: Marcus Garvey was a type of Negro prophet whose speeches had galvanized the Negro masses of the United States. He had planned to return all the North American Negroes to Africa.

AC: A mass movement was stirred up then, and for several years he was a symbol in the eyes of North American Negroes. In France there was a periodical called Le Cri des Nègres.

RD: I think that Haitians like Doctor Sajous, Jacques Roumain, and Price-Mars collaborated on that periodical. There also were six issues of La Revue du Monde Noir in which the Achille Brothers, Claude MacKay, René Maran, Price-Mars, Sajous, and others wrote.

AC: I remember that when we read the poems of Langston Hughes and Claude MacKay, I knew who MacKay was because during the years 1929 and 1930 an anthology of poetry by Negro North Americans appeared in France. In 1930 appeared MacKay's novel Banjo, which described the life of the dockers in Marseilles. This was truly one of the first works in which the author spoke of the Negro and gave the Negro some kind of literary dignity. I must say, then, that without having undergone the influence of the North American Negroes, I have felt, at least, that the North American movement succeeded in creating the indispensable atmosphere for a very-clear coming to consciousness among Negroes. In this period, grosso modo if you like, I underwent three influences. The first was a French literary influence by way of Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Lautréamont, and Claudel. The second was Africa. I didn't know Africa very well, but I have learned to know it through ethnography.

RD: I believe that European ethnographers have contributed to the elaboration of the concept of Negritude.

AC: Surely. And as for the third influence, it was the United States

"Negro Renaissance" movement, which didn't influence me in a literal manner, but created the atmosphere that would permit me to become conscious of the solidarity of the black world.

RD: At that moment were you not aware of, for example, the effort that was carried out in the same spirit by La Revue Indigène and Jean Price-Mars with his book Ainsi parla l'oncle in Haiti?

AC: No. I discovered the Haitian movement and the famous book of Price-Mars much later.

RD: How do you explain the encounter between you and Senghor — between Antillean Negritude and African Negritude? Was it the result of a particular act or of a parallel coming to consciousness?

AC: Simply the following fact: In Paris some 20 Negroes of all origins met each other. There were Africans, like Senghor; Guianians, Haitians, North American Negroes, Antilleans, et cetera. This was very important for me.

RD: In this circle of Negroes in Paris, did you become aware of the value of the culture of Black Africa...?

AC: And of the solidarity among Negroes. We were Negroes from all parts of the world. We met each other for the first time, discovered each other. This was very important.

RD: That was extraordinarily important. And how did you arrive at elaborating this concept of Negritude?

AC: I have the impression it is a bit of a collective creation. To be sure, I employed it for the first time. But it is possible that we spoke of it in our circle. It was resistance to the politics of assimilation. Until my epoch, until my generation, the French and the English — and most-particularly the French — had followed an unbridled politics of assimilation. We didn't know what Africa was. The Europeans despised Africa completely, and in France one thought of a civilized world and a barbarous world. The barbarous world was Africa, and the civilized world was Europe. So the best thing that could be done for an African was to assimilate him. The ideal was to be a Frenchman with a black skin.

RD: We have known this same phenomenon in Haiti at the beginning of the last century. A whole Haitian pseudoliterature exists, created by authors who allowed themselves to assimilate. The independence of Haiti, our first independence, was a violent impugnation against the French presence in our country, but the first Haitian authors didn't oppose French cultural values in the same way. The decolonization of their consciousness did not take place.

AC: This is what is called a bovarismo. In Martinique we were also in full bovarismo. I still remember a poor little Martinican pharmacist who passed the time writing poems and sonnets that he sent to the Juegos Florales de Tolosa. He became very proud when his production was rewarded. One day he told me that the jury had not even realized that his works had been written by a man of color. To put it otherwise,

his poetry was so impersonal that he was proud of it. He swelled with pride for something that for me was a crushing accusation.

RD: It was a case of total alienation.

AC: I think you have said a very-important word. Our struggle was a struggle against alienation. That is how Negritude was born. Because Antilleans were ashamed to be Negroes, they searched for all manner of euphemisms to designate a Negro. A Negro was called a man of dark skin (hombre de piel morena) and other such foolish things.

RD: Yes, truly foolishness.

AC: And then we took the word Negro as a word of defiance. It was a name of defiance. It was a reaction of angry youth. Since there was shame at the word Negro, we took the word Negro. I must say that when we founded L'Étudiant Noir I wanted to call it L'Étudiant Nègre (1), but there was great resistance among the Antilleans....

RD: Some thought the word nègre was too offensive.

AC: Yes, too offensive, too aggressive; and then I took the liberty of speaking of Negritude. There was for us a defiant will, a violent affirmation in the words nègre and Negritude.

RD: In the Cahier d'un retour au pays natal you have said that Haiti has been the cradle of Negritude. You have said more precisely: "Haiti, where Negritude stood up for the first time." Then in your opinion the history of our country is, in a sense, the prehistory of Negritude. How have you applied this concept to the history of Haiti?

AC: Only when I began to discover Africa and the Negro world of America, and not until I had explored the entirety of the Negro world, did I grasp the history of Haiti. I adore Martinique, but Martinique is an alienated land, while Haiti represented the heroic Antilles and also the African Antilles for me. I make the link between the Antilles and Africa, and Haiti is the most-African land of the Antilles. It is at the same time a country with a marvelous history. The first Negro epic in the New World was written by Haitians, by people like Toussaint l'Ouverture, Christophe, Dessalines, et cetera. Haiti is hardly known in Martinique. I am one of the few Martinicans who know and love Haiti.

RD: Then for you Haiti's first independence was the confirmation, the illustration of the concept of Negritude. Our national history was Negritude in action.

AC: Yes, Negritude in action. Haiti is the country where the black man has stood up for the first time in order to affirm his will to form a new world, a free world.

RD: During all of the Nineteenth Century there have been men who, without using the word Negritude, understood what the appearance of Haiti on the scene of universal history represented. Haitian authors such as Hannibal Price and Louis-Joseph Janvier spoke at that time of rehabilitating the aesthetic and cultural values of the Negro race. And a genius like Anténor Firmin wrote in Paris a book entitled De l'égalité des races humaines in which he tried to reappraise African culture in

order to face this enterprise of colorless assimilation and all that was characteristic of the first authors of our literature. It may perhaps be said that it is beginning in the second half of the Nineteenth Century when some Haitian writers had begun, with Justin Lherisson, Frederic Marcelin, Fernand Hibbert, and Antoine Innocent, to discover that we had an African past, that the slave had not fallen with the last rains of Saint Domingue, that voodoo was an important element in our developing national culture. Now it would be necessary to examine more closely the concept of Negritude. Negritude has lived through all kinds of adventures.

I think that this concept does not always have its original sense, its explosive character, and that there are, in Paris and other places, people who serve themselves from it with purposes very distinct from those you had in the Cahier d'un retour au pays natal.

AC: I would like to say that everyone has his own Negritude. There has been much theorizing over Negritude. I have kept myself from joining in it out of personal modesty. But if I were to be asked how I conceived of Negritude, I would say that in my opinion Negritude is before all else a coming to consciousness that is concrete and not abstract. It is very important to recall the atmosphere in which one lived, the atmosphere of assimilation in which the Negro was ashamed of himself, the atmosphere of rejection, the inferiority complex. I have always thought that the black man was in search of an identification. And it has seemed to me that the first thing one had to do if one wished to affirm this identification, this identity, was to take concrete consciousness of what one is: that is, of the primary fact that one is a Negro—that we were Negroes; that we had a past; that this past contained cultural elements that had been very valuable; and that, as you say, Negroes had not fallen with the first rains—that there had been Negro civilizations that were important and beautiful. During the period we were in, the period in which we wrote, people could write a universal history of civilization without dedicating a single chapter to Africa, as if Africa had not brought anything to the world. Therefore we affirmed that we were Negroes and were proud of it, and that we thought that Africa was not some sort of blank page in the history of humanity; and, finally, the idea was that that Negro past was worthy of respect—that its values were values that could still bring important things to the world.

RD: That is, values that are still universalizing....

AC: Universalizing, living, values that have not been dried up. The song was not dried up. There were new fruits that could be borne in that song, if one made the effort to irrigate it with sweat, to cultivate it again. There was, then, this fact: There were things to tell the world. We were not dazzled by European civilization, and thought that Africa could bring its contribution to Europe. It was also the affirmation of solidarity. This is true. I have always thought that what happened in

Argelia and among North American Negroes reflected back to me. I thought I couldn't be indifferent to Haiti. I couldn't be indifferent to Africa. Then, if you like, we have begun to arrive at this idea of a type of Negro civilization extending throughout the entire world. And I have come to the idea that there was a "Negro situation" (situación negra) that manifested itself in geographically-different areas, and that my fatherland was also Africa. There was the African continent, Haiti, the Antilles. There were Martinicans, the Negroes of Brazil, et cetera. That, for me, was Negritude.

RD: There was a movement prior to Negritude, properly speaking, which manifested itself between the two world wars, a "pre-Negritude" movement, if you like, that I see in the interest in African art that could be observed among European painters. Do you see a relationship between that interest manifested by European artists and the coming to consciousness of Negroes?

AC: Surely. This movement is also one of the components of our coming to consciousness. Negroes had been put in fashion in France by Picasso, Vlaminck, Braque, et cetera.

RD: In the same period the connoisseurs of art and art historians remained impressed by the quality of the sculpture of Black Africa. In France, a man like Paul Guillaume; in Germany, a Carl Einstein. The art of Negro Africa ceased to be an exotic curiosity, and Guillaume himself had to consider it the "life-giving sperm of the Twentieth Century" (esperma vivificadora del siglo XX espiritual)....

AC: I also remember the Negro Anthology of Blaise Cendrars.

RD: A book dedicated to the oral literature of the Negro in Africa. I can also remember the third number of the art review Action, that had gathered the opinions and judgments of the artistic vanguard of the time on the masks, statues, and other art works of Africa. Neither must one forget Guillaume Appollinaire, whose lyrical work is filled with evocations of Africa. To conclude, do you think that the concept of Negritude has formed on the base of an ideological and political affinity among its defenders? Your comrades of Negritude, the first militants of Negritude, have followed a trajectory different from yours. There is for example, the case of Senghor — a brilliant mind, a poet of great power, but very contradictory on the plane of Negritude.

AC: There have been, before all else, sentimental affinities between us. One feels himself a Negro or one does not feel himself a Negro. But there was also a political side. It was, after all, a movement of the Left. I have never thought, even for an instant, that emancipation could be better achieved by the Right. That is not possible. We have thought, Senghor and I, that emancipation put us on the Left, but we have refused to see only a social issue in the Negro question. There are people, for example, who thought and still think that it would be enough if the Left were in power in France. Then economic conditions would change so that the Negro problem would disappear. I didn't believe that in the

absolute. I thought that effectively this was one important condition, but not the only condition.

RD: Surely, since the relationships of consciousness with the world are extremely complex. It is for that reason that it is necessary to decolonize the consciousness, the interior life of the people, at the same time that the society is being decolonized.

AC: Exactly. And I remember having said the same to Martinican communists in that period. That the black man was, as you have pointed out, doubly proletarianized, doubly alienated: as a proletarian on one hand, and as a Negro on the other. Because it is a question, after all, of the only race to whom humanity has been denied.

FOOTNOTE

1. Nègre carries the same connotation "nigger" does in English.

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POETRY:

INTRODUCTION

Alchemy — whatever aspects of it were still retrievable — seemed to form a very-useful bridge between the apparently-divergent worlds. This not so much in the sense of synthesizing separate compartments of knowledge as in the sense of tapping the source of all of these compartments. It could combine the rigorous quietism of the Eastern yogas with action: medicine. Unfortunately, it is extinct.

The Eastern disciplines seemed too difficult, too “far fetched”; soul exaltation too rare, unless constantly boosted by chemicals. Political activity was out of the question, and there remained nothing but the solitary occupations of writing and drawing, neither of them true. Actually there was a kind of invisible residue: no career, no occult knowledge, no practice, but an inescapable fact: experience. To make living a practice would mean neither to follow any formal practice such as yoga, nor to deny oneself any natural inclination for the sake of some spurious spiritual advance. Everything become immediately simpler and more manageable.

At intervals, the yearning for a constant state of exaltation would reassert itself, paralyzing all activity. I want to be poor, without clothes, home, books, or sense of time and place; I want in short to be completely honest, all of the time; to know: to be in the wheel of rebirth with all my being, knowing pain, death, pleasure, fear, all in one; being nowhere, being unattached, withholding nothing, neither resisting nor exaggerating the pulse of energy. But this kind of thing cannot be planned and executed. The only scheme I could think of was to keep a candle constantly lit where I would be staying, a reminder of the continuity of life, the urgency of total awareness. Energy does not wait for the brain, nor life for compassion; the “sunday service” has to be an every-minute affair, the zen meditation never interrupted. Then I could face anything and even understand something of the flavor of an existence which is not bound; the existence of seaweed. The idea of growing up into a person was, compared to this, choosing a state of

death. To every written sentence I could say: "Yes, but . . ." Perhaps I had mentally rolled all writers — all "mental workers", as they're called in the socialist countries — into one: my father. He had ended rather wretchedly for all his books, read and written, and for all his interests and comforts and commitments and compliments and experiences. Life had not been a continual outpouring of gratitude, not a continual service, not a continual feasting at the table of holiness-energy. This proved to me that merely to commit oneself to a cause, merely to act altruistically, merely to "do things for the world" was not the answer.

Writing is intellectual self-indulgence, the deliberate limiting of one's horizon for the sake of intellectual pleasure, of creating "something out of nothing"; at least this is what it seemed like to me. There were exceptions; a few books wormed their way into me and spoke through me, books that read me instead of my reading them — such as Kenneth Patchen's "Journal of Albion Moonlight", and before that a children's book which contains the buddhist dharma — whether this is known to the author or not I cannot tell — "Die Sieben Glucklichen Inseln Hinter Dem Winde". But these and others (Kierkegaard, Kafka, Rilke, Neruda, Brecht, Karinthy) were all read within the confines of four walls, in the safety of brick apartment houses; they were basically spices added to a life which would otherwise have been intolerably dull.

The first things that yanked me out of this state were several repeated extremely-disagreeable and extremely-horrifying experiences of mental depravity. Over a period of several weeks I felt alternately giddy and "fine" (when on Dex or in comfortable surroundings with utterly undemanding people), and paranoid and suicidal (when high on grass and among people to whom I had formed untenable attachments). Literature, history, living as a student, all became completely distant, unimaginable, and without value. But neither could I become a full-fledged hippie, having nothing in me to make the scene. All I could do was drag myself around in the wake of various people, laugh at their jokes, listen to their words, try not to offend them, try to break my often-conspicuous silences with a few words, try to be alive in their presence, try to rub shoulders with everything around, try to sleep in the hallway.

