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The Editors, INTRODUCTION 1

Guido Baldi, THESES ON MASS WORKER AND
SOCIAL CAPITAL 3

Mario Tronti, THE STRUGGLE AGAINST
LABOR 22

Rikki, FABLES FOR MR. LEAR 27

Stan Weir, CLASS FORCES IN THE 1970's 31

M. Guttman, PRIMARY WORK GROUPS . . . 78

Steve Torgoff, POEMS 93

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Editors' Introduction

Changes in production mean changes in the class struggle. Before World War I, AFL trade unions confronted competitive manufacturers in industries marked by skilled craft production. The assembly line created a different terrain for the clash which took place during the Depression: industrial unions against concentrated single-industry oligopolies. By the Seventies both terms of the class dialectic have been altered again. Automation and statification have defined the new conflict between what Guido Baldi labels "mass worker" and "social capital". This issue of Radical America is devoted to specifying the nature of the contemporary class forces.

Guido Baldi presents an outline of the evolution of the class forces through the Twentieth Century: the constant modernization of capitalism and the subsequent "re-composition" of the working class on a higher level. The periodization is familiar. Working-class offensive rises, early in the century, among skilled and unskilled both, each in separate organization. Capitalist counter-attack in the Twenties represses the labor movement and accelerates erosion of its class base within skilled trades by the widening use of Taylorism's assembly line. After a decade of retreat, the working class again finds a strategy for attack, but on a new basis. Taking the assembly-line homogenization as a strength, the mass industrial unions are thrown up against capitalism. The capitalist response this time is to seek the integration of labor. Binding contracts, full employment, Keynesian growth, and incomes policy are introduced from the New Deal onward in a steady drive to incorporate the working class into state planning for capitalist expansion. The operation succeeded. Today the unions

are essential guarantors of working-class productivity, key lobbyists for subsidy to capitalism.

But while bureaucracy integrates, massification detaches. Automation separates the worker from the job and destroys the security of the producer role. Taking this detachment as the point of departure, Baldi argues for a frontal attack on productivity. The excerpt from Mario Tronti drives home the point. For Tronti, the struggle against labor is the beginning of revolutionary strategy in advanced capitalism.

What are the sides of the class struggle today? In analyzing both capitalist organization and the composition of the labor force, we need to clarify the features unique to this period. Stan Weir pinpoints some of the most crucial. Capitalist concentration has evolved qualitatively new forms. Classic single-industry firms have merged into conglomerate and multi-national corporations. Old labor forms of single-industry national unions find themselves outflanked. And new problems confront them from the other side. The working class has been transformed from the image the unions claim to represent. Pronounced trends — the growth of public-sector militancy; the expansion of white-collar labor; the rise of working-class radicalism among youth in particular — all signal the obsolescence of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy. Unable to keep up with capitalist merger or working-class militancy, the AFL-CIO unions must struggle merely to stand still. As vehicles for workers' offensive, they reveal few immediate prospects.

M. Guttman's article re-directs our attention. The irreducible basis of working-class power is, for Guttman and for Weir, the primary work group. At the shop or office, the fundamental relations between workers provided the basis upon which the unions were built. Today, at the end of the process of bureaucratization, the primary work group re-emerges as central. It is there, at the base, that the renewal of working-class socialism will be realized.

Theses on Mass Worker and Social Capital

By Guido Baldi

INTRODUCTION

“Theses on Mass Worker and Social Capital” brings together, in the form of a historical outline, some of the political hypotheses and methodological guidelines that have circulated within the Italian working-class movement since 1967. It does so by summarizing some of the ideas contained in Operai e Stato (Workers and State), a collection of essays on “workers’ struggles and the reform of the capitalist State between the October Revolution and the New Deal”, which has recently been published in Italy. (1)

These Theses have been written not to contribute to an academic, historical re-interpretation of workers’ struggles in the Twentieth Century, but rather to present a particular methodological and political perspective which, in a more developed form, has served as a basis for the political formation of revolutionary cadres in Italy. Thus, many of these ideas have represented theoretical anticipations of the development of a concrete revolutionary practice.

Methodologically, the intent of the Theses is to define and develop new concepts such as “class composition”, “political re-composition”, “technological path to repression”, and so forth whose use in the analysis allows one to grasp the main trends of class struggle today: the capitalist use of technology as a means of controlling the political movements of the working class, the interpenetration of economics and politics, the centrality of “quantitative demands” to the development of working-class unity in the anti-capitalist struggle. The most important contribution of this Italian viewpoint to an understanding of these trends in class struggle is perhaps the dichotomy between “working class” and “labor power”.

Politically, the Theses impute the impasse in which the Marxist Left has found itself, and the bankruptcy of its "revolutionary project" in the advanced capitalist countries, to two main circumstances: (1) the emergence of the "mass worker", the new political figure created by the "scientific organization of labor" in the American Twenties and generalized in the last forty years to the rest of the capitalist world; (2) the inability of the Marxist Left which emerged from the struggles of the first quarter of the century — both "orthodox Marxism" and its "Left-wing alternative" — to politically interpret and articulate the new program of struggles of this "mass worker", with its new and more advanced political contents.

The second essay presented here, "Struggle Against Labor", is an early attempt to make explicit the new political program of the mass worker. It is a selection from Mario Tronti's book Operai e Capitale (Workers and Capital) (2), published in 1965 as a reflection on his ongoing political practice (Tronti was the editor of the autonomous working-class journal Classe Operaia) and therefore as a prediction of Italian mass workers' revolutionary struggles to come.

The demands for more wages developing as an attack on the State; the struggle for more money and less work turning into a struggle against labor; the manifold struggle against labor materializing as a demand for "political wages", that is, an income disengaged from the labor expended (the concrete basis for a new unity of workers, unemployed, and housewives) — all this is the revolutionary process of the Italian Sixties. (3)

If we are correct, the test of the hypotheses presented in both essays lies in the American Seventies.

FOOTNOTES

(1) Milan, Feltrinelli, 1972. The contributors to this book are S. Bologna, George Rawick, M. Gobbini, A. Negri, L. Ferrari Bravo, and F. Gambino.

(2) This selection is from the last chapter of Mario Tronti's book *Operai e Capitale* (1965), and has been translated by John Merrington. The full English edition, Workers and Capital, copyright by New Critics Press, Inc., St. Louis, Missouri, 1971, is scheduled to appear in late 1972.

(3) Radical America readers are already familiar with "struggle against labor" as a concrete political slogan. They have seen it developed in "Italy: New Tactics and Organization" (Volume 5, Number 5) and in the Dalla Costa essay on "Women and the Subversion of the Community" (Volume 6, Number 1).

THESES ON MASS WORKER AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

1

The years from the beginning of the century up to the English general strike of 1926 witness this crucial new feature in class struggle: Whereas deep contradictions between developed and backward areas characterize capitalism at this stage and confine it to national levels of organization, the political autonomy and independence of the working class reach an international level: For the first time, capital is bypassed by the workers at an international level. The first international cycle, roughly 1904 to 1906, is a cycle of mass strikes which at times develops into violent actions and insurrections. In Russia, it starts with the Putilov strike and develops into the 1905 revolution. 1904 is the date of the first Italian general strike. In Germany, the spontaneous Ruhr miners' strike of 1905 on the eight-hour issue and the Amburg general strike of 1906 lead a class wave that overflows into a large network of middle-sized firms. In the US, the miners' strikes of 1901 and 1904 and the foundation of the IWW in 1905 seem to be a premonition of the struggles to come.