POETRY

Stefan Uhse

may 11 64

the unwashed glass of a train window, covered
with grey dirt smudged by the dried traces
of travelling water drops:

in that form

did the day pass.

a dry fishing net that passes through the hands
of all who live at the shore, and which
is thrown out at night, into the water,
the water holding its breath:

my eyes are no better

nor worse than that mass of string, darkened
with dampness if not with use.

a cluster of pigeons hypocritically praying
over the water. The thick fish-smell
would make me hungry, if I were not human.

And the conductor is merely a dark cloud passing.

june 1st 64

Read The Newspapers

forget love.
the window is bare
as if a storm had seen it.
forget the chisel

on a worn-out stone.

there is life
on the interstice.
the sun pokes fingers
into each face.
my collar's turned up
into a question mark.

the window
hinges on clearness.
the storm shuts its eye.
forget love.
read the newspapers.

Organization

In the wilderness
the calm face of the man in charge
reminds me
that there is no wilderness.

That airplanes crash as regularly as they land,
that this man is saved
with the same fierceness
with which another is destroyed.

But looking for the source of control
we find nothing but more faces
calm, of course, but not guilty.

And looking for the victims we find
the unjustly accused, guiltless
but accusing themselves.

And we dissolve into a million selves
crawling rapidly
each in a different direction

and again the wilderness envelops us.

At other places
the calm efficiency continues
at the cost of lives which as yet are not ours.

march 29 65

no force propels me against this wall
I walk to meet it at my own pace

The revolutionary poet of today
has already sold articles for the next issue
of National Review

neither junk nor disgust
propel me against this wall:
defeat; turning in one's coat
in exchange for something like a fix

I still am master of myself,
I can afford to have opinions of my own,
I am free like an umbrella in a dirty river.

everything plots
to tear the scales from your eyes
you see rivers of bobbing heads
tongues of blood in open throats
wolf-groins crawling with lice

the dead scream in your ear

nothing you do will do any good
inner peace is crime and impossible anyway
and your arm isn't long enough to hit the
the right people

only the minutes pick away at your eyes

THE BUFFALOES GRAZE, NOT JUST NOW BUT EVERY DAY

I know my pulse will continue to rot even
under the clearest sky,
the soles of my feet have invisible roots,
my laughter will not echo.

Still I like to think of myself at a future time
as another person. That is the way we behave.
I have the common habits which proves
as against what I suspected
that I am one of you.

Personal Histories of the Early CIO

Staughton Lynd, editor

This is an edited transcript of a community forum on "Labor History From The Viewpoint Of The Rank And File" held at Saint Joseph's College in East Chicago, Indiana on March 24 and March 31, 1970.

Doctor Charles McColleston of the Department of Philosophy of Saint Joseph's College was general chairman of the forum. Speakers were introduced by Professor Neil Betten of the Department of History of Indiana University at Gary, and Staughton Lynd. The film "The Inheritance" was shown on the second evening, and each evening began with labor songs sung by Danny Mack, Bob Vuxinic, and Ed Zivich. Lynn Dubek, a student at Saint Joseph's College, transcribed the tapes.

Following an opening statement about the purpose of the forum, the speakers (in order of presentation) were Harvey O'Connor, George Patterson, John W. Anderson, Jessie Reese, and John Sargent:

Harvey O'Connor took part in the Seattle general strike of 1919; was educational director of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers; and has written a number of books, including Steel: Dictator and Empire of Oil. During the early 1930s O'Connor lived in Pittsburgh and, together with Heber Blankenhorn and Harold Ruttenberg, assisted the emerging rank-and-file movement in the steel industry.

George Patterson was picket captain at the Memorial Day Massacre in 1937 and first president of Local 65 of the United Steel Workers of America (United States Steel South Works, South Chicago, Illinois). Before the formation of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee in June 1936, Patterson built an independent union of 3,000 workers at the South Works mill. In September 1936 he was fired for union activity, and from then until he retired in 1969 he was employed as an organizer by SWOC and USWA.

John W. Anderson belonged successively to the Industrial Workers of the World, the Socialist Party, and the Socialist Workers Party. A metal finisher, Anderson was a member of the Briggs (Detroit) strike committee in 1933, and chairman of the Fleetwood (Detroit) strike committee during the General Motors sit-down strike of January and February 1937. After World War II he was president of Fleetwood's GM Local 15. He is presently writing a memoir of his experiences.

Jessie Reese, a black man and an open member of the Communist Party, went to work at Youngstown Sheet and Tube in East Chicago, Indiana in 1929. Reese was a member of the Resolutions Committee at the first national convention of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee in December 1936.

John Sargent was first president of Local 1010, USWA (Inland Steel, East Chicago, Indiana). Sargent was re-elected in 1943, 1944, 1946, and (despite vicious Red-baiting) 1964. In 1958 and 1962 he took a strong stand against a dues increase at the USWA conventions. He is still working in the mill. (Sargent is the "John Smith" whose experience and point of view are presented in Staughton Lynd: "Guerrilla History in Gary", Liberation (October 1969).)

Two major themes emerge from these accounts. First is the vigor of rank-and-file activity during the period. Before the CIO was formed, George Patterson had built an independent union at South Works and Jessie Reese had organized a lodge of the Amalgamated Association at Youngstown Sheet and Tube. John Sargent describes how in Little Steel, because there was no contract and no no-strike clause, wildcat strikes in particular departments continued for three or four years after the Memorial Day massacre in 1937. And John Anderson tells how the contract which settled the General Motors sit-down strike sacrificed the shop-steward system.

A second theme is the expulsion of radicals after the unions were organized, and the narrowing of goals which resulted. We wanted the union to be a watchdog for the working class, Reese concludes, but "...your dog don't bark no more...."

Staughton Lynd :

I would like to say something about the kind of history we're going to be doing here tonight. One of the songs from the 1930s is called "Talking Union", and begins: "If you want to form a union, here is what you've got to do: You've got to talk to the fellows in the shop with you." The song says that we all know from experience that organizing begins with talking. People talk together, then they act together. And after we act together we talk about what we did. We come back from the picket line to the union hall, and we evaluate our action. What happened? Sometimes, as you know, in a confused demonstration, each person sees only part of the action, and you have to wait until you're all together again to be able to put those pieces together and be sure what really happened out there. What happened? Was it a success? Even if it was a success, how can we do it better next time? This kind of talk — talking together after an action about what that action meant — is history.

History is not something in books. History is people remembering together what they did. Everyone who has ever been in a strike or

demonstration knows that the newspapers, even when they mean well, never tell it quite like it was. It's the same way with history books. The point is that the people who know most about something are the people who personally experienced it, the people who can say "I was there." There are an awful lot of these people — an awful lot of history — in this room tonight.

Now why are we doing this kind of history? One reason is this: I happen to be 40 years old, halfway between the men and women in their 60s who built the CIO and the young people in their 20s who built the civil-rights and peace movements in the 1960s. And maybe because I'm halfway between these two generations, I feel very deeply the anguish of the older people who can't quite explain to the younger people — often their own children — just what it was they experienced, and of the younger people who may know that their dads and moms were involved in putting together the CIO, but still can't quite explain to their folks the newer type of movement they are into. And so young people grow up and leave a community like this one without ever really knowing the history — the tradition of struggle — of the community they are leaving.

I think we can't afford this particular kind of generation gap. We need to ask ourselves whether we can't find a definition of "what it means to be a worker" which includes both father and son — both the worker who is in the steel mill and the worker who is a teacher in school. We need to ask whether there is a definition of popular struggle broad enough to include both a student strike and a work stoppage — both a sit-down strike in a plant and the occupation of a building in a university. A kid who is thrown out of school for taking part in a peace demonstration and a worker who is canned for taking part in a wildcat have a great deal in common, I think.

Another reason that we need this kind of history is that labor is stirring again. Once again rank-and-file unionists are rejecting the so-called statesmanship of labor leaders. Once again idealistic young people are leaving the colleges and trying to lend a hand. Once again unemployment is rising and real wages are going down, so that working men and women feel that their backs are to the wall and that they're struggling simply to keep what they already have. Once again the President of the United States is using troops as strike breakers. Once again working men on strike have determined that there is a higher law than a court injunction and that the human rights to a living wage and a steady job are superior to all property rights. Once again the word has gone out to organize the unorganized.

Yesterday afternoon, not a 15-minute drive from here, I attended a meeting of working people, mostly older women, at Saint Margaret's Hospital in Hammond. Their average wage last year was \$3187 — \$1900 less than the average in Lake County hospitals, which itself isn't enough to live on. They want a union, they face an injunction, and they

will probably go on strike. Once again facts like these kindle both an indignation and a spirit of solidarity, so that we begin once more to see workers in one industry on the picket lines of another.

And once again ordinary men and women begin to wonder why the coal and the oil and the open hearths should be sources of profit for men of power whom none of us have elected, or why schools are not better in a county of wealthy steel mills, or why some men of 60 work midnight shifts while others give dictation in air-conditioned offices. In so many ways the problems of the '30s, the spirit of the '30s, and even the songs of the '30s are with us again.

And so our forum asks the questions: "What was it that led four million persons to join the CIO and half a million to stage sit-down strikes in 1936-37? Why did that militancy fade away so quickly? How did rank-and-file groupings try to keep that militancy alive? What can we do to revive that militancy today?"

Harvey O'Connor :

I really did like the way you started off this meeting with song. It reminded me that when I was a youngster working in the logging camps of Western Washington, I'd come to Seattle occasionally and go down the Skid Road to the Wobbly Hall, and our meetings there were started with song. Song was the great thing that cemented the IWW together. Wherever you had a Wobbly Hall you had people singing and enjoying themselves, and that song "Solidarity Forever" was of course a Wobbly song from way back: 1917-18-19, around those years. In the words of that song was condensed the philosophy of that organization. Later, of course, "Solidarity Forever" was adopted by the CIO as their official song, and in the Oil Workers it's the same.

But I'm here to tell you about the early days of the rank-and-file movement in the Steel Workers Union in Pittsburgh. I lived in Pittsburgh from 1930 to 1937, and it was one of my unforgettable experiences to have lived in Western Pennsylvania at the depth of the Depression. I suppose the Depression was worse in the steel mills than in any other industry, and was certainly at its worst in Western Pennsylvania. I remember we lived on a hilltop in Pittsburgh, and the natives used to tell me you could see Pittsburgh for the first time in history. Usually, you know, it was blotted out with smog and smoke, but during the Depression not a mill was running. I would go out as a labor newspaperman to steel towns such as Duquesne and Homestead up and down the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio Rivers. And I can never forget, at Homestead, good old Carnegie Steel, "the friend of the steel workers". The mills were shut down and there was no Social Security in those days, folks; there were no unemployment benefits; there was no nothin'. Except Carnegie Steel every Saturday had baskets for its employees. (If you could call them employees any more: I mean

they didn't have no jobs.) There'd be a lot of moldy old bread and some sour old bacon and some flour with maggots in it. It was a lot of junk being handed out, out of the goodness of the heart of Carnegie Steel, to keep these people alive till the time came when they would be needed again. We couldn't afford to have them die on us, you know! They had to be available when the Depression was over.

There was a very-curious labor situation at that time. There was an organization known as the Amalgamated Association of the Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers, and one of its main locals was a horseshoe factory in Buffalo which made not only horseshoes but also nails. This was about the extent of organization in the steel industry, aside from a few old tin mills. The gentleman who ran this union was named Mike Tighe. It was always said that Mike had a deal with Carnegie Steel and the rest of them not to organize, but to kind of lay off, and that there should be certain perquisites for them. They had a little hall in Pittsburgh for the union officers, but they had only a few thousand members. And during this horrible period when the mills were shut down, the union was pretty-well shut down too. And I think maybe Mike Tighe went into hibernation during that period. He had nothing to do. He didn't have much to do anyway, but he had much less to do when the horseshoe mill shut down.

So in 1933 along came the New Deal, and then came the NRA, and the effect was electric all up and down those valleys. The mills began reopening somewhat, and the steel workers read in the newspapers about this NRA Section 7A that guaranteed you the right to organize. That was true, and that's about as far as it went: You had the right to organize, but what happened after that was another matter. All over the steel country union locals sprang up spontaneously. Not by virtue of the Amalgamated Association; they couldn't have cared less. But these locals sprang up at Duquesne, Homestead, and Braddock. You name the mill town and there was a local there, carrying a name like the "Blue Eagle" or the "New Deal" local. (If you can't remember what the "Blue Eagle" was, that was the bird that took us out of the Depression.) There was even an "FDR" local, I think. These people had never had any experience in unionism. All they knew was that, by golly, the time had come when they could organize and the Government guaranteed them the right to organize!

In Homestead the steel workers took this seriously. But Carnegie Steel owned Homestead. There were no halls. It's difficult to organize when there's no place to get together to organize. The situation became so notorious that Madame Perkins, who was Secretary of Labor under Roosevelt, finally had to come to Homestead and hold a meeting there for the steel workers. Where did she hold it? The only free territory in Homestead was the steps of the local post office; that was Federal property. So she stood there to deliver a speech to the steel workers and help them get going. The trouble with Section 7A was that while it

guaranteed you the right to organize, it didn't guarantee you the right to anything else.

The people got together in the Rank-and-File Movement almost spontaneously, you might say. The Amalgamated Association chartered these locals. Mike Tighe was willing to have the per-capita coming in. (You folks know what per-capita is: It's what keeps the bureaucrats going.) And so the per-capita began to come in and there had to be a convention. The Amalgamated Association called a convention, and in poured these people from all over Western Pennsylvania, Eastern Ohio, West Virginia. They hardly knew what to do: They knew what they wanted, but they'd never had any experience, and Mike Tighe wasn't very likely to help them out much. As a matter of fact Mike Tighe was appalled, because if it was going to be a democratic union, then these Rank-and-File would run it. And you couldn't permit that; that could be the end of Mike Tighe.

At the time of the convention there was a chap at the University of Pittsburgh, Carroll Dougherty, who had a bright young student in his class and assigned him to come down to the convention and help the Rank-and-File get started. We were working together listening to the Rank-and-File putting together the resolutions they wanted the way they wanted them and getting things going. Of course the resolutions carried; it was a grand success; and the Rank-and-File people went home and nothing much happened. So we entered a new period in the history of the union — one in which Mike Tighe began expelling these locals because they were exercising their autonomy and doing what they could.