The second cycle starts with 1911. We see the same class vanguards initiate the struggle: In the US the vanguards are the coal miners of West Virginia, the Harriman railroad workers, and the Lawrence textile workers; in Russia they are the Lena gold miners of 1912; in Germany they are the workers of the 1912 mass strike of the Ruhr. World War I represents the occasion for the widest development of class struggle in the US (1,204 strikes in 1914; 1,593 in 1915; 3,789 in 1916; and 4,450 in 1917 — and the National Labor Board sanctions a number of victories: collective bargaining, equal pay for women, guaranteed minimum wage) while laying the groundwork for a third international cycle. Since the War has produced a boom in precision manufacturing, electrical machinery, optics, and other fields, the class weight of the superskilled workers of these sectors is enormously increased in Germany and elsewhere. They are the workers who form the backbone of the councils in the German revolution, the Soviet Republic in Bavaria, and the Italian factory occupation of 1919. By 1919, the year of the Seattle General Strike, 4,160,000 workers in the US (20.2% of the entire labor force) are mobilized by the struggle. In the international circulation of struggles, Russia, the “weakest link”, breaks. The capitalist nightmare comes true: The initiative of the working class establishes a “workers’ state”. The class that first made its appearance in the political arena in 1848 and that learned the need for political organization from its defeat in the Paris Commune is now moving in an international way. The peculiar commodity, labor power, the passive, fragmented receptacle of factory exploitation, is now behaving as an international political actor, the political working class.

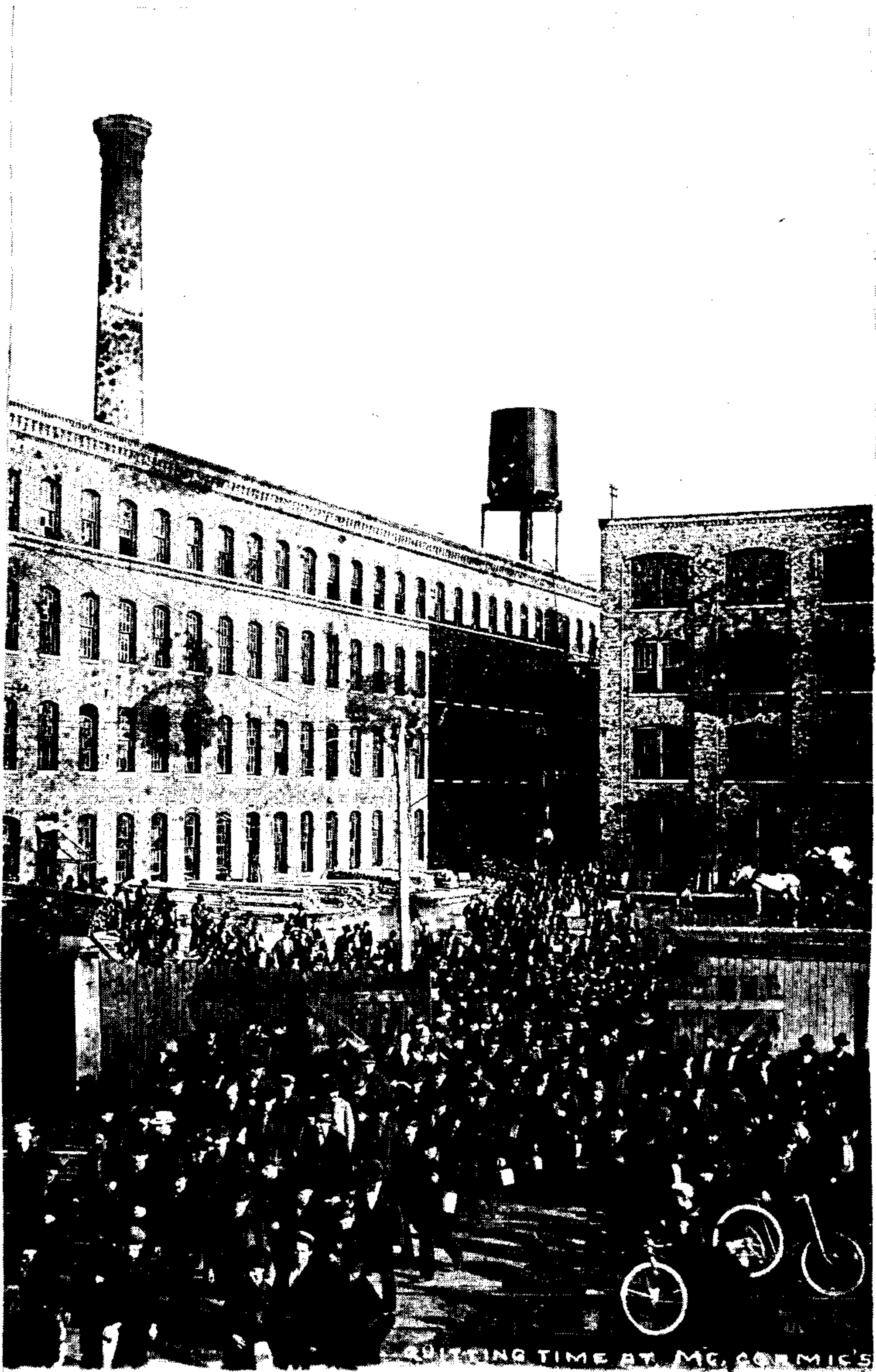
The specific political features of these three cycles of struggle lie in the dynamics of their circulation. The struggle starts with class vanguards, and only later does it

circulate throughout the class and develop into mass actions. That is, the circulation of struggles follows the structure of the class composition that predominates in these years. That composition consists of a large network of sectors with diverse degrees of development, varying weight in the economy, and different levels of skill and experience. The large cleavages that characterize such a class composition (the dichotomy between a skilled "labor aristocracy" and the mass of the unskilled is one prominent example) necessitates the role of class vanguards as political and organizational pivots. It is through an alliance between the vanguards and the proletarian masses that class cleavages are progressively overcome and mass levels of struggles are reached. That is, the "political re-composition of the working class" is based on its industrial structure, the "material articulation of the labor force (labor power)".

4

The organizational experiments of the working class in these years are by necessity geared to this specific class composition. Such is the case with the Bolshevik model, the Vanguard Party. Its politics of class consciousness "from the outside" must re-compose the entire working class around the demands of its advanced sectors; its "politics of alliances" must bridge the gap between advanced workers and the masses. But such is also the case with the Councils model, whose thrust toward the self-management of production is materially bound to the figure of the skilled worker (that is, the worker with a unique, fixed, subjective relationship to tools and machinery, and with a consequent self identification as "producer"). In Germany in particular, where the machine-tool industry developed exclusively on the basis of the exceptional skill of workers, the Councils express their "managerial" ideology most clearly. It is at such a relatively-high level of professionalization — with a worker/tools relationship characterized by precise skills, control over production techniques, direct involvement with the work plan, and co-operation between execution and

7



planning functions — that workers can identify with their “useful labor” in a program for self-management of the factory. In the heat of the struggle, this program gains the support of productive engineers.

5

With the Councils, “class consciousness” is expressed most clearly as the consciousness of “producers”. The Councils do not organize the working class on the basis of a political program of struggles. The Council structure reproduces — by team, shop, and plant — the capitalist organization of labor, and “organizes” workers along their productive role, as labor power, producers. Since the Councils assume the existing organization for the production of capital (a given combination of variable and constant capital, of workers and machines) as the basis for their socialist project, their hypothesis of a workers’ democratic self-management can only pre-figure the workers’ management of the production of capital, that is, the workers’ management of their very exploitation.

6

Yet, the revolutionary character of all workers’ struggles must always be measured in terms of their relationship to the capitalists’ project. From this viewpoint, it becomes clear that the organization of the Councils, by reproducing the material articulation of the labor force as it is, also freezes development at a certain level of the organic composition of capital (the level of fixed, subjective relationship between workers and machines). Therefore, it challenges capital’s power to bring about whatever technological leap and re-organization of the labor force it may need. In this sense the Councils remain a revolutionary experience. As for the ideological aspect of the self-management project, the hypothesis of a workers’ management of the production of capital, it also becomes clear that “the pre-figuration of a more advanced level of capitalist development was the specific way in which workers refused to yield to the capitalist needs of the time, by trying to provoke the failure of

capital's plan and expressing the autonomous working-class need for conquering power". (De Caro) It is in the workers' refusal to be pushed back into a malleable labor force under capitalist rule, and in their demand for power over the productive process (whether in the form of the Councils' "self-management" and freeze over development, or in the Bolsheviks' plan for development under "workers' control") that the fundamental political novelty of these cycles of struggle lies: on an international level, the workers' attempt to divert the direction of economic development, express autonomous goals, and assume political responsibility for managing the entire productive machine.

7

When the capitalists move to counter-attack, they are not prepared to grasp the two main givens of the cycles of struggle: the international dimension of class struggle, and the emergence of labor power as the political working class. Thus while the international unification of the working-class struggle raises the need for an international unification of capital's response, the system of reparations imposed on Germany by the Versailles Treaty merely seals the inter-capitalist split. While confronted by the international working class, the capitalists can only perceive their national labor powers. The outcome is a strategic separation between their international and domestic responses. Internationally, world revolution appears to the capitalists as coming "from the outside", from the exemplary leadership of the USSR: hence the politics of military isolation of the Revolution in Russia. Domestically, all the capitalists know is the traditional tools of their rule: (1) the violent annihilation of workers' political organizations (the Palmer raids and the destruction of the IWW; Fascism in Italy; bloody suppression of the "Red Army" in the Ruhr, and so forth), which breaks the ground for (2) technological manipulation of the labor force (Taylorism, the "scientific organization of labor") as a means of politically controlling class composition.

Taylorism, the "scientific organization of labor", the technological leap of the Twenties serves but one purpose : to destroy the specific articulation of the labor force which was the basis for the political re-composition of the working class during the first two decades of the century (Thesis 3). The introduction of the assembly line cuts through traditional cleavages in the labor force, thus producing a veritable revolution in the composition of the entire working class. The emergence of the mass worker, the human appendage to the assembly line, is the overcoming of the vanguard/mass dichotomy upon which the Bolshevik Party is modeled. The very "aristocracy of labor" that capital created after 1870 in its attempt to control the international circulation of the Paris Commune (the very workers supposedly "bribed" by the eight-hour work day, Saturdays off, and a high level of wages) became one of the pivots of the circulation of struggles in the Teens. Through the assembly line capital launches a direct political attack, in the form of technology, on the skills and the factory model of the Councils' professional workers. This attack brings about the material destruction of that level of organic composition which served as the basis of the self-management project. (The political unity between engineers and workers is also under attack. From Taylorism on, engineers will appear to the workers not as direct producers, but as mere functionaries of the scientific organization of exploitation; and the self-management project, devoid of its original class impact, will reappear as a caricature, the "managerial revolution" to come.)

Thus, capital's response to the struggles follows the Nineteenth Century's "technological path to repression" : It entails breaking whatever political unification the working class has achieved during a given cycle of struggles, by means of a technological revolution in class composition. Constant manipulation of class composition through contin-

uous technological innovations provides a tool for controlling the class "from within" through its existence as mere "labor power". The re-organization of labor is a means to the end of the "political decomposition" of the working class. Since the working class has demanded leadership over the entire society, to push it back into the factory appears as an appropriate political move. Within this strategy, factory and society are to remain divided. The specific form of the labor process in the capitalist factory (that is, the plan) has yet to be imposed on the entire society. Social anarchy is counterposed to the factory plan. The social peace and the growing mass production of the Twenties seem to prove that traditional weapons have been successful again. It will take the Depression to dissipate this belief.

10

With 1929, all the tools of the technological attack on the working class turn against capital. The economic and technological measures for containing the working class in the Twenties (re-conversion of the war economy, continuous technological change, and high productivity of labor) have pushed supply tremendously upward, while demand lags hopelessly behind. Investments decline in a spiral toward the great crash. In a very real sense, 1929 is the workers' revenge. Mass production and the assembly line, far from securing stability, have raised the old contradictions to a higher level. Capital is now paying a price for its faith in Say's law ("supply creates its own demand"), with its separation of output and market, producers and consumers, factory and society, labor power and political class. As such it remains caught in a tragic impasse, between the inadequacy of the economic and technological tools of the past and the lack of new, political ones. It will take Roosevelt-Keynes to produce them.

11

While Hoover resumes the old search for external "international causes", Roosevelt's approach is entirely domestic: a re-distribution of income to sustain the internal

12



UPI

The crash: Jobless men in New York, 1930

demand. Keynesian strategy is already emerging — keeping up demand by allowing wages to rise and by reducing unemployment through public expenditure. The National Industrial Recovery Act (NRA) of 1933 raises wage rates, encourages unionization, and so forth at the same time that it authorizes both massive investment in public works through the PWA and large relief funds. The political break with the past is enormous. In the classical view, the flexibility of wages is the main assumption. Workers' struggles are seen as an outside interference with a self-regulating economy: Labor organizations belong with other "institutional factors" that maintain wages "artificially", while it is the State's role to preserve the economy against such artificial interference. In the Keynesian model, the downward rigidity of wages is the main assumption; wages are taken as independent variables. The State becomes the economic subject in charge of planning appropriate redistributions of income to support the "effective demand".

12

Keynes's assumption of the downward rigidity of wages is "the most important discovery of Western Marxism" (Tronti). As wages become an independent variable, the traditional law of the "value of labor" collapses. No "law" but only labor through its own struggles can determine the value of labor. Class antagonism is brought into the heart of production and is taken as the material given on which capital must rebuild its strategy. The NRA is precisely a political maneuver to transform class antagonism from an unpredictable element of risk and instability into a dynamic factor of development. Through its emphasis on the income effect of wages, as opposed to the mere cost effect, the New Deal chooses wages as the mainspring of growth, but within precise limits: Wages must rise harmoniously with profits. The necessary control over wage dynamics requires the institutionalization of class struggle. For workers' struggles inside capital's plan means working class inside capital's State. Hence the need for the emergence of two new political figures in the Thirties: capital as the new "State-as-Planner" and the working class as organized "Labor".

The turn toward State-as-Planner is a radical break with all previous policies of State intervention. The NRA regulates the whole of industrial production. The certainty of a capitalist future has been shaken to its roots by the crisis: The NRA "codes", involving the totality of the capitalist class (95% of all industrial employers), guarantee that a future exists. As the depth of the crisis makes the State's function of "correcting mistakes" obsolete, the State must assume the responsibility of direct investment, "net contribution" to purchasing power. The State must expose the myth of "sound finance" and impose budget deficits. It is no longer a juridical figure (the bourgeois government of law); it is an economic agent (the capitalist plan). (All this represents a historical watershed, the beginning of a long political process that will culminate in the "incomes policy", the wage-price guideposts of the New Frontier.) Most important, as the representative of the collective capitalist, the State's main function is the planning of the class struggle itself. Capital's plan for development must establish an institutional hold on the working class.