Out of this really-anarchic situation that existed in '33 and '34 came, of course, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. Somebody had to come in there with know-how to get the organization going. I must say the miners were perhaps the most important. They did understand unionism, even though they were poorly organized at the time. They had been organized in the past, and they were reorganizing all over the country. It was at that time that John L. Lewis decided the time had come to establish the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. And in order to build up this organization he had to appeal, of course, to these Rank-and-File locals that were scattered all over the country, and I suppose all around this part of the country. Around the Pittsburgh region organizers came in mainly from the miners' union.

There's an interesting little sidelight on that. When John L. Lewis wanted to go into steel towns like Duquesne, Homestead, and Braddock, literally, as I've said, there were hardly any people in these localities who understood organization except for one particular set of people — the Communists. Now you may say: How come there were Communists around? Well, in the Western Pennsylvania region there were all kinds of literary and dramatic societies based on ethnic groups: Hungarians, Yugoslavs, and so on. They had their dramatic and singing societies

and the like, and in these societies there was a strong bond of unity and solidarity. And it was into these organizations, many of which were dominated by the Communists, that John L. Lewis went for organizers to help those miners who had come in. The miners didn't know anything about steel, and so he had to have some steel people. And it's one of the oddities, you know, of organization that John L. Lewis used the Communists to organize the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, and when he had it going pretty well he threw the Communists out! He was through with them. So that was some of the early history of the Union.

George Patterson :

I met Harvey many years ago; he doesn't remember me because in those years we met many strange people. Isn't that right? We're not so strange, however.

I came here when I was 16 years of age and went to work in South Chicago at the South Works. I became a roll turner's apprentice and went to night school at Englewood High. I worked 10 hours a day in the mill and went four hours an evening to night school. (Self-educated.) I graduated from high school and served my apprenticeship all at the same time, and it wasn't easy for a young fellow.

The first job I got was in a blacksmith's shop, and we got \$5 a day; that was 50¢ an hour for 10 hours. But I quickly got over trying to be a blacksmith; I wasn't built for it. So I went into the roll shop and became a roll turner, and I dropped down to 29¢ an hour; that was \$2.90 for a 10-hour day. Of course every six months you got a raise.

At the time that the steel workers began to get interested in the CIO, we in the roll turner's trade began to form our own union, and I became the international vice-president of the United Roll Turners of America. This was my first experience with unions. I wasn't too interested in unions other than to get more dough; I was a typical steel worker. We had just come through the Depression. Those Depression years were terrible. I almost starved to death. The reason I got interested in the union was that I got married in the middle of that depression, and then along came my son and I didn't have enough money to buy a bottle of milk.

Well, we got interested in the union not because of the steel workers themselves but because the steel-mill people came into the mill around 1933 and handed us a piece of paper. We looked at it, and it was called "An Employee Representation Plan". Now the Employee Representation Plan was the company-union plan. It was based on the fact that we had the right to bargain collectively. The company drew the whole thing up, and the workers in the various departments elected representatives of their own. I looked at this paper as a young lad and said this thing could never work, because it said right at the outset that there would be five members from management to sit on a committee and five members

Steel Workers Attention!

“The Company Union Is Illegal!”

Such is the advice of the Company Union Lawyer to Employee Representatives of the United States Steel Corporation. At last the Bastard Monster which has no place in civilized America is declared officially Dead by its makers.


**The Steel Workers' Union Drive
Has Killed the Company Union
Now What?**

The Forward March of Industrial Union for
Steel Workers' Economic Security is on

No Power in America Can Stop It

Just as sure as Old Glory is the Flag of the Land just that sure the
Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers of North
America is the only Union of and for Steel Workers in the Country.

**JOIN THIS UNION
JOIN THE FORWARD MARCH**

 **STEEL WORKERS' ORGANIZING COMMITTEE**

from the union — the company union — to sit on the committee. I asked who settled the tie, and of course I found out management did. So you see how useless it would have been. I talked to the fellows in the shop, and I talked faster than the others about unions. (I'd heard my dad talk about unions in the Old Country.) I said: "I don't think this thing is any good." So they elected me to be their representative! And the first thing I did was begin to destroy this company-union idea. I believed in the legitimate form of union. I got in touch with this Amalgamated Association through my craft union, the roll turners, and they wouldn't have anything to do with us. Leonard was the secretary. He wrote me nice letters, but never came to see me or invite me to come down and talk over joining with them.

Then, strange things began to happen. One night I came home — I'll always remember as long as I live; it was Lincoln's birthday about the year 1936. — and I walked into the house and there were two big fellows sitting there talking with my sister. They had a wonderful opportunity for a job for me. Now I was working in a mill as a roll turner, making pretty-good money for that time. When I got to talking with these fellows, I found out that they wanted to hire me as a spy. So you see I became very-quickly acquainted with labor espionage. We were trying to form a legitimate union, and these people invited some of us to come spy. Of course I turned this down and told them I had nothing much to offer them.

We tried to disband the company union, and we formed what we called the Associated Employees. This was just workers like myself attempting to do something by way of getting into a legitimate union. The Amalgamated Association was lying there and wouldn't do a thing for us, never even offering to talk to us. So we formed an independent union. One day we read in the newspapers that they were trying to do the same thing down in Pittsburgh. So I was elected to go down to Pittsburgh and talk matters over with the fellows who were attempting to do that. And I got to talking to a man named Johnny Mullin who asked me if I knew of a certain man named Hemingway. And I looked at him and said "Yes. What do you know about him?" "Well," he said, "I work for him." I said: "You mean you're working for that spy?" He said "Yeah." He had been approached by these same spies down in his plant in Pittsburgh, and he was taking the money. He was giving them the reports they wanted, and then he was turning them over to Clinton Golden of the National Labor Relations Board. We found out that Frick, vice-president of US Steel, was the company man in charge of the spying. Mullin and I went down and testified before Senator LaFollette's committee, and there we revealed the beginnings of labor espionage in the steel mills and in other industrial plants. That was an interesting time in my life, I assure you; but little did I know that there was more to come.

I became president of the Associated Employees, and then we heard

about a man named John Lewis who was very interested in trying to organize the unorganized. I wrote him a letter and said we had an independent union that would like to join up. He wrote back and told me if I held my short tail in he'd be down there in the near future and he'd send a man by the name of Philip Murray. So I got to meet Phil Murray and found he was a Scot born about a mile from where I was born, and we got along pretty well. He was old enough to be my father. He was a United Mine Worker and could tell me more about unions in America than anybody else I knew, and I began to work very closely with him. One day he said to me: "I'd like you to come down to Pittsburgh and do a little testifying against 'yellow-dog' contracts." A company had quickly signed a "yellow-dog" contract with a company union that still existed... the remnants of it. So we appeared before Madame Perkins and testified against "yellow-dog" contracts, and these contracts were ruled illegal and the company unions were disbanded. Just at that time the Steel Workers Organizing Committee began their drive. But I was fired for doing this. I had 12 years in the steel mills... it was the only place I had worked... and now I was fired. But I was quickly picked up, thank goodness, by the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, and for the last 33 years of my life I've been working as an organizer for the United Steel Workers of America.

In June 1936 we started the drive to organize the steel workers in this area. I had a lucrative place to go; I had all these company unions throughout the steel mills, and I knew nearly every one. I would go to these people and get them to start joining the Steel Workers Union. Of course many of them were joining up at their own volition; I didn't do all this by myself. I was just an organizer.

By that time 1937 had rolled around, and we had already gotten a contract with US Steel (Carnegie-Illinois at the time). When we tried to get a contract with Republic Steel on May 26, 1937, the workers went on strike because Tom Girdler said he would rather dig potatoes than ever sign a contract with any labor organization. So the strike was on.

I understand you want to hear just a little bit about the Memorial Day Massacre. I was there. I was there on the Wednesday night when the strike started. I watched the police march around in their military formation. They were very well oriented. And toward 11 p.m. they marched out all of a sudden and broke up our picket lines, and the next thing I knew I enjoyed being placed in jail for the first time. I was in jail many times after that, and I never found anything too wrong with jail except the bed bugs, which I didn't like. Otherwise I got along fine in jail. I always carried an extra \$50 bill hidden away somewhere so I could get myself out. I learned that trick very early. (But you know, the Wobblies, they didn't have a \$50 bill. But we young steel workers were getting wise and saving our money a little bit by this time, because the Depression was beginning to get over with and we were working a little steadier.) So I ended up in jail on the first night of the strike with about



Scene just before Memorial Day Massacre, 1937

18 other organizers. We got out immediately the next morning, charged with disorderly conduct. Thursday I began to organize the picket line and we went down to picket, and they wouldn't let us picket. Mayor Da... Mayor Kelly.... I've got to watch that, Daley and Kelly: There's no difference, you know.... Mayor Kelly said at the time: "Yeah, you can picket all you want." But if we went down there the cops would beat the hell out of us. So we kept trying to picket and we got put back in jail. On Friday night we got real angry. We marched, and we were determined that we were going to picket. We met the police again. This time they really took a swat at us, and they were beating the hell out of everybody in the front lines. If you were in the front you were pretty lucky if you could get away without getting clubbed a little bit. Then they fired a few shots in the air, and that scattered us. There was no riot. We ran like hell. The cops were after us. They always say we riot. We never riot. We wanted to picket, and they won't let you picket; so they beat you up and then they say you rioted. This is the fact. The cops make you riot. They riot against us, always. I know it; I've been there too many times. I'm always well-behaved: I might talk to them, but that's about all. Anyhow, they chased us and they beat us again.

This got a lot of union people mad. They got mad over here at Inland

Steel; they got mad at Youngstown Sheet and Tube; and they got mad down at Gary. So we decided to hold a big meeting the following Sunday, which was Memorial Day. We invited the public to come and hear us, and we were going to picket. We had been given the right; it was in the paper. Everything said we could picket; now we were going to picket. After the meeting was over we started to march, and I went down with the front group right by the flag, and there we met about 650 cops lined up. It was getting to be kind of familiar. I was always ill at ease: I didn't like it; don't ever think anybody's that brave. But I was an organizer in charge of the picket line, so I walked along and saw my familiar old friends Mooney, the commander of the police, and Kilroy. They stood about six feet, six inches tall; they're big fellows, and I'm not very big. And I looked up and said: "Well, here we are. We'd like to go through. Would you escort us? We'd like to picket."

Well, he was standing there — Kilroy was the man. — and he was reading a very-official document asking us in the name of the people of Illinois to disperse; and as soon as he said that he put the paper down and all hell broke loose. They began to shoot us, club us, and gas us...10 people died while 68 were wounded...and we don't know how many got hurt in all: It really was hell on that field. I ran back with the rest of them, and I got mad. I could see the cops there shooting away with their guns. At first I thought they were blanks — I really did. I could smell the gunpowder; I'll never forget it. And then I began to see people fall. I saw a boy run by, and his foot was bleeding. Then it dawned on me: They were shooting real bullets. This was for keeps. They didn't stop shooting and killing till an hour and a half later. They were chasing people and picking people up.

It was about a week later that I was picked up by the police, and this time I really got the treatment. I went in and was held incommunicado for four days and four nights. You know how they do it: Every 24 hours they move you (They don't need to book you.), and all the time you're being questioned. My wife didn't know where I was at; nobody knew. I just disappeared. They picked me up on 95th Street at Torrence. I was going over to a meeting at the Burnside Steel Foundry, where I was organizing at the time. I never got there. How did I get out of it? Well, after about the third night there was a boy in the cell next to me who had been picked up for drunken driving, and his mother came down from Joliet to get him out, and I asked this lovely lady: "Would you do me a favor?" She said: "Well, you look like a nice fellow." And I said: "Yes, I am. I've been in here for four days and four nights, and I'm trying to get word to my wife." And she said: "Give me your telephone number." And I told her. And she called my wife. When they got the information from my wife, my lawyers got a writ of habeas corpus and produced the body, which was me, and we were put out on \$50,000 bond.

We were charged with exactly the same thing these seven fellows were charged with: conspiracy to commit an illegal act. They did it



Scene during Memorial Day Massacre

then, they'll do it next year, they'll do it any time. The police will react the same way, the mayors of Chicago will react the same way. Every time you put on a demonstration, always take for granted that this is what's going to happen. I haven't seen it change from the Haymarket days to that Memorial Day to the 1968 National Democratic Convention, when the police are faced with a plain group of citizens and are stirred up by the newspapers and foolish propaganda. I don't know what we can do to teach policemen that we're law-abiding citizens who are walking on the streets; we're demonstrating for something right. My heart bled the night of the Democratic Convention.

You know these things happen, and you'll have to be prepared to face them. We were ready to do these things: We stood up and we organized the steel workers all over the country. Some people ask: "Was it worth it?" Of course it was worth it. We got a contract at Republic Steel.

Well, anyhow I briefly told you my experiences, and I haven't even touched on half of them. But I know that you're going to listen to a very-interesting gentleman from the Auto Workers. I know what the sit-down strikes were, because we steel workers also began some of our unions that way. And some night maybe I'll tell you the story of the Fansteel strike in Waukegan. That was a real sit-downer, and I happen to have been in that in my younger days. That Memorial Day was just one of the things we went through, and the sit-down strikes marked the beginning of the Auto Workers.

John W. Anderson:

My entry into the labor movement in January 1933 was one of the accidents of my life. I deserve no special credit. Most things in life are more-or-less accidental. I was able to get an education by working my way through high school and college. In 1931, when I graduated from the University of Wisconsin, only 10% of my class were able to get jobs in their professions. The other 90% had to make a living any way they could. I had learned the metal-finishing trade back in 1926 at Seaman Body in Milwaukee. In December 1932 I found it necessary to go back into the shop and work at that trade. There were millions unemployed at the time. Many of these unemployed went to employment offices at 4 a.m. and stayed until they closed at night, hoping to get a job. At that time I was 27, and the employment men recognized that I could stand the work expected of a metal finisher in those days.

With all that unemployment, you wouldn't think they would work 10, 12, and 14 hours a day seven days a week. I went to work at the Dodge Hamtramck plant December 2, 1936, and I worked every day, including Saturdays and Sundays, 10, 12, and 14 hours a day. At seven o'clock on Christmas Eve they laid me off, saying: "We'll call you when we need you." I had been paid at 52¢ an hour. In 1929 I earned \$1 an hour and sometimes more. But wages had been cut 50%. Since we couldn't expect to work more than four or five months a year during those Depression years, I had to look for another job.

Briggs Manufacturing Company hired me as a metal finisher at 52¢ an hour, but they failed to pay me at that rate. The first week I got 45¢ an hour. The second week our rate was cut to 40¢ an hour, and the third week it was cut to 35¢. These wage cuts were enough to provoke the men to strike. After being called to work on Sunday, they walked out at noon without telling the foreman. On Monday we went to work again, and before starting work we told the foreman: "We want to know what our wages are. We were hired at 52¢ an hour, and we're being paid 35¢." The foreman said: "You see that line out there of men looking for jobs? If you fellows don't want to work, get your clothes and clear out. There are plenty of men who will take your jobs."