Hence, the need for Labor as the political representative of the working class in the capitalist State. But the technological leap of the Twenties has entirely undermined the trade unions, by making their professional structure obsolete: By 1929, the AFL controls only 7% of the industrial labor force. By cutting through the old class composition and producing a massification of the class, Taylorism has only provided the material basis for a political re-composition at a higher level. As long as the mass worker remains unorganized he/she is entirely unpredictable. Thus with "Section 7a" of the NRA and later with the Wagner Act the collective capitalist begins to accept the workers' right to organize and bargain collectively. It will be no smooth process, for while capitalists as a class support the NRA, the individual capitalist will resist its consequences at the

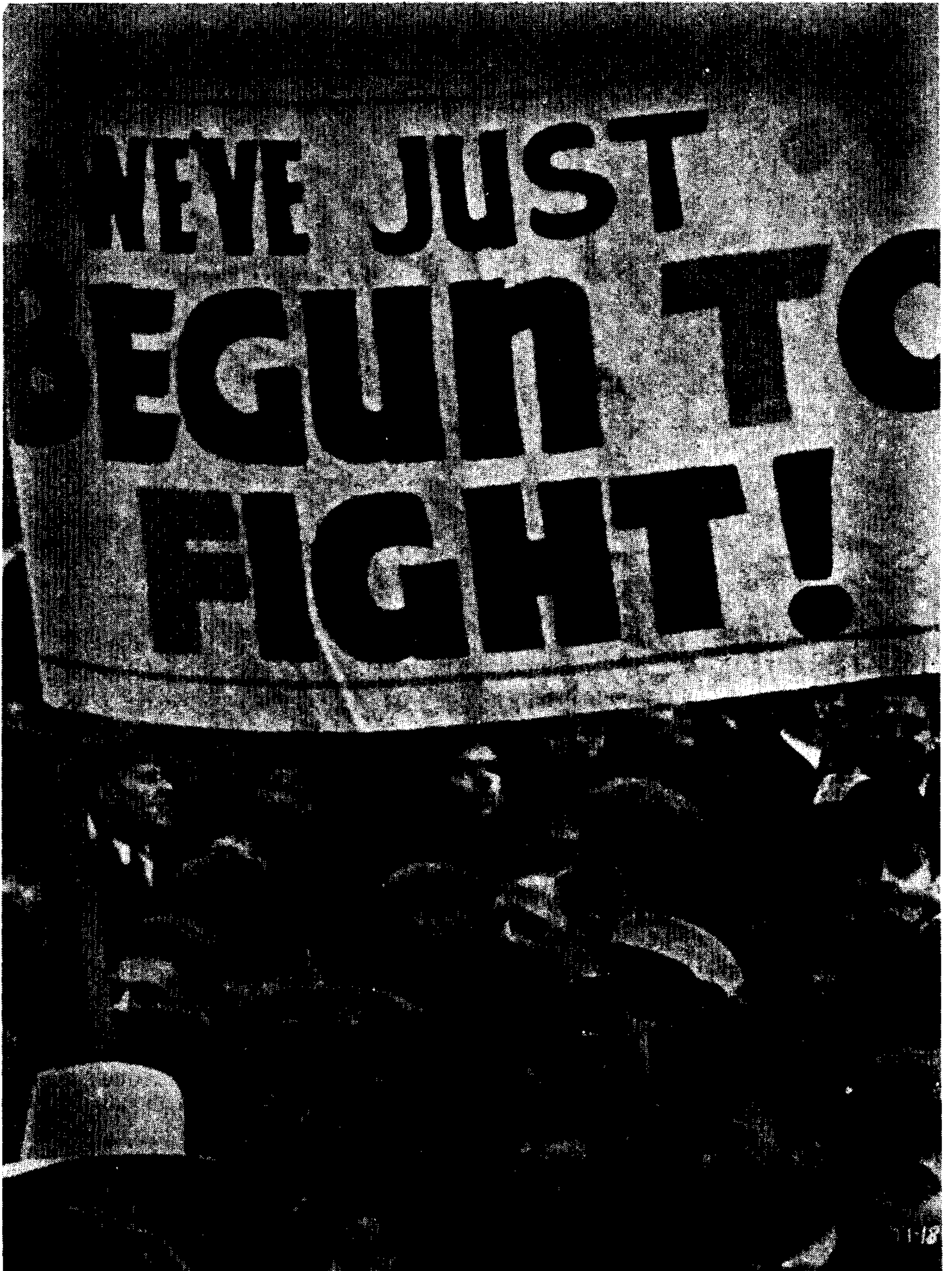
level of his own factory. The birth of the CIO will mark the victory of a thirty-year-long struggle for mass-production unionism. Capital and the mass worker will now face each other as the State-as-Planner and organized Labor.

15

Class struggle, once the mortal enemy of capitalism to be dealt with through bloodshed, now becomes the main-spring of planned economic development. The historical development of labor power as the political working class is acknowledged by capital's plan in this major theoretical breakthrough. What was conceived of as a passive, fragmented object of exploitation and technological manipulation is now accepted as an active, unified political subject. Its needs can no longer be violently repressed; they must be satisfied, to ensure continued economic development. Previously, the working class was perceived as capital's immediate negation and the only way to extract profits was to decrease wages and increase exploitation. Now, the closed interdependence of working class and capital is made clear by the strategy of increasing wages to turn out a profit. Whereas the reduction of the working class to mere labor power was reflected in a strategic split between factory (exploitation) and society (repression) (Thesis 9), capital's political acknowledgment of the working class requires the unifying of society and factory. Capital's plan is outgrowing the factory to include society through a centralized State. This involves the development of the historical processes leading to the stage of social capital: the subordination of the individual capitalist to the collective capitalist, the subordination of all social relations to production relations, and the reduction of all forms of work to wage labor.

16

The signing of the NRA by the President (June 1933) marks the beginning of a new cycle of struggle. The second half of 1933 witnesses as many strikes as the whole of 1932 with three and a half times as many workers. By June 1934, with sharply reduced unemployment and a 38% growth of the total industrial payroll, the strike wave gathers momentum :



7.2% of the entire labor force (a peak not to be matched until 1937) is mobilized by the struggle. The crucial sectors are being affected — among them steel and auto workers, the West Coast longshoremen, and almost all textile workers, united behind wage, hours, and union recognition demands. 1935 is the year of both the CIO and the Wagner Act. Between the summer of 1935 and the spring of 1937, employment surpasses the 1929 level, from an index of 89.2 to 112.3. In a context of relative price stability, industrial production moves from an index of 85 to 118, and wages move from 69.1 to 110.1. The massification of the working-class struggle and the economic development of capitalist recovery are two sides of one process. 1936: The struggle circulates to small factories and marginal industries while the sit-downs begin at Firestone, Goodyear, and Goodrich. 1937 is the year of 4,740 strikes, the peak year in the generalization of the mass worker's struggle. In February GM capitulates; in March US Steel recognizes the Steel Workers Organizing Committee and accepts its basic demands: 10% wage increase for a 40-hour week.

17

The crucial aspect of the struggles throughout the New Deal is the general emergence of wages (wages, hours, unionization), the workers' share of the value produced mutually acknowledged by both capitalists and workers as the battlefield for the new stage of class struggle. For capital, wages are a means of sustaining development, while for the workers they represent the weapon that re-launches class offensive. It is precisely this contradictory political nature of wages (the means of workers' "integration" on one hand, and the basis for the class's political re-composition and attack on profit on the other) that causes Roosevelt's failure to ensure steady growth while at the same time maintaining control of the working class. To the threatening massification of struggles, big business responds with an economic recession, a refusal to invest, a "political strike of capital". (B. Rauch: The History of the New Deal)

The economic recession of 1937-38 is the first example of capital's use of the crisis as a means of regaining initiative in the class struggle. Inflation, unemployment, and wage cuts are weapons that break the workers' offensive and are means for a new political de-composition of the working class. The political necessity of the economic crisis shows dramatically that the Keynesian model is not sufficient to guarantee stability; only through an act of open violence can capital re-establish its domination over workers. Yet, it is only with the introduction of crises as a means of controlling the class that the Keynesian model can show its true value. While in 1933 the use of class struggle as the propelling element of capitalist development was the only alternative to economic recession, five years later, with the "Roosevelt recession", "crisis" is revealed as the alternative face of "development". Development and crisis become the two poles of one cycle. The "State-as-Crisis" is thus simply a moment of the "State-as-Planner" — planner of crisis as a pre-condition for a new development. From now on, capital's crises will no longer be "natural", uncontrollable events, but the result of a political decision, essential moments of actual "political business cycles". (Kalecki)

The political figure which dominates class struggle from the 1930s on is the mass worker. The technological leap of the Twenties has produced both the economic recession of 1929 and the political subject of class struggle in the Thirties (Thesis 8). The "scientific organization" of mass production necessitates a malleable, highly interchangeable labor force, easily movable from one productive sector to another and easily adjustable to each new level of capital's organic composition. By 1926, 43% of the workers at Ford require only one day for their training, while 36% require less than a week. The fragmentation and simplification of the work process undermine the static relationship between worker and job, disconnecting wage labor from "useful

labor" entirely. With the mass worker, "abstract labor" reaches its fullest historical development: The intellectual abstraction of Capital is revealed as worker's sensuous activity.

20

From the plant to the university, society becomes an immense assembly line, where the seeming variety of jobs disguises the actual generalization of the same abstract labor. This is neither the emergence of a "new working class" nor the massification of a classless "middle class", but a new widening of the material articulation of the working class proper. (In this process, however, lies the basis for much ideology. Since all forms of work are subsumed under capital's production, industrial production seems to play less and less of a role, and the factory seems to disappear. Thus, what is in fact an increasing process of proletarianization — the main accumulation of capital being the accumulation of labor power itself — is misrepresented as a process of tertiarization, in which the class dissolves into the abstract "people". Hence the peculiar inversion whereby the notions of "class" and "proletariat" appear as "abstractions", while "the people" becomes concrete.)

21

From the worker's viewpoint, interchangeability, mobility, and massification turn into positive factors. They undermine all divisions by productive role and sector. They provide the material basis for the political re-composition of the entire working class. By destroying the individual worker's pride in his or her skills, they liberate workers as a class from an identification with their role as producers. With the political demand of "more money and less work", the increasing alienation of labor becomes a progressive disengagement of the political struggles of the working class from its economic existence as mere labor power. From the workers' viewpoint, wages cannot be a reward for productivity and work, but are instead the fruits of their struggles. They cannot be a function of capital's

20

need for development, they must be an expression of the autonomous needs of the class. In the heat of the struggle, the true separation between labor power and working class reaches its most threatening revolutionary peak. "It is quite precisely the separation of the working class from itself, from itself as wage labor, and hence from capital. It is the separation of its political strength from its existence as an economic category." (Tronti)



"All they think about is money."

Struggle Against Labor

By Mario Tronti

The contemporary forms of workers' struggles in the heartlands of advanced capitalism unmistakably reveal, in the rich content of their own spontaneity, the slogan of the struggle against wage labor as the only possible means of striking real blows against capital. The party must be the organization of what already exists within the class, but which the class alone cannot succeed in organizing. No worker today is disposed to recognize the existence of labor outside capital. Labor equals exploitation: This is the logical prerequisite and historical result of capitalist civilization. From here there is no point of return. Workers have no time for the dignity of labor. The "pride of the producer" they leave entirely to the boss. Indeed, only the boss now remains to declaim eulogies in praise of labor. True, in the organized working-class movement this traditional chord is, unfortunately, still to be heard — but not in the working class itself; here there is no longer any room for ideology. Today, the working class need only look at itself to understand capital. It need only combat itself in order to destroy capital. It has to recognize itself as political power, deny itself as a productive force. For proof, we need only look at the moment of struggle itself: During the strike, the "producer" is immediately identified with the class enemy. The working class confronts its own labor as capital, as a hostile force, as an enemy — this is the point of departure not only for the antagonism, but for the organization of the antagonism.

If the alienation of the worker has any meaning, it is a highly revolutionary one. The organization of alienation: This is the only possible direction in which the party can lead the spontaneity of the class. The goal remains that of refusal, at a higher level: It becomes active and collective,

a political refusal on a mass scale, organized and planned. Hence, the immediate task of working-class organization is to overcome passivity.

This can be achieved on one sole condition : that this passivity is recognized as an elementary, spontaneous form of refusal by the working class. For mass passivity always follows after the political defeat of the class, caused by its official organizations; alternatively, it follows a leap forward in capitalist development, in the appropriation by capital of socially productive forces. We all know that these two objective pre-conditions of working-class passivity have been combined in the past few decades. Indeed, they have together constituted the absolute despotic power of capital. At the international level, capital was conquering the whole of society and was itself becoming socialized, while the idea of giving the working-class movement the political role of management of the national social interest threatened it with historical suicide. The result was an interruption of the revolutionary process that, in its successive stages, dates from 1848, 1871, to 1917. From 1917 onward, the annals of the revolution carried the mark of defeat.

What intervened at this point to block the further progress of the revolution? What prevented the process from reaching its goal? The closer we look, the more passivity emerges as the most potent barrier — the controlling factor governing any future revolutionary possibilities. The truth is that the massive withdrawal by the working class, its refusal to consider itself an active participant in capitalist society, is already an opting out of the game, a flouting of the social interest. Hence, what appears as integration of the working class in the system, by no means represents a renunciation of the struggle against capital: It indicates a refusal to develop and stabilize capital beyond certain given political limits, beyond a fixed defensive cordon, from which aggressive sallies can then be launched.

Given that the working class had to find a single adequate response at both levels, vis a vis both capitalist production

and the official working-class movement, the solution which was adopted could scarcely have been otherwise. The situation demanded a specific form of self-organization, entirely within the class, based on a spontaneous passivity: an organization, in other words, without organization — which meant not subject to bourgeois institutionalization. The result was one of those organizational miracles that are possible only from the workers' viewpoint — like Lenin's "bourgeois state without a bourgeoisie" — an organization no longer seen as an intermediary form leading to the workers' state, but now seen as a preliminary form of the workers' party.

It is true that today we are faced with the awesome task of building the party on the basis of a political void in terms of practical experience and theoretical research. But this does not alter the fact that at the decisive level of direct class struggle the foundations have already been laid, marking out the terrain and the targets of struggle. Passive non-collaboration in the development of capitalism and active political opposition to the power of capital are precisely the starting point and direction of this organizational leap. The opening of the revolutionary process lies entirely beyond this point: On this side lie all the present problems of building up the organization for the revolution. We need the tactics of organization to actualize the strategy of refusal.