This statement provoked the men into walking out as a body, not as individuals. They had no organization; they had no one to speak for them. There were several hundred of them milling around in the street wondering what to do. I had seen such situations before, and the men generally stayed out a few hours or at most a day or two, and then went back to work. Because of my education I felt obligated to the men to speak for them. I got on a car fender and suggested that we demand the 52¢ an hour promised on our hiring slips.

Leon Pody, Lloyd Jones, and I were chosen to call on M. L. Briggs, the vice-president of the Company. We went to the sixth floor, where the offices were located. After about 10 minutes of argument, Briggs

agreed that we should be paid the 52¢. I said: "How about putting it in writing?" He said he wasn't going to put anything in writing. "Well," I said, "anything that's not worth putting in writing is not worth going out to the men with." We didn't know whether or not he would live up to his agreement, and so the strike began. We knew some men were working as much as 20 hours a day while tens of thousands of others were looking for work. Some were called to work day after day, and then sent home because there was no work. They were told: "Come back tomorrow, and we'll see if we have anything for you." Men were paying for their streetcar fare and lunches, and yet weren't making enough to afford either. This went on for years during the Depression.

The newspapers publicized the strike as communist-inspired. It was true that Left-wing groups — communists, socialists, Wobblies, and other Leftists — often were the inspiration and furnished the leadership of most of those strikes. When I saw the Mayor, Frank Murphy, using the Welfare Department of the City of Detroit to force the men to go back to work and the people on welfare to become strike breakers (both city and state police under a Democratic mayor and governor), I came to the conclusion that these officials were strike breakers and not on the side of the workers. The strike was lost after about three months. It wasn't lost completely, though; we had gained valuable experience from the strike, and we made up our minds that we would carry unionism wherever we went.

I was blacklisted as a result of the strike; but I could always change my name, and I did. I was hired back by Briggs to work at its Luchner plant, where experimental work was done and about 200 men were employed. This was a good job. Here I learned that as a result of the strike the wages of metal finishers had been raised to 60¢ an hour — a big raise for those days. We worked eight hours a day five days a week.

The strikers didn't get credit for all the improvements in wages and working conditions, but it gave me a lot of satisfaction to know how much good the strike had done. There had been work stoppages at other plants in the city. We were told that there had been a meeting of the employers at which they had decided to raise the wages of metal finishers to 60¢ an hour and those of workers in other job categories accordingly.

After I had done experimental work for two months, I was told to go back to the Mack Avenue plant, where I was identified and fired the first day. But in a few days I had another job with Murray Body. Here the IWW was organizing the workers. I was biased against the IWW, and for some time refused to sign up in the union. I had formed my opinion of it from press reports which accused it of committing acts of violence to gain its objectives. But finally Frank Cedervall, the IWW organizer, told me to read Paul Brissenden's history of the IWW, and after reading this book I changed my mind. From then on I gave less

credence to what the press said about labor.

The Murray strike had been in progress about a month when the Detroit police picked me up one afternoon. They then drove down to the picket line where Cedervall was and picked him up. When a lawyer and a judge came down to the police station to have us released, the police threatened to throw them in jail too! Believe it or not we were charged with violating a law passed in 1862 against the Southern states in the Civil War: We were charged with trying to overthrow the Government of the United States! We represented only a few hundred people. We were arraigned and held on \$500 bail. In 1933 \$500 cash bail was hard to come by. We were held in jail for more than a week. In prison you really get to understand what this government is like. It makes a deep impression on your mind.

While I was there two other strikers were brought in. They were from the tool- and -die strike called by the Mechanics Educational Society, and had been caught with sling-shots and ball-bearings in their car. Many of us in the labor movement who held to our convictions spent time in prison.

When it came time for our trial no one appeared against us, and the charges were dropped. The purpose of arresting us and holding us in jail had been to break the strike, and in this they were successful.

During the next two years, from '33 to '36, I spoke in front of factory gates and at strike meetings for the IWW. On November 24, 1936 I got a job at Fleetwood Fisher Body in Detroit. Hearing and reading about the activities of the CIO, I decided to begin organizing for them. The IWW was no longer active in Detroit and had no organization there.

By the middle of December 1936 I had organized a nucleus of the UAW - CIO in Fleetwood. They already had a strike in progress in Atlanta, Georgia, and other strikes soon followed. At Flint, Michigan we held a conference of GM workers at which many GM plants were represented. Soon we had a nationwide strike. Before the strike we met with the Fleetwood plant manager, but he had no authority to settle any of our grievances.

On the day of the strike, January 8, I was scared; my knees were shaking in spite of all my experience. That morning the plant manager stood on one side of the aisle near the exit and I stood on the other side. I was urging the workers to go to the cafeteria, where we were going to hold a meeting to organize the sit-down strikers. We remained in the plant until January 16, when we were asked by the UAW leadership to leave. This sit-down was a great experience — the best education that a worker could get. This demonstrated the power of labor.

Many of us were not satisfied with the settlement. We had been sold on the idea that we should have a shop-steward system throughout the Corporation to represent the workers, and this wasn't part of the agreement. I spoke in support of the shop-steward system, arguing that we should stay out until this system was recognized.

John L. Lewis, Governor Murphy, and the UAW and GM officials had agreed to the settlement. The Union officials felt that this was the best that could be gotten at that time. It was the kind of beginning that enabled us in the next few months to organize hundreds of thousands of workers at GM, Chrysler, Briggs, Packard, Hudson, and hundreds of smaller plants.

The GM strike was the great push that established the CIO, and I'm proud to have participated in that great struggle. I hope the book I'm writing will bring out clearly the militant workers' viewpoint. I spent the best 30 years of my life as a worker in the Fleetwood Fisher Body plant. I had many disagreements with the top leadership of the UAW. I know that the histories that have been written about the UAW have been written from the viewpoint of the labor bureaucracy and the Democratic Party. These histories are biased in their favor, and are largely false.

Jessie Reese:

You are looking now at living history: not reading from a book, but listening to a man who took part in the history of building a trade union in steel.

I went to work at Youngstown Sheet and Tube in 1929, and we had a skeleton union there called the Amalgamated Association. It had only three or four people in it. I worked down there for a few months, and I decided to join that union and see what I could do. The party organizer of the American Communist Party came to my house and sat down and talked to me for two hours. He said: "I have an assignment for you." I said: "What is that?" And he said: "I want you to go into the old Amalgamated Association; I want you to build that union. You're going to meet many difficulties. You're going to meet Jim Crow; they're going to throw it in your face. You're going to meet racism; they're going to throw that in your face. But I want you to stand up and throw your ring around with the leadership. That's your assignment." I said: "Well, I have a few things on my mind." And he said: "What is that?" "Freedom, Tom Mooney, the Scottsboro Boys — nine young Negro kids framed for rape in Scottsboro, Alabama," I said; "if I can take a stand on that...." And he said: "Well, you've got to go in there with the leadership, and report to me about every week or two how things are going."

I went in, and the first thing I met was old Jim Crow. They intended to run me out. So they said to me: "Well, we don't take colored people in here, we haven't been taking colored people; but since you're a steel worker and we need the trade union built, we'll give you a chance. But remember one thing: You'll have to organize to stay here." I told them "That's my business coming here — to help organize the union." One of the secretaries said to me: "I love Negroes, but I like to see 'em in

their place." I didn't say a thing, because the organizer had told me to take it cool: "Don't lose your cool, but stay there." So when it came to my time, I took the floor. I said: "I met a brother here in this union, and he gave me something to think about and something to do. He told me he liked colored people, but he liked them to stay in their place." I said: "Brothers, I agree with him. The place of black people is in the labor movement and officiating in their place, and I'm going to see that everyone out here can be put in his place." I said: "Every working man should know his place. I don't know what place you belong to, but my place is in the labor movement. Is that the place you were telling me you wanted me to stay in?" So that went on.

A few days later, they said to me: "We heard the Reds were coming in here, to take over the union. Stay away from the Communists; stay away from them." I didn't say a word. I waited till my time had come, and I got on the floor. I said: "Mr. Chairman, fellow delegates to this union: I didn't come here to tell you how good communism is, I came here to help you build a union. I feel that if a man's in jail, and you have a piece of pie in your hand and tell him how good it is when he needs liberation, it is foolish, when you can't enjoy it under the present system that we live under." And they left me alone, and next time they said: "This brother, we're going to make him president of this local union. He's able to take care of stuff, and the rest of us don't." And they said: "We're making you president. How about it?" There were four of them. I said to them: "Well, listen, you white fellows say you are free. Why do you want to put such a load on my shoulders?" They said: "Well, you're the man for it; you can do it; you can do a good job. You're president of the union — we're going to nominate you." So they elected me, and I took it.

I reported to the organizer and told him I'd done a good job, and he said: "Tell me what you did." I told him. I said: "They hit me in the face, they hit me everywhere, but I hit back. And they hit me with communism, but I told them I hadn't come there to tell them how good communism was, since they couldn't enjoy it anyway under the present society that we live under." And he grabbed me and kissed me — first time I'd ever been kissed by a man in my life, but it was a true kiss: It wasn't a Jim Crow segregation kiss, but it was a kiss of an honest brother.

I went on there in the union. I wanted to know how I could get the people in the union; that was my next step: to get people to join the union — to get black people in there. So I kept talking to my brothers and working with them. Black folks had the key positions in the mill, the positions of the hardest jobs, like pickling. All the steel had to come through the pickles at the Youngstown Sheet and Tube tin mill. They fired our foreman, a nice fellow, and they brought over a slave driver from Gary. A white fellow told us he was an organizer for the Ku Klux Klan and said: "You all going to stand for that guy to come in

here?" So I went down to the operators of the pickles and said: "Shut the pickles down." And they said: "We can't do that, man!" I said: "Shut the pickles down." And they shut them down. I went over to see Long, the foreman, and I said: "Long, you lost your job?" And he said: "Yes." And I said: "Well, give me five minutes and we'll make them tell you where your job's at." And he said: "You got all day."

I drove over to the hot strip where the white fellows were rolling hot steel, and I said: "Hey, fellows, just stop a minute rolling that steel. We're shutting down over there. We're fighting for 10¢ an hour and our foreman back on the job." (It would look foolish fighting for your foreman and not for yourself.) And they said: "Oh, you got it organized?" And I said: "Yes, we shut it down; look over there: We're down; we're not moving. We want you to stop until our grievance is heard." So the white fellows said: "We'll follow you."

Before I could get to the superintendent's office every superintendent in the mill was there. When I walked in, this man by the name of Mr. Griffin said: "Hello; come in, Mr. Reese. I heard you were coming." And I said: "Well, Mr. Griffin, you should have cooked a cake." And he said: "Well, if I had known it in time maybe we could have had a cake. What's your story?" I said: "Well, I'll tell you: You fired our foreman, and we want him back on the job if you want any steel rolled and any tin pickled." And he said: "Well, listen, you boys all made a mistake. We gave your foreman a vacation with pay and a better job." Nobody had ever given anybody a vacation with pay before — not in the mill, not anyplace. I said: "Did you give us 10¢ an hour? Didn't you know that we wanted 10¢ an hour on our pay for coming and an annual 35¢ added onto that?" "Oh, Reese," said Griffin, "that's too much; oo-oo, I can't do that. You'll have to go to Youngstown Sheet and Tube." One of the superintendents said: "Give 'em 3¢." And Griffin said: "Well, I'll tell you, we decided about a month ago to give you all 3¢ on the hour." So I said: "You can't make it 10¢?" And one of the fellows came up hunchin' me and said: "Take it; take it and let it go." So I couldn't go ahead of my army; you know, if I went too far ahead of my army I would lose my gang. I looked around, and they said: "Take the 3¢ and come on." And I said to them: "If we can't get 2¢ more, let's fight for it!" And I said to Mr. Griffin: "The brothers say 2¢ more, Mr. Griffin, and we'll settle with you: 2¢." "Well, we'll think about it," said Griffin. "Boys, I want to tell you this is your home, this mill is your home. Go along back to the pickles and pickle the steel, and we'll see about your raise."

We went back down there, and I said: "You asked for 10¢. Why didn't you...?" And they said: "Yeah, we want 10¢; but you know that's too much." And I said: "That's never too much to ask from the man; ask for the mill."

I went back to the hot strip and told the brothers: "Well, we got 3¢ on the hour, and the foreman a better job with a vacation." And there

was an iceman, whose name was Bill — Bill Anderson. He was a big, heavy, strong fellow. And he said: "Bring 'em on up to the union, and we're going to initiate them—every man; we're going to make a strong union." So I brought them into the union and we made a talk —and how they got it. But the hot strip didn't get anything. They just gave to the pickle. So everything was hot on the hot strip. How were they going to get their increase? The hot-strip boys were coming into the union. They were afraid of the union at first; everybody was scared to come in. But they were going to join the union.

I had a meeting in East Chicago — Indiana Harbor. A candidate by the name of Mr. Fred Higgins was running for Lake County judge, if I remember right. And that was my smokescreen: I could bring forth my union — what my union was doing for the politician; so I could call for membership. I think I had about 2,000. Then I was called in on the carpet. Mr. Griffin called me in and said: "Hey, I thought you were satisfied. What are you doing now? I heard you got to be president of the Amalgamated Association, and you're calling mass meetings." And I said: "My viewpoint, Mr. Griffin, is politics." "Oh, that's all right," he said; "go ahead." But I didn't tell him what kind of politics I meant.

The years rolled on. We had a terrible depression — 1932 and '33. Evictions were taking place; black people were being thrown out from block to block and from street to street; and we were beginning to work one day a week — one day in the mill, and the rest of the days in the street putting furniture back in the houses. Lots of people had bought property on option lease. They thought they had a contract until their real-estate agents proved that they had only leased their houses: "We didn't sell it to them." (Something like what's going on in Chicago now.)

A hunger march came through led by a black man named Claude Lightfoot. So I got my gang ready, getting some of the people in Gary ready to meet the hunger march, all those who could go to Washington getting aboard the train. The train was moving in for unemployment insurance, social security, and \$6 a day with a five-day week: Those were the demands of the Communists in that day. Arnold Johnson, the Republican mayor of the city at that time, said: "No hunger march is coming through Gary!" Well, Claude got an average number in his march (which looked about a mile long), and stopped about 15 minutes and said: "Arnold, we are here! And we are on our way to Washington for unemployment insurance, social security paid by the Government, and five days' work six hours a day." That's the way it was.