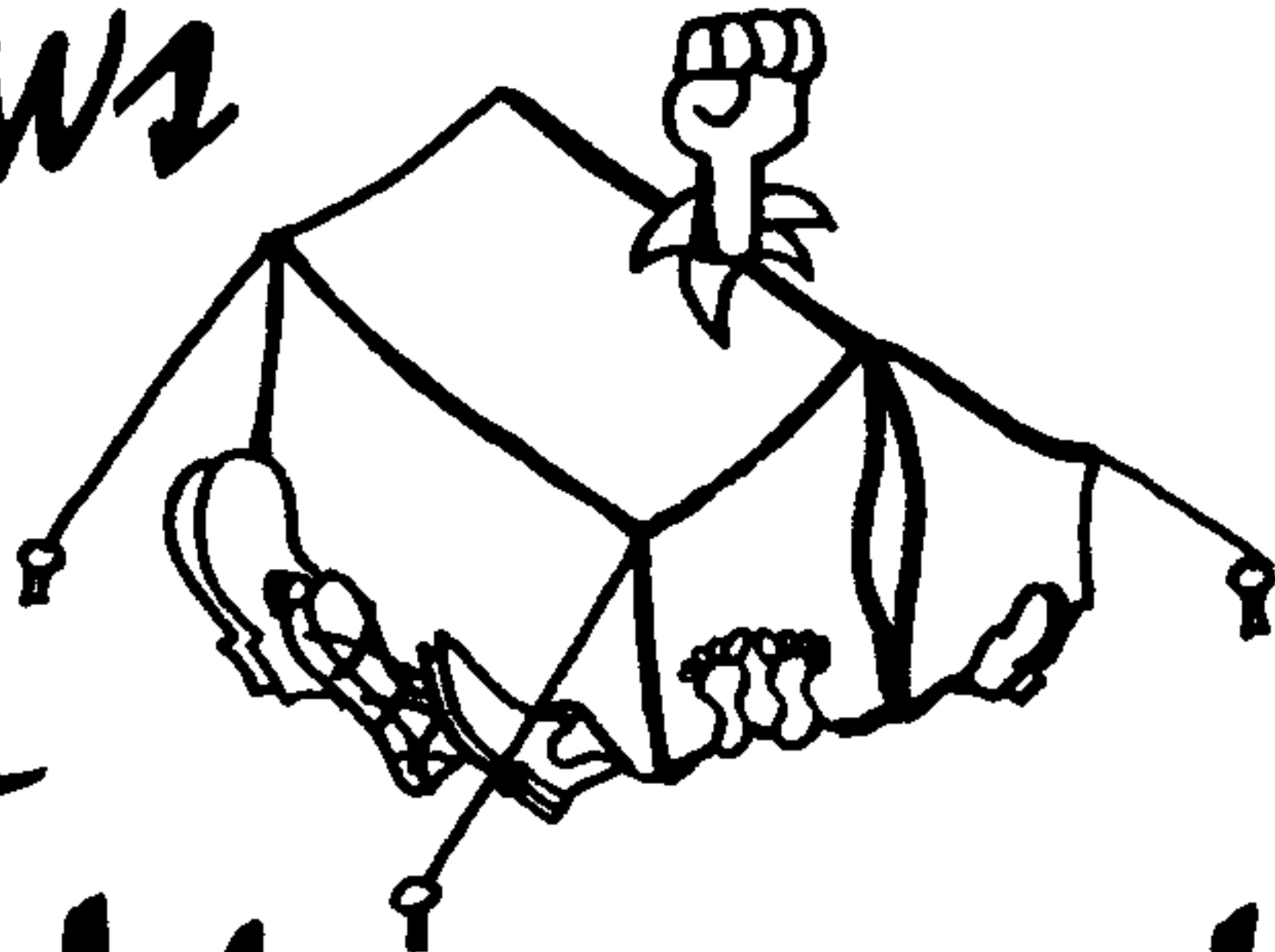
Throughout this process, from now on, the enemy must constantly be attacked with the only subversive weapon capable of reducing him to a strategically subordinate position: the threat of denying him the mediation of the working class in the capitalist relations of production. The working class must cease to express the requirements of capital, even in the form of its own demands: It must force the bosses to put forward demands, so that the workers can actively, that is on an organized basis, reply "No!" This today is the only possible means of overcoming working-class passivity — overcoming the spontaneous form which this passivity presently takes — while furthering its politi-

cal content of negation and revolt. The first organized "No!" of the workers to the first "demands" of the capitalist class will reverberate as a declaration of total class war, a historic call to the decisive phase of the struggle, the modern version of the classic revolutionary slogan: Proletarians of All Lands, Unite!

None of this will be possible without the highest degree of violence — this we know from experience. All the social upheavals of the past left intact the form of productive activity. It has always, exclusively, been a question of the distribution of productive activity, redistributing it to new groups of people. Only the communist revolution, as Marx said (or, as we can today begin to say, the revolution, the only present-day minimum program of the working class), challenges for the first time the whole of productive activity that has hitherto existed. This challenge will suppress labor. And in so doing it will abolish class domination. Suppression of labor by the working class and the violent destruction of capital are one and the same.

What then of labor as "the prime necessity of human existence" (Marx)? Perhaps it would be better to transfer it from the future prospect of communism to the present history of capitalism — to let the workers drop it and consign it to the bosses. Does this mean that confronted with Marx, the working-class viewpoint would arrive at the point of parricide? This is a question which we cannot yet answer. The continuation of the research presented here will be decisive for the solution of this and all the other problems it raises. There are no solutions already given. Once again, everything remains to be done. To do it, we have to keep our eye on the most obscure aspect of the whole process: until, that is, we have reached the point at which we can distinguish what has happened within the working class since Marx.

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Fables for Mr. Lear

By RIKKI

THE PLANET DIES

It rained hard all that summer
The forest drank without thirst
The bloated trees made ugly faces
Before sinking one by one like freshly slain pigs
The snakes uncoiled and searched for higher ground
Animals smelling of old mattresses stirred the muck
Eyes dim and soft teeth stinging
They rooted in the slime for bones and marrow
The rivers swelled and spilled the wells went bad
The land choked and tried
To write something down before it died

When the sky folded up
The people ran to the mountains
But the sides were slick with mud
They pierced the earth with hammers
Driving nails chains screws nets
Anything they could find and still they slipped
They fell the rain was pouring then
They were lost and tried to write something
Fish up from murky countries blind and hungry
Came to eat the floating turtles cats and children
Played and being lords and kings
Their teeth were set in rows of twelve
They laughed before they sank into the sea
Then the waves swelled greasy bubbles
Bladders black balloons and sucked
Everything deep into the moonblind belly of the sea
Sometime in autumn the rain stopped
With winter came ice

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE NEW COUNTRY

We complained to the city officials about the smell. They said we had made the smell ourselves, and that therefore they could not do anything about it.

I took an airplane to the new country. The president met me at the airport. He rode on the back of a large black beetle, and his police, driving small motorized toilets, flanked him. All week he visited the factories. There were seven hundred thousand, all running day and night. The hum was deafening. The President had some cold beef fat sent up. We used this to plug up our ears. The workers in these factories wore electrified helmets. They were soldered to their heads. When a worker needed food he was given an electric shock, and when he needed sleep he was recharged electrically. The helmets were yellow and resembled bee hives. They seemed to have been made of gold but this was not possible.

When the workers died, they were melted down in a centralized factory called by code the diminishing zone, and poured into little tins like butter, and labeled. Later I managed to read one of these labels. It read LITTLE BLACK SAMBO'S BEST. That night at the President's house we ate pancakes. They tasted strange, and the President explained that they had been kept frozen for many centuries in gigantic aluminum freezers. However, he added that the butter was fresh and that in fact I myself had seen it being made that very day.

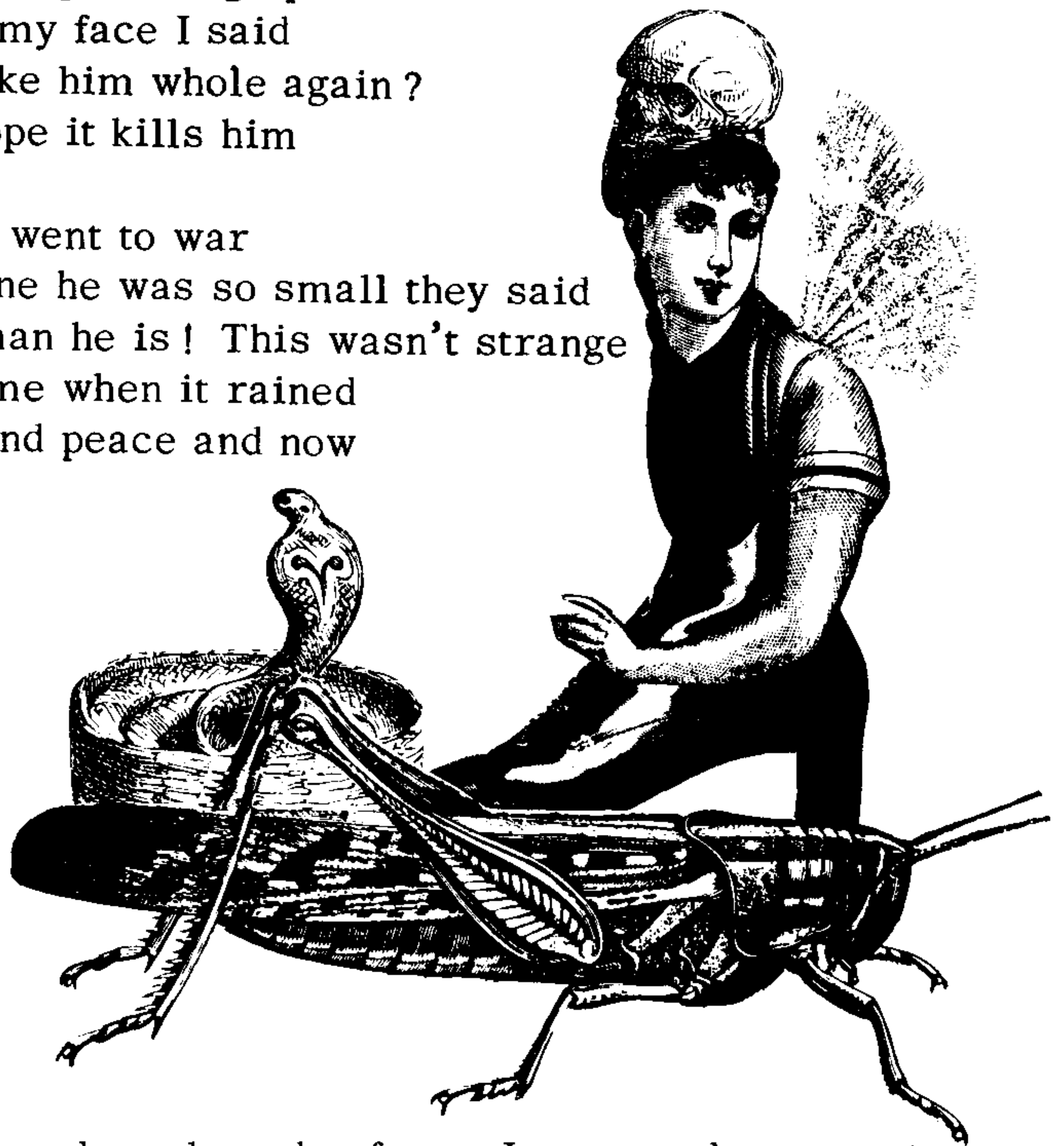
The morning before I had been scheduled to leave, two strangers in uniform came to my room as I slept. They sewed me to the mattress and painfully erased my face. When they were finished they cut me free and sent me home on the bus. The trip home took me over three hundred hours and was considerably more expensive than I had been led to believe. My wife refuses to believe this story and insists that my face remains just the way it was before.

A BROKEN HEAD

I SAID WHY did you bring him here ?
They said nobody wanted him
I said he's dead
They said his head is broken

She gave me yards and yards of tape and a jar of paste
I tried and tried to tape his head
It kept falling open
I tried but it kept falling open
She slapped my face I said
Will that make him whole again ?
She said I hope it kills him

Winter Papa went to war
We were alone he was so small they said
How like a man he is ! This wasn't strange
He slept by me when it rained
Somehow found peace and now



She gave me yards and yards of tape I must make tea and
People come to see him why do they want to see
What do they want to see
SOME IMPOSTER WITH A BROKEN HEAD
HE NEVER HAD A BROKEN HEAD
I SAID HE NEVER HAD A BROKEN HEAD

RIKI 1970

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Class Forces in the 1970s

By Stan Weir

Prologue: Theory and the Political Group

Socialists have remained for over 20 years trapped within objective conditions, unable to perform their necessary roles and often indifferent to the very necessity of social theory. As a consequence, there is not one revolutionary socialist organization, in the full meaning of the term. "Socialist" and "revolutionary" are often used, but rarely have more than rhetorical, anti-capitalist content. As individuals most socialists have developed their own vision of a better society, and have often shared their vision unsystematically with those closest to them, but can find no organization devoting itself (that is, its collective membership) to the job of concretizing and giving life to that vision. For all the admirable expenditure of energy and self-sacrifice, individuals and groups work with limited tools that stunt growth. Therein lies much of the unhappy and even surly atmosphere that surrounds and infuses existing organizations. Slogans are offered, for instance, which may be good, but have little to support them. Those in the general working public reached by the slogans have little opportunity to distinguish between transitional and reformist efforts: Without some supportive efforts, the former can be as unappealing, dry, and husklike as the latter. What ideas socialists do obtain are for the most part gained empirically, with little if any mediation between practical activity and theory. Within the socialist groups, education is generally seen as a process of exposure to the writings of the Marxist greats, histories of the class struggle, critiques of specific areas of bourgeois society (generally related to factional self-justification), and little more. The full-time theoretical pursuits

that can merge the intellectual life of an organization with its day-to-day functions in the outside world generally do not exist, or do so parasitically as the perpetual self-replication of the organization as is.

Here I want to offer as an example of organizational potentialities and problems a discussion of the part of the history of the movement with which I am most familiar. The democratic character of the Trotskyist movement during the Depression gave it an opportunity to involve its membership in concentrated study. Out of that period it developed a considerable body of theory. In turn, the movement gained high morale and considerable self-confidence. There was little internal suspicion of the sort caused today by uncertainty as to the political position of fellow members. There was a great degree of collectivity, and it was even possible for those who most bitterly opposed one another to participate jointly in common public activity. The 1940 split in the American Trotskyist movement caused few morale problems in either the Socialist Workers' Party or the newly formed Workers' Party. On the day before the split the membership belonged to an organization of over a thousand members, and on the next day they belonged to one of approximately half that size. But the members of both groups had deep convictions of their correctness, so that for many the split was greeted with enthusiasm. Each membership would now be free to carry forth its ideas without hindrance, which would have been impossible were there doubt in either organization as to its own cohesion and the ideas of both sides.