Sure enough, they passed social security (which you pay for) and unemployment insurance (which you pay for). And that's what you're getting today; that's how you got it. And if anybody here doesn't know how he's getting social security, that's the way it was got: through a struggle. The old fellows here — I know they know. Everything that we gained there came through struggle. And it was a hard struggle. I came up some time in the union on the strength of the slogan: "Five days'

pay, social security We must organize our union and fight for those things."

We had a "rump" convention of the old Amalgamated Association in Pittsburgh, but we didn't have any money to send people there. We had to have \$100. One of the brothers there who Red-baited so bad told me: "I want you to go to Communist Party headquarters and borrow \$100." And I said: "No, I won't. I'm the president of this union. I'm going to let the delegation go, and you're going to be on the committee." "Well, Reese," he said to me, "I thought you knew him." I said: "You can get acquainted with him!" So sure enough, they went on and borrowed \$100 to go to Pittsburgh. They never did pay it back. They couldn't give social affairs to raise money because there was so much racism in the outfit. They were scared of a black and white social affair, but later on they began to see that there wasn't much difference, and they had to do whatever they could to get money.

They went on to Pittsburgh. That was Mike Tighe's union — the old Amalgamated. They called on Mike Tighe to come and help build a union; they wanted his viewpoint. Mike Tighe came and expelled all of us, calling us Reds. I said: "Oh my goodness, this bunch of Catholics: All of them are Catholics but me." I was the only Red in the bunch. But he expelled all of them. I went back and said: "Hey, I thought you were going to keep the Reds out of the union, you fellows turning Red all the way around in one night. How did that happen?" And they said: "We ain't going to have no Red-baiting in this union. We're going to be in this union, and Mike Tighe is out to break it up."

In the year 1935 a resolution to organize steel was introduced at the AFL convention. It was a knock-down, drag-out fight. John L. Lewis and Bill Green (Bill Hutcheson) got to fighting over the resolution, and I understand that Lewis knocked Green down and came out with a CIO industrial-union council, ready to organize.

John L. Lewis told Philip Murray that he wanted our union built in steel and to go into Party headquarters and hire all the Communists. Philip Murray told him: "I don't want to have anything to do with the Communists!" He said: "Murray, if you were going to build a house you wouldn't go to the mines and get a dust blower, and you wouldn't get a plumber; you'd get a carpenter, wouldn't you? So I want you to go and get the know-how, go and get the Communists. We're going to build the union if we have to fight the Devil in Hell!" Well, he came out to Party headquarters, hiring everybody he could hire. So the Party organizer said: "Reese, you can get a job for \$8 a day." I said: "A man can hire, a man can fire. I'm going to stay in the mill and build my union where I know I'll have security." I said: "John L. Lewis with his money . . . well, he can have fire, but I have no security; but if I have mass security, I can have security in the mill."

Well, brothers, we rolled on, building steel. I helped to organize Youngstown, and we had a strike in 1937. Republic Steel was scabbing.

So we went to South Chicago with truckloads of people — working-class people. And we started our picket line like any union would be doing, and brother George Patterson was leading the strike. And while walking along I heard guns, and I thought: "Oh, oh; they're shooting blanks." I said: "Keep moving, folks; they ain't doing a thing but shooting blanks. File up; march!" But then I began to see people drop. There was a Mexican on my side, and he fell; and there was a black man on my side and he fell. Down I went. I crawled around in the grass and saw that people were getting beat. I'd never seen police beat women — not white women. I'd seen them beat black women, but this was the first time in my life I'd seen them beat white women — with sticks. There was this woman carrying a flag in her hand, and they took the flag away from her and began beating her with the flagpole. I thought: "I'm here with nothing. I should have brought my gun." But I didn't get hurt; I got out of there all right.

US Steel signed a contract. And I think the steel plant where we were working signed some kind of state agreement. And later on we also got a contract.

I had always said I wanted a union that would be a watchdog for the working class and guard its interests. So I always called our union the watchdog. If I ever had a chance I was going to turn my dog loose on the steel corporation. I always looked at Mississippi and Alabama. The lynching, Jim Crow, and segregation always stayed on my mind: How could we stop it? My aim was to do it.

The first convention at Pittsburgh I begged to get on the resolution committee, and I wouldn't tell anybody why. I wanted to draw up a resolution for Tom Mooney and the Scottsboro Boys, and I knew if I told them that they wouldn't put me on the resolution committee. Well, I met a white fellow from Missouri, and I said: "How about nominating me for the resolution committee?" And he did. I went in the resolution room (You had to bring the resolution from your committee onto the convention floor.), and I had one of the biggest fights in that room with my own man — a black man. He was sent by the Alabama committee to keep me from bringing up our resolution in the resolution room. He didn't mean it, but he had to go back to Alabama; he had to make that fight against the resolution on the Scottsboro Boys. I said: "Listen, I'll tell you where I'm going to stand. You're from Alabama, I'm from Mississippi; but I happen to be here for a little while. I know how you feel going back, but I'm going to fight for this resolution on the floor of the convention." Well, I did. John L. Lewis called me on the floor. Yessirree, as the representative of East Chicago 1011, I had a right to speak on the resolution. I came forward and I spoke on Tom Mooney and the Scottsboro Boys, who had been framed. I said the union was the watchdog of the working class, and it must speak up on the misery of the working class of people. (Both resolutions were adopted.)

I want to say, friends... and I'm not going to take up more of your

time...I had to give it to you like it is. In 1935 the Communists built the union. After we got the union built, something happened to John L. Lewis, and Mr. Philip Murray carried out his aims: He fired every Communist organizer. He made an agreement with the steel trusts, it seems to me, that he would fire the Communists; and that's what happened, and the union's been going back, back, back ever since. It doesn't open its mouth.

Today we have in our unions a pet dog — what you might call a pet company dog — led by the caretakers; and the caretakers are the leaders of our union. And our dog is being fed Red-baiting and his teeth have been pulled out — That's the strike clause. — and your dog don't bark no more for you. So the only thing you can get to win now is a cat; and it's got to be a wild cat, organized as a blanket matter. You've got to use blanket cover to keep from being exposed.

Your so-called leaders are the leaders of the industrial pet dog. Your dog don't bark at no misery; your dog won't bark no more — he can't hear. Makes no difference how many people they kill, your dog don't say nothing; he ain't the dog of 1937, when that dog turned loose nine boys — the Scottsboro Boys — and freed Tom Mooney. Your dog— What's the matter with your dog? I couldn't stay in that union, pay dues, and keep quiet. They'd have to do something about things. There's no justice, no justice! And we sit down with a big trade union — with intelligent people (people who are educated, they say); and you don't hear nothing and you can't say nothing and you can't see nothing — You can't see those people getting killed. They have declared war on color — and not just on one color, but on all color from the Kennedys to the Kings to the black ghettos to the Black Panthers to the mine workers; and they're now dancing on the doorsteps of Asia, and your dog don't bark. Because you don't have anything but the pet dog of the steel trusts.

Now I hope tonight that you do something about things before you leave here. If you came to hear the history of the union, the way it was organized then is the way you're going to have to do it now. You have no leaders: Your "leaders" don't say nothing; they're scared. Freedom is the jail house — that's the way of freedom. It ain't worth being free if you're not willing to go to jail for it. But your leaders ain't going nowhere if they can keep from it. You're going to have to organize and fight for peace and freedom, and against racism. That's the worst enemy the working class ever had — racism. To organize that black boy out there today you've got to prove yourself to him, because he don't believe nothing you say. He says: "Racism is your thing; do what you want with it." But I say it's our thing; we've got to do something with it; we've got to fight it and bring that boy back, just the way he got out there by himself. There's no one man can win a revolution. You can't advance ahead of the rest of the working class. He's very impatient; he's not ready to wait. He feels that if I shed blood for the

power structure, I can shed blood for myself. I agree with that. But I don't agree with his shedding blood by himself.

Well, friends, I thank you for letting me have this little few minutes' talking. Maybe I overtalked my time, but that's the way it's going to have to be done. You're going to have to do just like John L. Lewis had Murray do: Take the Communists to do the job.

John Sargent:

I'm always glad to be with my friend Jesse because he makes me feel like a young man, and it's great to feel young. You see, I got in the mills many many years after Jesse Reese; I got in the mills in 1936. And when I heard what he had to put up with between the time he got in and 1936 I felt as if I'd been in there only a relatively-short time. But both Jesse and I — especially I, because I was a little younger — were fortunate to be caught up in a great movement of the people in this country. And that doesn't happen very often in one's lifetime, but it's an experience that I think is important to anyone who has been able to participate in a movement of this kind. It's indeed a very-important event in his or her life. Because a movement of the kind that we had in the Steel Workers Union and in the CIO was a movement that moved millions of people, literally, and changed not only the course of the working man in this country, but also the nature of the relationship between the working man and the Government and between the working man and the boss, for all time in this country. There are some parallels in the movement today, especially among the young people and the black people, that I won't go into because I don't think you ought to be up here too late; but I'd like to speak to you from what little experience I've had personally with this great movement of people in the early 1930s.

I was hired at the Inland Steel Company in 1936, as I told you. And I remember I was hired at 47¢ an hour, which was the going rate, and at a time when there were no such things as vacations, holidays, overtime, insurance, or any of the so-called fringe benefits everybody talks about today. But the worst thing — the thing that made you most disgusted — was the fact that if you came to work and the boss didn't like the way you looked, you went home; and if he did like the way you looked, you got a promotion. Anything and everything that happened to you was at the whim and will of the fellow who was your boss and your supervisor. Now fortunately Jesse had a good boss, so you see how grateful were the people in the mill who had a good boss. I might tell you that 99% of the people did not have good bosses. As a matter of fact, in order to get a promotion — and sometimes even in order to work — you had to bring the boss a bottle of whiskey, or you had to mow the boss's lawn, or you had to do something to make yourself stand out from the other people he saw. This was the type of condition



A mock funeral for the company union

that existed as late as 1936 in the steel mills in this region.

When the CIO came in, the people were ready to accept a change; and because they were ready to accept a change, it was not a difficult task to organize the people in the steel mills. They were willing to make a change. And thousands upon thousands of them, in a spontaneous movement, joined the steel workers' organization at that time. And they did it because conditions in the mill were terrible, and because they had become disgusted with the political set-up in this country and the old tales told by the Republican Party about the free-enterprise system in this country in which any man was his own boss, and there was no sense in having an organization, and organizations and unions were anti-American, and so on. All this fell off the backs of the people at that time. They realized that there was going to be a change — both a political and an economic change — in this country, and there was.

Now Jesse told you a lot about the 1937 strike. John L. Lewis had an agreement with the US Steel Corporation, and they signed a contract. Little Steel — which was Youngstown Sheet and Tube, Republic Steel, Inland Steel, and other independent companies — had no contract with the Steel Workers Union. As a result in 1937 there was a strike called

on Little Steel. And one of the things that happened during the strike was the massacre in South Chicago — the same Chicago cops of 1936 beating and shooting the people. The strike was not won; we did not win a contract. Neither Youngstown Sheet and Tube, nor Republic Steel, nor Inland Steel won a contract with the Company. What we did get was an agreement through the Governor's office that the Company would recognize the Steel Workers Union and the company union and any other organization that wanted to represent the people in the steel industry. And we went back to work with this Governor's agreement signed by various companies and union representatives in Indiana. At Inland Steel we had a company union; we had our own steel workers' union. When we got back to work we had company-union representatives and Steel Workers Union representatives, and we had no contract with the Company. But the enthusiasm of the people who were working in the mills made this settlement of the strike into a victory of great proportions.

Without a contract; without any agreement with the company; without any regulations concerning hours of work, conditions of work, or wages, a tremendous surge took place. We talk of a rank-and-file movement: The beginning of union organization was the best type of rank-and-file movement you could think of. John L. Lewis sent in a few organizers, but there were no organizers at Inland Steel, and I'm sure there were no organizers at Youngstown Sheet and Tube. The union organizers were essentially workers in the mill who were so disgusted with their conditions and so ready for a change that they took the union into their own hands. For example, what happened at Inland Steel I believe is perhaps representative of what happened throughout the steel industry. Without a contract we secured for ourselves agreements on working conditions and wages that we do not have today, and that were better by far than what we do have today in the mill. For example as a result of the enthusiasm of the people in the mill you had a series of strikes, wildcats, shut-downs, slow-downs, anything working people could think of to secure for themselves what they decided they had to have. If their wages were low there was no contract to prohibit them from striking, and they struck for better wages. If their conditions were bad, if they didn't like what was going on, if they were being abused, the people in the mills themselves — without a contract or any agreement with the company involved — would shut down a department or even a group of departments to secure for themselves the things they found necessary.

We made an agreement with Inland Steel way back in '38 or '39 that the Company would not pay less than any of its competitors throughout the country. We never had it so good — I assure you of that. All you had to do as a union representative was come into the Company and say: "Look, we have a group of people working in the pickle line, and at Youngstown, Ohio or Youngstown Sheet and Tube in East Chicago people are getting more money than we're getting for the same job."

And if that was a fact, we were given an increase in wages at Inland. In those departments where you had a strong group of union members, where they were most active, we had the highest rates in the country. We were never able to secure conditions of this kind after we secured contracts.

What I'm trying to get at is the spontaneous action of people who are swept up in a movement they know is right and correct and want to do something about. Our union now has a grievance committee of 25 people. In those days there were more than 20 assistant grievors and hundreds of stewards. The grievance committee set-up could handle the affairs of the people on every shift and every turn with every group. Where you did have contracts with the companies (at US Steel, for example), you had a limited grievance procedure. The US Steel plant in Gary — the largest steel plant of the largest steel company — had a grievance committee of only 11. Where union officials did not take over the union through a contract with the company (as they did with US Steel), you had a broader, bigger, more-effective, and more-militant organization that set an example for unions throughout the country. Where the union and the company got together through union contracts (as at US Steel), you had a smaller, more-restrictive, less-militant union that provided less representation for the people in the mill. US Steel has never had a strike so far as I know since the unions organized, whereas unions like the Inland Steel union had a whole series of strikes in order to protect their conditions and prevent the Company from taking over or taking back the things they had earned.

What happens to a union? And what happened to the United Steel Workers of America? What makes my friend Jesse Reese mad, and what makes me mad, and what makes thousands of other people in the mill mad is that the companies became smart and understood that in order to accommodate themselves to a labor organization they could not oppose that labor organization. What they had to do was recognize that labor organization. And when they recognized a labor union they had to be sure they recognized the national and international leadership of that labor union and took the affairs of that labor union out of the hands of the ordinary elected officials on a local scale.

Now Little Steel was not smart. Little Steel had people like the president of Republic Steel, who said he would go out and pick apples before he would recognize the union. And our own dear Inland Steel Company said they would do nothing; they would rather shut their place down forever than recognize the Steel Workers Union. Now what happened to these companies that did not recognize the union — that forced the union to act against the company — was that the workers developed the most-militant and most-inspiring type of rank-and-file organization that you can have. Now when the companies realized that this was what was happening, they quickly saw that they had gone off in the wrong direction, and they recognized the leadership of the union.

We used to bargain locally with the Inland Steel Company, and we had our own contract with the Company. We let a representative of the international union sit in, but we bargained right in Indiana Harbor and settled our differences right there. But soon Inland began to realize that this was not the way, because they were up against a pretty-rough bunch of people who had no ambitions to become political leaders and labor representatives on a national scale. They realized that the best way to handle the situation was to work with the international leadership of this union. And today, as Jesse has pointed out to you, the Company and the international leadership get along pretty well.

The union has become a watchdog for the company. The local union has become the police force for the contracts made by the international union. If a local union tries to reject a contract in the Steel Workers Union, the contract is put into effect and the local union acts as the police to see that the men live up to the contract, even if it is rejected by the entire committee which negotiates the contract.

This is, I think, the normal growth which occurs when labor unions and most other organizations become legitimate and old and part of the general situation of the country. At the same time, I think it important to realize that the growth of the union in this country has changed the bond. We no longer have many of the sweat-shops we had in the '20s and early '30s, or the terribly-low wages we had before. The union taught the System — taught the industrialists of this country — that it is possible to pay decent wages and provide decent working conditions and still make a fortune. In fact the steel mills make more money now than they ever made before. They do it by paying people a fairly-decent wage and by working people not nearly so hard as they were worked in the past. The union has taught the companies how to make money through recognizing the union organization. And the Government and the employers have learned how to adopt, co-opt, and engulf the union and make it a part of the Establishment. And in making it part of the Establishment they took the guts, the militancy, and the fight out of the people who work for a living.

This is what's going to happen, I presume, to many of the movements we have going today. I think some 30 years from now one of you young folks will be standing up here making a speech about the peace and youth movements of the early 1970s and what happened to them in the next 30 years.

WORK

COUNTER-PLANNING ON THE SHOP FLOOR

Bill Watson

It is difficult to judge just when working-class practice at the point of production learned to by-pass the union structure in dealing with its problems, and to substitute (in bits and pieces) a new organizational form. It was clear to me, with my year stay in an auto motor plant (Detroit area 1968), that the process had been long underway. What I find crucial to understand is that while sabotage and other forms of independent workers' activity had existed before (certainly in the late Nineteenth Century and with the Wobbly period), that which exists today is unique in that it follows mass unionism and is a definite response to the obsolescence of that social form. The building of a new form of organization today by workers is the outcome of attempts, here and there, to seize control of various aspects of production. These forms are beyond unionism; they are only-secondarily concerned with the process of negotiation, while unionism made that its central point. Just as the CIO was created as a form of struggle by workers, so, out of necessity, that form is being by-passed and destroyed now, and a new organizational form is being developed in its place. The following, then, is by implication a discussion of the self-differentiation of workers from the form of their own former making. The activities and the new relationships which I record here are glimpses of a new social form we are yet to see full-blown, perhaps American workers' councils. (1)

Planning and counter-planning are terms which flow from actual examples. The most-flagrant case in my experience involved the sabotaging of a six-cylinder model. The model, intended as a large, fast "6", was hastily planned by the company, without any interest in the life or the precision of the motor. It ran rough with a very - sloppy cam. The motor became an issue first with complaints emanating from the motor-test area along with dozens of suggestions for improving the motor and modifying its design (all ignored). From this level, activities

eventually arose to counter-plan the production of the motor.

The interest in the motor had grown plant-wide. The general opinion among workers was that certain strategic modifications could be made in the assembly and that workers had suggestions which could well be utilized. This interest was flouted, and the contradictions of planning and producing poor quality, beginning as the stuff of jokes, eventually became a source of anger. In several localities of the plant organized acts of sabotage began. They began as acts of misassembling or even omitting parts on a larger-than-normal scale so that many motors would not pass inspection. Organization involved various deals between inspection and several assembly areas with mixed feelings and motives among those involved — some determined, some revengeful, some just participating for the fun of it. With an air of excitement, the thing pushed on.

Temporary deals unfolded between inspection and assembly and between assembly and trim, each with planned sabotage. Such things were done as neglecting to weld unmachined spots on motor heads; leaving out gaskets to create a loss of compression; putting in bad or wrong-size spark plugs; leaving bolts loose in the motor assembly; or, for example, assembling the plug wires in the wrong firing order so that the motor appeared to be off balance during inspection. Rejected motors accumulated.

In inspection, the systematic cracking of oil-filter pins, rocker-arm covers, or distributor caps with a blow from a timing wrench allowed the rejection of motors in cases in which no defect had been built in earlier along the line. In some cases, motors were simply rejected for their rough running.

There was a general atmosphere of hassling and arguing for several weeks as foremen and workers haggled over particular motors. The situation was tense, with no admission of sabotage by workers and a cautious fear of escalating it among management personnel.

Varying in degrees of intensity, these conflicts continued for several months. In the weeks just preceding a change-over period, a struggle against the V-8s (which will be discussed later) combined with the campaign against the "6s" to create a shortage of motors. At the same time management's headaches were increased by the absolute ultimate in auto-plant disasters — the discovery of a barrage of motors that had to be painstakingly removed from their bodies so that defects that had slipped through could be repaired.

Workers returning from a six-week change-over layoff discovered an interesting outcome of the previous conflict. The entire six-cylinder assembly and inspection operation had been moved away from the V-8s — undoubtedly at great cost — to an area at the other end of the plant where new workers were brought in to man it. In the most-dramatic way, the necessity of taking the product out of the hands of laborers who insisted on planning the product became overwhelming. There was

hardly a doubt in the minds of the men — in a plant teeming with discussion about the move for days — that the act had countered their activities.

A parallel situation arose in the weeks just preceding that year's change-over, when the company attempted to build the last V-8s using parts which had been rejected during the year. The hope of management was that the foundry could close early and that there would be minimal waste. The fact, however, was that the motors were running extremely rough; the crankshafts were particularly shoddy; and the pistons had been formerly rejected, mostly because of omitted oil holes or rough surfaces.

The first protest came from the motor-test area, where the motors were being rejected. It was quickly checked, however, by management, which sent down personnel to hound the inspectors and to insist on the acceptance of the motors. It was after this that a series of contacts, initiated by motor-test men, took place between areas during breaks and lunch periods. Planning at these innumerable meetings ultimately led to plant-wide sabotage of the V-8s. As with the six-cylinder-motor sabotage, the V-8s were defectively assembled or damaged en route so that they would be rejected. In addition to that, the inspectors agreed to reject something like three out of every four or five motors.

The result was stacks upon stacks of motors awaiting repair, piled up and down the aisles of the plant. This continued at an accelerating pace up to a night when the plant was forced to shut down, losing more than 10 hours of production time. At that point there were so many defective motors piled around the plant that it was almost impossible to move from one area to another.

The work force was sent home in this unusually-climactic shutdown, while the inspectors were summoned to the head supervisor's office, where a long interrogation began. Without any confession of foul play from the men, the supervisor was forced into a tortuous display which obviously troubled even his senses, trying to tell the men they should not reject motors which were clearly of poor quality without actually being able to say that. With tongue in cheek, the inspectors thwarted his attempts by asserting again and again that their interests were as one with the company's in getting out the best-possible product.

In both the case of the "6s" and the case of the V-8s, there was an organized struggle for control over the planning of the product of labor; its manifestation through sabotage was only-secondarily important. A distinct feature of this struggle is that its focus is not on negotiating a higher price at which wage labor is to be bought, but rather on making the working day more palatable. The use of sabotage in the instances cited above is a means of reaching out for control over one's own work. In the following we can see it extended as a means of controlling one's working "time".

The shutdown is radically different from the strike; its focus is on

the actual working day. It is not, as popularly thought, a rare conflict. It is a regular occurrence, and, depending on the time of year, even an hourly occurrence. The time lost from these shutdowns poses a real threat to capital through both increased costs and loss of output. Most of these shutdowns are the result of planned sabotage by workers in certain areas, and often of plant-wide organization.

The shutdown is nothing more than a device for controlling the rationalization of time by curtailing overtime planned by management. It is a regular device in the hot summer months. Sabotage is also exerted to shut down the process to gain extra time before lunch and, in some areas, to lengthen group breaks or allow friends to break at the same time. In the especially-hot months of June and July, when the temperature rises to 115 degrees in the plant and remains there for hours, such sabotage is used to gain free time to sit with friends in front of a fan or simply away from the machinery.

A plant-wide rotating sabotage program was planned in the summer to gain free time. At one meeting workers counted off numbers from 1 to 50 or more. Reportedly similar meetings took place in other areas. Each man took a period of about 20 minutes during the next two weeks, and when his period arrived he did something to sabotage the production process in his area, hopefully shutting down the entire line. No sooner would the management wheel in a crew to repair or correct the problem area than it would go off in another key area. Thus the entire plant usually sat out anywhere from 5 to 20 minutes of each hour for a number of weeks due to either a stopped line or a line passing by with no units on it. The techniques for this sabotage are many and varied, going well beyond my understanding in most areas.

The "sabotage of the rationalization of time" is not some foolery of men. In its own context it appears as nothing more than the forcing of more free time into existence; any worker would tell you as much. Yet as an activity which counteracts capital's prerogative of ordering labor's time, it is a profound organized effort by labor to undermine its own existence as "abstract labor power". The seizing of quantities of time for getting together with friends and the amusement of activities ranging from card games to reading or walking around the plant to see what other areas are doing is an important achievement for laborers. Not only does it demonstrate the feeling that much of the time should be organized by the workers themselves, but it also demonstrates an existing animosity toward the practice of constantly postponing all of one's desires and inclinations so the rational process of production can go on uninterrupted. The frequency of planned shutdowns in production increases as more opposition exists toward such rationalization of the workers' time.

What stands out in all this is the level of co-operative organization of workers in and between areas. While this organization is a reaction to the need for common action in getting the work done, relationships

like these also function to carry out sabotage, to make collections, or even to organize games and contests which serve to turn the working day into an enjoyable event. Such was the case in the motor-test area.

The inspectors organized a rod-blowing contest which required the posting of lookouts at the entrances to the shop area and the making of deals with assembly, for example, to neglect the torquing of bolts on rods for a random number of motors so that there would be loose rods. When an inspector stepped up to a motor and felt the telltale knock in the water-pump wheel, he would scream out to clear the shop, the men abandoning their work and running behind boxes and benches. Then he would arc himself away from the stand and ram the throttle up to first 4,000 and then 5,000 rpm. The motor would knock, clank, and finally blur to a cracking halt with the rod blowing through the side of the oil pan and across the shop. The men would rise up from their cover, exploding with cheers, and another point would be chalked on the wall for that inspector. This particular contest went on for several weeks, resulting in more than 150 blown motors. No small amount of money was exchanged in bets over the contests.

In another case, what began as a couple of men's squirting each other on a hot day with the hoses on the test stands developed into a standing hose fight in the shop area which lasted several days. Most of the motors were either neglected or simply okayed so that the men were free for the fight, and in many cases they would destroy or dent a unit so that it could be quickly written up. The fight usually involved about 10 or 15 unused hoses, each with the water pressure of a fire hose. With streams of crossfire, shouting, laughing, and running about, there was hardly a man in the mood for doing his job. The shop area was regularly drenched from ceiling to floor, with every man completely soaked. Squirt guns, nozzles, and buckets were soon brought in, and the game took on the proportions of a brawl for hours on end. One man walked around with his wife's shower cap on for a few days, to the amusement of the rest of the factory, which wasn't aware of what was happening in the test area.

The turning of the working day into an enjoyable activity becomes more of a necessary event as the loneliness and hardship of constant and rapid production becomes more oppressive. Part of the reality of concrete labor is that it is less and less able to see itself as merely an abstract means to some end, and more and more inclined to see its working day as a time in which the interaction of men should be an interesting and enjoyable thing. In this way the campaign against the six-cylinder motors does not differ from the rod-blowing contest or the hose fight: Each is the expression of men who see their work as a practical concrete process and their relations as men as simple and spontaneous, to be structured as they see fit. Whether they should work together at full steam or with intermittent periods of diversity—or even cease working altogether—comes to be more and more a matter

for their own decision. The evolution of these attitudes is, needless to say, a constant target for bureaucratic counter-insurgency. (2)

This constant conflict with the bureaucratic rationalization of time is expressed dramatically each day at quitting time. Most workers not on the main assembly line finish work, wash, and are ready to go a full four minutes ahead of the quitting siren. But with 30 or 40 white-shirt foremen on one side of the main aisle and 300 or 400 men on the other side, the men begin, en masse, to imitate the sound of the siren with their mouths, moving and then literally running over the foremen, stampeding for the punch clocks, punching out, and racing out of the plant as the actual siren finally blends into their voices.

With a feeling of release after hours of monotonous work, gangs of workers move out from the side aisles into the main aisles, pushing along, shouting, laughing, knocking each other around — heading for the fresh air on the outside. The women sometimes put their arms around the guards at the gates, flirting with them and drawing their attention away from the men who scurry from the plant with distributors, spark plugs, carburetors, even a head here and there under their coats — bursting with laughter as they move out into the cool night. Especially in the summers, the nights come alive at quitting time with the energy of release: the squealing of tires out of the parking lot, racing each other and dragging up and down the streets. Beer in coolers stored in trunks is not uncommon and leads to spontaneous parties, wrestling, brawling, and laughter that spills over into the parks and streets round the factory. There is that simple joy of hearing your voice loudly and clearly for the first time in 10 or 12 hours.

There is planning and counter-planning in the plant because there is clearly a situation of dual power. A regular phenomenon in the daily reality of the plant is the substitution of entirely-different plans for carrying out particular jobs in place of the rational plans organized by management.

On the very-casual level, these substitutions involve, for example, a complete alternative break system of workers whereby they create large chunks of free time for each other on a regular basis. This plan involves a voluntary rotation of alternately working long stretches and taking off long stretches. Jobs are illegally traded off, and men relieve each other for long periods to accomplish this. The smuggling of men through different areas of the plant to work with friends is yet another regular activity requiring no small amount of organization.

The substitution of alternative systems of executing work has its counterpart in areas of the plant which have become, strictly speaking, off limits to non-workers; they are havens of the plant where men are not subject to external regulation. Usually they are bathrooms, most of which are built next to the ceiling with openings onto the roof. Chaise longues, lawn chairs, cots, and the like have been smuggled into most of them. Sweepers, who move around the plant, frequently keep tabs on

what is called "john time"; the men line up an hour here or there when they can take a turn in the fresh air of the roof or space out on a cot in one of the ripped-out stalls. The "off-limits" character of these areas is solid, as was demonstrated when a foreman, looking for a worker who had illegally arranged to leave his job, went into one of the workers' bathrooms. Reportedly he walked up the stairs into the room, and within seconds was knocked out the door, down the stairs, and onto his back on the floor. That particular incident involved two foremen and several workers and ended with the hospitalization of two participants with broken ribs and bruises.

The co-existence of two distinct sets of relations, two modes of work, and two power structures in the plant is evident to the worker who becomes part of any of the main plant areas. But that co-existence is the object of constant turmoil and strife; it is hardly an equilibrium when considered over time. It is a struggle of losing and gaining



IN THE FACTORY.

ground. The attempt to assert an alternative plan of action on the part of workers is a constant threat to management.

During the model change-over mentioned above, the management had scheduled an inventory which was to last six weeks. They held at work more than 50 men who otherwise would have been laid off with 90% of their pay. The immediate reaction to this was the self-organization of workers, who attempted to take the upper hand and finish the inventory in three or four days so they could have the remaining time off. Several men were trained in the elementary use of the counting scales while the hi-lo truck drivers set up an informal school to teach other men to use their vehicles. Others worked directly with experienced stock chasers and were soon running down part numbers and taking inventory of the counted stock. In several other ways the established plan of ranking and job classification was circumvented in order to slice through the required working time.

The response to this was peculiarly harsh. Management forced it to a halt, claiming that the legitimate channels of authority, training, and communication had been violated. Being certified as a truck driver, for example, required that a worker have a certain amount of seniority and complete a company training program. There was a great deal of heated exchange and conflict, but to no avail. Management was really determined to stop the workers from organizing their own work, even when it meant that the work would be finished quicker and, with the men quickly laid off, less would be advanced in wages.

The threat which this unleashing of energy in an alternative plan of action presented to the authority of the bureaucracy was evidently quite great. Management took a stand, and, with only a limited number of men involved in a non-production activity, retained its power to plan that particular event. For six weeks, then, the "rational" plan of work was executed — which meant that the labor force was watched over and directed in an orderly fashion by foremen and various other agents of social control. The work which men want to do together takes four days — at most a six-day week; the work which is forced on them, in the same amount, is monotonously dragged out for six weeks, with all the rational breaks and lunch periods which are deemed necessary for the laborers.

We end, then, more or less on the note on which we began: stressing a new social form of working-class struggle. The few examples here have been a mere glimpse of that form and hardly entitle us to fully comprehend it. But we can see that as a form it is applied to the actual working day itself and to the issues of planning and control which, in my view, make it distinctly post-unionism as a practice. The use of sabotage as a method of struggling for control will increase as this form of struggle develops further, but this is merely the apparatus of movement. A crucial point to focus on is the differentiation of this new form of struggle from its former organization: mass unionism.

Within these new independent forms of workers' organization lies a foundation of social relations at the point of production which can potentially come forward to seize power in a crisis situation and give new direction to the society. I would urge, in closing, that our attention and work be focused on the investigating and reporting of the gradual emergence of this new mode of production out of the old. "Like a thief in the night" it advances relatively unnoticed.

FOOTNOTES

1. In this plant more than half the workers were either black or newly-arrived Southern whites; that percentage may be as high as 75%. The remainder were mixed: whites of Northern origin, many Italians and Mexicans, and a small Hungarian and Polish segment. The women constituted from 5% to 10% of the work force and were generally black or Southern white. In the actions and organizations of workers which this paper describes, the most-operative relationships were between blacks and Southern whites. Despite the prevalence of racist attitudes, which were a regular substance of interaction and even a source of open talk and joking, these two groups functioned together better than any other groups in the plant. Also in the events described women were no less active than men. Finally, there was a definite relationship between age and action. Younger workers were more willing to fight back and risk their positions than older workers. The workers from 18 to 35 were the most-militantly anti-union and the most willing to go beyond the established channels in their work actions.

2. The overt expressions of the men themselves about their activity are closely tied to the actual work experience: There is little if any notion that the daily struggle in the plant has anything to do with the State or the society as a whole. Rather, it is seen as a struggle waged against an immobile bureaucracy in the company and against the labor establishment so as to improve working conditions. A kind of populist mentality is crucial here, particularly with the Southern whites who show an immediate dislike for all organizational authority and believe (like a religion) that the only way to get anything done well is to do it themselves. While workers clearly design activity to control the length of the working day, for example, these same men are unaware that the relationships and organization involved could also function to plan and control their own production. Yet it is not so important that workers so often miss the social significance of their activities; the vital point is not their consciousness, but what they actually do. Their activity smashes into the contradictions of productive relations and motivates the evolution of counter-structures in the plant.

REVIEWS

Len DeCaux: Labor Radical: From the Wobblies to CIO, A Personal History (Boston, Beacon Press, 1970, 548 pages, \$15)

Len DeCaux's Labor Radical has made available to us the wealth of experience and knowledge which the author accumulated during active participation in the working-class and Left movements in the United States from the 1920s to the 1950s. Because DeCaux occupied a central position in many of the most-important labor developments in the '30s and '40s, his book provides an essential antidote (or addition, as the case may be) to more-formal histories of labor and the Left in the US. Furthermore, however, as a Marxist and radical DeCaux has made a direct contribution to our understanding of the relationship between the Old Left and the New Left through his unassuming and frank recounting of his own life, which spanned both.

Born and raised in New Zealand in the period before World War I, DeCaux entered an upper-class high school in Britain in 1914, as the son of any prosperous British parents in the outposts of the Empire would have wanted. After graduating, he joined the Army (Royal Field Artillery) only to become disgusted with the hypocrisy of the war aims and war itself. Caught up in the post-war disillusionment, he spent two years at Oxford, where he became enthralled with the radicalism of the labor movement and further disheartened at his own roots in the upper classes. At first he was attracted to Fabian socialism, but the Russian Revolution profoundly affected him with a more-practical concern for the possibilities of some other form of life than that so unquestioningly accepted by his Oxford classmates. Always an outsider and uncomfortable with the snobbish social circles into which he was born, he made the decision to quit that world and "join the working class". So, in the early spring of 1921, he emigrated to the United States, the only place where his upper-class background might be shed completely, where millions of others also had abandoned their pasts to take up a new life.

While others started on the bottom hoping to work their way up, DeCaux started at the top hoping to work his way down. After living

in New York City for a while, embarrassed by his proper Oxford accent and surrounded by literary acquaintances, he exhausted his initial stake of money. He looked for work, but found nothing before driving himself to collapse from hunger and exhaustion on a New York sidewalk. However he recovered quickly with a clerical job at \$17 a week, and soon was making the rounds among circles of literati in the City. He decided, however, that he had not fled Oxford for this; so he struck out again, this time for several years of hobo life, riding the rails all across the nation.

The early 1920s were the last dying years of the free-swinging and independent life of the migrant worker and hobo. The IWW was still very-much alive among those who rode the rails in those years, and in embarking on this experience De Caux traveled a road very similar to that taken by many famous radicals before him (including Big Bill Haywood, William Z. Foster, and others). He worked the harvest as it moved from Texas to Montana, and he rode rails and flopped in flop houses from coast to coast. He became acquainted with the migrant workers and their IWW leaders, including the organization-conscious farm laborers and the bitter displaced miners who rode the rails of the Mountain and Western States.

His association with labor radicals and his working experience round the country led him to a sojourn in the world of labor education at the Brookwood Labor College, where he met, in addition to his future wife Caroline, the whole range of the American labor movement from A. J. Muste (who ran the school) to labor Leftists and labor bureaucrats of the AFL. In the mid-1920s he deepened his insight in the Midwestern industrial heartland, where he went to work in the great open-shop industries — electrical, maritime, meat packing, and steel.

From there he went into labor journalism, first reporting from his direct experience on the job and later becoming full-time writer and editor for various labor newspapers. He again traveled a road taken by others, working on the Wobbly paper Industrial Solidarity; on the Illinois Miner, where he got his first glimpse of John L. Lewis at his purging, Red-baiting best and got to know and appreciate the socialism of the old Socialist Party through his acquaintance with then-editor Oscar Ameringer; and as editor of the Locomotive Engineers Journal of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. He was still working for the Locomotive Engineers Journal and living in Cleveland when the Depression struck. But he gladly accepted a job at the Washington Bureau of the Federated Press, with which he had been connected on and off for many years. The FP was the Liberation News Service of the few Left newspapers of the 1920s and 1930s, and gave De Caux the opportunity to get closer to the radicalism which was emerging from the chaos of the Depression and from which his Cleveland office had been far removed. It was this move to Washington which brought him into the midst of much of the nation's labor agitation and into the

view of John L. Lewis and John Brophy when they were looking for someone to direct the CIO Publicity Department during its early days in 1935.

De Caux seemed to possess a certain detachment from events which allowed him to remain a critical observer while fully participating. Whether this derived from something in his childhood which had made him an outsider in upper-class society, or from his foreign birth and class background in the context of radicalism and labor organization in which he was immersed, De Caux was never taken in wholeheartedly and uncritically by any of the movements or events he experienced. He sympathized with the radicalism and class-struggle approach of the Wobblies, but knew that they were on the fringe of the working class. He admired the practicality and hard work of the Communist Party, but was critical of their sectarianism and narrow ideologies. He saw the necessity of trade-union organization, but never permitted the logic of bureaucracy to obscure the needs and aspirations of the workers he knew and worked with during the 1920s. While he joined the Great Britain Communist Party in 1925 during a brief visit there, he did so more out of the desire to be associated with the great coal strike and general strike than going on than out of an ideological commitment to a vanguard organization. If there was one commitment which really did possess De Caux fully, it was the commitment to devote his personal fortunes and energies to the struggle of the working class for a better life: to be swept along with them by the same fortunes and misfortunes that affected wage earners, pleading no special privilege along the way.

The bulk of Labor Radical employs this perspective in analyzing the CIO in the 1930s, its rise in the ranks of labor, and some of the major personalities whom De Caux got to know and with whom he worked closely. De Caux outlined his views as follows as he entered on the great experiences of the 1930s:

Most of those drawn to the movement by the Great Depression contracted radicalism like a child its first measles or mumps. Turned 30 by then, I'd already had 'em. Calluses of generalization covered the sensitivities of my youth, protecting me from the more generous, romantic, emotional appeals. I was cautious, practical, inclined to watch my step. (Page 177)

In his post in Washington in the early 1930s, he critically analyzed the reaction of the Government and the labor movement toward the rising upsurge of workers in the auto, electrical, maritime, textile, and other industries. He saw clearly that labor was on the move, and that the Establishment — government and labor — was not prepared for this.

De Caux's focus on events below (among workers), combined with his intimate knowledge of labor unions and union leaders, led him to some important insights into the process going on. In the first place, he did

not mistake the rumblings of John L. Lewis within the AFL for the beginnings of a principled split, or even a fundamental disagreement on the goals and aims of labor organizations in America. He saw that the labor bosses closest to industrial workers, with most to gain from extended organization — men like John L. Lewis, Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and David Dubinsky of the ILGWU — had determined to organize the mass-production industries, and that craft-union bosses were too afraid and too tied to the interests of the bosses to get on with the task. In short he saw that the real issue in the split of labor in 1934 and '35 "was the actual intent and ambition to unionize unorganized millions". Industrial unionism was not the issue, since the AFL had recognized the necessity for such organization long before. None of these labor leaders — AFL or CIO — were admirers of socialism, and all were determined to get recognition and a contract with the employers they fought.

In observing that socialism was not the issue, De Caux side-steps the central question of whether the labor upsurge of the 1930s could have led to revolutionary awakening instead of to bread-and-butter trade unionism. For if revolution was not the chief issue in the split in the established labor movement, De Caux felt, neither was it the chief issue among the rank and file.

In America's new-unionism sweep, it was similarly natural that communists should be to the fore. Rather than Lewis, a man like Eugene Debs, William Z. Foster, or Big Bill Haywood might have been expected to lead. Debs did, in fact, lead industrial organizing and big strikes in the United States at the time of the British New Unionism (the 1880s and 1890s). Haywood was the most-militant working-class leader of his time. Foster's big 1917-19 packing and steel drives were the most-immediate precursors of the CIO campaign. But Lewis was ostensibly no more than a pragmatic business unionist. Few now challenged the business-union concept that a union's job was to get what it could for the workers under capitalism, as against the IWW idea of continuous conflict with bosses until capitalism was overthrown. The workers wanted results here and now. If they also wanted to change society, they were more likely to look to political action than to their union. This business unionism was based, in effect, on class submission. It didn't challenge the capitalists' control of industry. It struck to win from them an agreement. In periods of acute capitalist crisis, doubts might arise. Failure to challenge capitalist control might lead to taking lower wages, for instance, for the sake of capitalist stability. Then more-far-reaching class struggle to win power for labor might make sense to many. But the CIO was launched in a period of relative recovery

from acute crisis. There was little real challenge to capitalist control. (Page 236)

Yet just because the fight was for immediate gains, it was no less a FIGHT. And to take on billion-dollar corporations required more than the decrepit AFL had to offer. It required a fight "in a class spirit".

This was the quality that the Left brought to the labor upsurge of the 1930s, and without which it would not have made even the advances that it did. The Left supplied many of the first and boldest fighters, those who had the confidence and courage to carry doubting souls through a bitter fight with the most-powerful foe imaginable. Left militants led in the sit-downs, in the general strikes in 1934 in Minneapolis and San Francisco, and in the bitter battles with police all across the country in virtually every industry. Their contribution was not in the strange behind-the-scenes maneuvers and pronouncements that came down from on high. It came from the militants, from the young workers who braved the dangers of company goons, National Guardsmen, and police; who were not cowed by experience of defeat in the 1920s; and who knew what they were doing because they knew their jobs and they knew their fellow workers.

Because of its central role, the Left had a sure place in the plans of John L. Lewis and the CIO. Lewis was bold enough to join with them and clever enough to use them. An old-line labor boss and a veteran expeller of Reds from his own UMW during the 1920s, Lewis perceived what was happening and how to lead it to the most-immediate results and gains.

Lewis was great when he realized identity with the millions of workers he led to the CIO. They filled him out. They made him big. They made him live life to the full. In his pride he said: "I am them and they are me." Millions for the moment gloried as did he in the identification. The workaday world went back to its workaday ways. The millions awoke in the gray dawn of another workaday morn. They yawned and said: "John L. Lewis — yep, quite a guy! But what's it to us today?" Then Lewis knew what he had known — that he was not they and they were not he. He felt the air ooze out of his bigness. He was no longer John L. Lewis/CIO. He was just another labor leader trying to assert authority over followers who no longer followed him. (Pages 386-387)

The hold of business unionism on both labor leaders and the movement, then, defined the boundaries within which the struggle sought its initial goals and gains. Once fulfilled, through economic recovery, the New Deal's cleverness, and industry's quickness to grant concessions, the movement subsided. For De Caux, the movement was not "diverted into"

business unionism; it flowed there from its own momentum and history. It was not up to any leader or organization to determine; it was instead a matter which arose from the bottom and which was swept along by events far removed from individuals in leadership. What De Caux does not reveal is what forces propel the millions, how ideas among masses arise and how they change, and under what conditions working-class consciousness can transform life. Those broad questions receive regrettably - brief treatment from De Caux, although he provides the reader with fleeting insights into the process.

De Caux remained Publicity Director of the CIO after Lewis resigned and Phil Murray took over. Until he was dismissed in the Red purges of 1947, he remained at the top of the new labor bureaucracy that mushroomed out after the labor upsurge subsided in 1939 and 1940. He provides fascinating descriptions of the personalities and the organizational evolution that shaped the present AFL-CIO into its junior - partner - of - capitalism role. He witnessed the creation of an international role for American organized labor in subverting Left labor movements in post-war Europe and Asia, the decline of the Left in the CIO and labor, and the expulsion of most of the Youngsters who made the CIO a success.

An equally-fascinating part of De Caux's personal history revolves around the period following 1947 and his expulsion from the CIO. He had maintained some contact with the Communist Party throughout the 1930s and 1940s, meeting from time to time with Party members, but never officially joining. Having lost his job with the CIO, he worked as an editor on the March of Labor, a small Party-sponsored attempt to revive the spirit of unity at a time when it was collapsing all around. When that folded, he looked for work as an editor elsewhere; but no one was willing to "risk" associating with him. He finally went to a trade school, where he learned printing. After bouncing from job to job with the FBI only steps behind, he gained journeyman status and enough job security to resist Red-baiting. In short he did what a whole generation of radicals in America were forced to do — he ran and ran, afraid of not being able to support his family; cut off from all his old friends; and subjected to the disgusting spectacle of many of them turning on their past, testifying before this or that committee in a vain attempt to hold on to respectability. He remained true to his commitment, claimed no special privilege, and descended back into the working class he had joined.

Two flaws in Labor Radical should at least be noted. First, De Caux does not elaborate on his insightful account of the relationship between workers' uprisings in the 1930s and the labor bureaucracy that arose above their efforts. Second, De Caux does not provide a full discussion of his own job as Publicity Director of the CIO, during which he came in contact with members of the media from all over the country and saw the way the bourgeois press worked. In the present period, so

dominated by the mass media, it is our loss that he did not discuss how the CIO Publicity Department tried to develop the CIO News and other papers to counter the force of the monopoly-controlled press. He again provides only brief glimpses into the role of the financial interests in shaping the way the news of the Chicago Memorial Day Massacre or the violence of the Little Steel Strike was reported, or the way that "public opinion" moved back and forth, for and against the CIO at the whim of the monopoly wealth that stood behind the scenes.

In conclusion, Len De Caux has begun a process of reincarnating the missing link between the Old Left and the New Left that the McCarthy mania wiped out. The scars of that period live on in the present with such force that we often find ourselves fighting the same battles and making the same mistakes over and over again. Few from the Old Left ever step forward with anything more than the worn-out cliches and dogmas that have so repelled the young today. Yet the need for historical perspective and dispassionate analysis grows stronger. Labor Radical is an excellent attempt at such analysis, and deserves to be read by all who are concerned with the past, present, and future of the American Left.

Paul Richards

William O. Boyer and Richard Morais: Labor's Untold Story (first published in 1955, reprinted by the United Electrical Workers Union, 11 East 51st Street, New York, New York 10022, \$2.50)

For all radicals, the re-issuance of Boyer and Morais's Labor's Untold Story is a very-important event. Despite all its political and historical flaws, this book completed 16 years ago is the only readable introduction to the struggles of working people over the past century. While we have witnessed during the past few years an upsurge of the "history from the bottom" school and a new interest in American trade-union history (as discussed in Sidney Fine's Sit-Down, 1937), most of these important works are written in a dry academic style. Labor's Untold History is one of the few books I know of that can be read and enjoyed by workers.

Because it is essentially a work of political propaganda, the book must be evaluated in a specific context: How well does it explain American labor history to working people. It is tragic that such a well-written book is extremely misleading in terms of both history and politics. Some of the historical misinterpretations can be only briefly mentioned, such as the authors' refusal to treat the IWW as a serious

workers' organization and the failure to discuss the historical role of the American Federation of Labor in American imperialism. Also, the authors fall into a trap common to writers of labor history: They deal only with organized workers, omitting the actions of the unorganized. This error limits the scope of the book, for the majority of American workers have been without unions, and their culture and lives always remain a mystery within the discipline of labor history.

The fundamental growth of US imperialism and its consequence — that of a skewed distribution of spoils (wages and working conditions) to primarily-white-male workers — establishes the context in which to discuss labor history. Although the book gives some credence to the struggles of blacks and women, nowhere are the problems of male chauvinism and white-skin privilege dealt with as they relate within the working class. For example, we do not read what happened to the thousands of black skilled workers in the South after the Reconstruction period. Nor do we understand what became of the black membership in the United Mine Workers. Nor is there mention of the relationship between the women suffragists and women workers in general. Instead what emerges is a view of a growing united working class. The chief implication is that whatever problems of racism or sexism have been created by imperialism can be solved by the cry of unity. Would it were so simple.

Equally important, Boyer and Morais confuse the relationship of the State to the class struggle. Most Marxist theory assumes that the State exists to deal with the contradictions of capitalism and that it serves essentially the capitalist class. Particularly, under an imperialist system, the role of the State becomes essential in the maintenance of continual expansion. Labor's Untold Story does not present this view in any consistent fashion. In the late Nineteenth Century Boyer and Morais discuss the use of State power to quell labor unrest (1877, Homestead, Pullman); the political repression initiated by President Wilson against the members of the IWW and the Socialist Party; and the use of injunctions by the courts to break strikes through the 1920s. In these chapters it is made clear that the capitalists use State power to keep order and fight the actions of workers.

Yet when we come to the New Deal, a different picture emerges. The New Deal is viewed as a triumph of people's democracy. Franklin D. Roosevelt, to be sure a capitalist, captured the essence of workers' demands and formulated (with the aid of farmers, workers, and blacks) New Deal programs which were hated by all businessmen. The Wagner Act, the Social Security Act, and the very foundation of the CIO all emerged from this new coalition.

Still, many important businessmen did support Roosevelt and his programs. Moreover, institutions like the National Labor Relations Board (which was originally drafted by some of the most-important corporate lawyers on Wall Street) have emasculated and contained the

revolutionary actions of workers at the point of production. The New Deal's most-important function was to stabilize capitalism and respond to the "turbulence" of the working class through a series of reforms that left political and economic power in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

To distort the New Deal as Boyer and Morais do is more than just historical oversight; it reflects the political blindness of the Communist Party and those who followed its political line in the post-war period. The message of the authors and the message of the Communist Party is to celebrate the old Roosevelt coalition and work to restore that grouping (only now it is called the United Front Against Monopoly) to bring about change. This strategy is devoid of revolutionary political organizing among workers, but merely bolsters the present union system to support "progressive" elements of the bourgeoisie against the historical threat from the Right.

Again, as in the 1930s, this strategy fails to understand the State and undermines revolutionary work. In that period the Communist Party supported Lewis's famous call to workers: "President Roosevelt wants you to join a union." Radicals did not object to the Flint workers' leaving the auto plants after the 1937 sit-down strike waving American flags. Their position was that it was American to organize, and better still, to get the Federal Government to aid. The same workers are now faced with Indo-China and all its domestic effects, supported by the same state and the same flag. The flag they waved at Flint is the same flag their sons and grandsons are sent to die for in Indo-China. And these militant unionists cannot understand the contradiction. Failure of the Communist Party to deal with the role of the State has resulted in tremendous problems for the building of a revolutionary workers' movement today. Until the interests of the State are clearly identified in the minds of the workers, even the most-militant struggles will be stopped by the Government either in the courts or in the streets. The task ahead is the construction of a revolutionary workers' party that understands State power and how to take it.

Taken as a work of political propaganda, *Labor's Untold Story* is just what the title implies—a limited story of American working people. But the tails spun out are not sufficient to represent all of the American working class, and the most-important lessons drawn from them are hardly appropriate today. Yet the reality of the situation dictates that when workers want to know about their past, it is the best book around.

Jim Jacobs
Detroit Organizing Committee

Ernst Bloch: A Philosophy of the Future, translated by John Cumming (Herder and Herder, New York, 1970, 149 pages, \$5.95)

The work of Ernst Bloch is still relatively unknown in this country. Until last year there was still nothing available by him in English with the exception of one or two essays in out-of-the-way journals. This is surprising, since Bloch (along with Lukacs, Korsch, and the founders of the "Frankfurt school") was one of the most-innovative of the "Hegelian Marxists" of the Twentieth Century.

Born in 1885, as was Lukacs, Bloch grew up in the oppressive atmosphere of Wilhelminian Germany. After World War I he found his way to the Far Left, but without becoming a member of the Communist Party. From the 1920s to the 1950s he wrote some of the most-creative and most-original work from a Marxist perspective that has ever been penned in this century. The best example is his Das Prinzip Hoffnung (The Principle of Hope), a three-volume study of the radical potential that the human quality of "hope" has had throughout history. This work is in a way as important as Lukacs's History and Class Consciousness, and yet few have read it or even heard of it. The same obscurity has plagued Bloch's other books as well, at least in the US.

This, at least, was the case until last year. Now Herder and Herder has begun the extensive project of translating Bloch into English. Last year two collections of his essays appeared, the first entitled Man on His Own and the second entitled A Philosophy of the Future. This year, two more are scheduled for publication: The Spirit of Utopia, an early work dating from 1918, and On Karl Marx, nine essays written mostly in the 1950s and 1960s. Finally, Bloch's magnum opus, The Principle of Hope, is due to be translated in its entirety.

A Philosophy of the Future is not the best of Bloch's works, but it is a good introduction to his thought — especially to its breadth and its many-sidedness. What seems to be missing, though, at least on the surface, is the political and radically-utopian aspects that can be found elsewhere in Bloch — and in abundance. Partly this is because the book was not written with this purpose in mind. Originally it was composed as an "introduction to philosophy" at the University of Tübingen. But partly it is because nothing in Bloch is obvious or "on the surface". Everything, including language, is suffused with a deeper meaning, and with a dialectical content which is submerged and at first glance seems not to be there. A close reading of A Philosophy of the Future not only will reveal the qualities of Bloch's dialectical thinking, but also should make clear his view of the transparency and transitoriness of "what is". For Bloch, nothing is permanent; through the mediation of man everything — even that which is considered "fixed" — is on its way to becoming something other than what it is. What now exists has only a partial being, not the finality of Being which most people confer on it. Needless to say, this is a healthy antidote to the prevailing view that

the given is the only reality there is. In Bloch's opinion, true reality is contained not in the "how", but in the "not-yet" — that is, in the future and in all that can come into being, but has not yet done so because of the restraining forces of the present. It is up to man to actualize the content of the future by a transforming practice in the here-and-now.

Those familiar with Marcuse will find many similarities in Bloch. Still, Bloch develops ideas which are entirely unique, and should be of interest to the American Left.

David Gross

Peter Geismar: Fanon (Dial Press, New York, 1971, 214 pages, \$6.95)

"Detailed theoretical criticism of The Wretched of the Earth," the author writes, "though thoroughly enjoyable, somehow misses the point." Thus Geismar justifies the book's most-glaring weakness — its failure to deal at all seriously with the ideas of the man whose name and world-wide impact are inextricably linked to The Wretched of the Earth. Fanon's work is of course partisan and written in the heat of combat, but its value is none the less for that. What remains is a sometimes-engaging, sometimes-perplexing narrative of Fanon's life, by far the most-interesting parts of which are those describing his activity as a psychiatrist. A definitive work on Fanon remains to be written, but until it is this book will serve as a useful and at times informative treatment of his personal life.

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PAMPHLET SUBSCRIPTIONS

Radical America's pamphlet sub has been designed to suit several purposes: first and foremost, to make available to a limited number of readers a broad range of publications from the small press in the US and abroad — creative political pamphlets, politically-oriented poetry books, new magazines, journals, wall posters, and so forth; second, to provide a means of distributing RA pamphlet publications without the added difficulties of catalogues and the like; and third, to afford a substantial means of regular support for RA's existence and growth unobtainable any other way.

The best description of a pamphlet sub is the materials received by subscribers. In Fall 1970 those RA readers who sent us \$10 or more received the Perlman-Gregoire account of the May-June Paris events: Worker-Student Action Committees; Perlman's analysis of C. Wright Mills, The Incoherence of the Intellectual; David Montgomery's What's Happening to the American Worker?; Paul Lafargue's classic pamphlet The Right To Be Lazy; and a special issue of the Florida journal PM, containing a reprint of Murray Bookchin's Listen, Marxist! New RA pamphlet subscribers also received older pamphlets still in stock: Herbert Marcuse's The Obsolescence of Psychoanalysis and Fredy Perlman's The Reproduction of Daily Life. In January first issues of two new journals were sent out: ARSENAL: Surrealist Subversion, the first surrealist journal ever to appear in the US; and Libertarian Analysis, an anarchist-libertarian publication with such contributors as Noam Chomsky and Leonard Liggio. In addition, an issue of The Abolitionist (publication of the Radical Libertarian Alliance) and the sixth issue of TELOS (including more than 350 pages of philosophical discussion and analysis) were offered, plus the first regular Radical America literature catalogue and a reprinted version of the first RA pamphlet, Stone Sarcophagus by d. a. levy, the brilliant suicided poet.

New pamphlet subscribers will receive those pamphlets currently in sufficient stock (As of March, these include The Obsolescence of Psychoanalysis, The Reproduction of Daily Life, What's Happening to the American Worker?, Stone Sarcophagus, and the RA catalogue.) plus the new issue of TELOS. New mailings for Spring 1971 include an issue of a new Canadian magazine, Transformation; a new pamphlet by a New Haven group on collectives, The Anti-Mass; a long-delayed poetry text by Dick Lourie, LIES; and (hopefully) a British pamphlet offering several heretofore-untranslated Gramsci texts. In preparation are a poetry book by Charles Potts, a pamphlet on the Madison Teaching Assistants' Association, and several other texts.

Many of the publications pamphlet subscribers receive are simply unavailable elsewhere; others would not ordinarily be found either at book shops or at literature tables locally. And in all, far more than the \$5 additional subscription-money is received in literary materials. Cost: \$10 per year, including an RA subscription.