With the outbreak of World War II, approximately 80% of the membership of the Workers' Party became employed in heavy industry. Draftable or not, most made the move with enthusiasm. Employment caused no decline in the quality of internal political and intellectual life in the WP. In fact, while there was less time for discussion, its quality increased greatly through the contact with real life and practical activity. However, there was a contradiction between the internal political life of the members and their "outside"

activity. The vital national and international developments continued to dominate internal discussion, but this discussion bore little relation to external activity or to the content of the WP weekly newspaper, Labor Action. The membership read each issue of the theoretical discussion bulletin and the New International, the party's theoretical journal, with avid interest since they were vehicles for internal discussion that brought members growth and gratification. And then there was Labor Action, which was read only on occasion, as when a good article was pushed out of the New International for lack of room, or when one's own article appeared in the newspaper. Labor Action was written "for the workers" — not for the specific workers the membership was meeting each day in the shops, but for that undefined, little-above-average worker who was thought to constitute a potential member of a future "mass movement". Stated or unstated, consciously or unconsciously, the membership of the WP operated on the idea that explosive social upheavals in the near future would put a mass in motion for revolutionary change, and carry their own organization into its leadership. The party which developed the best popular mass line, and thereby proved to enough workers that it had the skills to run a mass movement, would at least be given the chance to become the vanguard.

By 1943 the press run of Labor Action was in the tens of thousands. In San Pedro, California alone, 12,000 copies were distributed to workers each week, primarily in shipbuilding. That situation was not unique. Distribution kept the membership of the WP and especially the women in a state of perpetual exhaustion. A major function of the national office staff became the bundling and mailing of the newspaper. There was hardly a branch whose membership did not become a major influence in two or three of the large progressive union caucuses in its area. WP members, for example, played leading roles in building the Rank and File Caucus in the UAW, a caucus that led a national movement in the industry against the no-strike pledge, against a return to piece work and for a sliding scale of

wage increases. True to and consistent with the orientation of their party and the press, members concentrated almost entirely on mass work. Opportunism of the classical type was rarely involved: They maintained a principled opposition to reactionary ideas and backward officials in the unions. Most avoided the temptation to accept staff or high local union positions. To the "mass" they held forth transitional and fighting alternatives. However, recruitment to the WP took on a low priority, given its belief that a mass party would appear within a decade. The WP continued to grow during the War due to a modest but significant influx of workers. They came in by ones and twos, recruited by close on-the-job contact. As they entered they were immediately thrown into a whirlwind of activity involving several meetings each week. Some stayed only a few months. The party had little success in getting many of them to mass-distribute Labor Action. Since the inclination for that type of activity was not always present, and "native" workers did not want to risk their jobs or the security of their families, the task of maintaining the small mass-party facade was left to those who saw themselves as "colonists".

When the War ended, the "real (industrial) worker types" recruited in the four-year period were the first to leave in numbers. Their recruitment and membership had involved them in little study. They had been attracted by the small mass-party concept and the promise of relatively big pay-offs in the short-term future. (There were a significant number who joined because membership offered them the opportunity to rapidly obtain a high-level education in unionism, thus enabling them to enter the bureaucracy.) It was not that the "workers" were opposed to learning, study, or participation in theoretical discussions, but rather that the theoretical discussions were seldom if ever conducted on subjects involving industrial technology, the society and culture of the work place, or the systemic and societal role of unions. Subjects like the nature of the Russian or capitalist states or imperialism, on the other hand, were never discussed in relation to the world of industrial production.

The next to leave were a significant group of artists and intellectuals. They departed as individuals, but for a complexity of related reasons. Like others, they had become demoralized. They had lost their basis in wartime industry and some decisive perspectives of their socialist organization had failed. In addition, they had been victims of the generally accepted notion that for socialists to be anything "less" than industrial workers meant inferior commitment. They wanted to resume their careers as musicians, architects, or poets, and did not feel that socialist activity among their peers would be viewed as meaningful. Some had been pressured into industry by the enthusiasm of others, and now they resented it. Down deep they believed artistic endeavors to be socially necessary labor, but they found no acceptance of the idea in their own organization. Their exodus, among other things, accelerated the withering of theoretical activity and creative internal life. Those who remained were thus less able to stimulate interest among those they met on the outside, and within a few years not many among them could sustain themselves in industrial work. Thus the drift back to careers became widespread throughout the party.

Contrary to Trotsky's prediction, the end of World War II did not bring a defeat to Stalinism or a corresponding growth of a revolutionary democratic movement in the world. The WP's prognosis had proven in some respects incorrect, and very little remained of four years' work in the war industries. Later, the WP was to take on the more realistic perspective of an educational or propaganda group, but the limitations of the past and the growing difficulties of objective political conditions could not be overcome. By its failure to grow theoretically and politically beyond the point reached in 1946, the socialist movement (not merely in the WP, but throughout the Left) condemned itself to stagnation for a generation, and was ill-equipped to meet the influx from the New Left in the late 1960s.

The unresolved theoretical tasks of one generation inevitably fall upon the next. Moreover, we have generally neg-

lected the inheritance of theoretical and practical experience available. Consider, for instance, two of the most pressing questions for socialist work today: the statification of the unions and the present function of primary work groups. Statification of the economy was a major question for the socialists in the 1940s: They were necessarily concerned with the regimentation of labor through the Communist bureaucracies in Europe and the USSR and the official labor movement in the US. Today, recent upsurges within the ranks of labor raise questions as to the extent and exact meaning of statification, yet the conception has not been put into writing for collective discussion. We must examine the involvement of official labor in the tri-partite arrangement with government and the employers. Does it constitute a qualitative statification, a trend in that direction, or a modern exemplification of traditional trade-union reformism? Obtaining wage increases on the basis of productivity has become a standard operation for labor's officialdom, and the denial of that method caused labor to leave the Wage Board. The increasing anti-labor decisions by the NLRB are now causing talk of boycotts against the Board in the top echelons of labor's leadership. How do these events effect the viability of the statification hypothesis discussed above?

The significance of workers' relationships to each other on the shop floor has been a recurrent theme in the American Left at least since the days of the IWW. As the supplementary article by M. Guttman indicates, the changes in technology since Marx's time necessitate a full-scale study of primary work groups, for the self-activity of the groups reveals potentials, previously not taken into account, of the working class's ability to manage production. These are the only workers' organizations not susceptible to bureaucratization, and thus are the natural foundation on which to build the working-class organizations of the future. Yet here as well as in other areas in concern, so long as there is no adequate discussion, sources of difference of method and tactics among socialists remain obscure, and suspicion

continues pointlessly. The subjects discussed briefly and preliminarily in the next section are unfortunately only a few of the many areas in which socialists are not supported in their activities by a fundamental and up-to-date body of theory.*

The main value of the particular heritage being discussed here lies in the concepts and theories of working-class democracy which were developed. The detailed studies of the Russian counter-revolution in the 1940s made it possible to see — as the best elements in SDS would see a generation later — that however admirable historically, the pre-1917 Bolshevik models were inadequate for current tasks. After a lengthy interruption, History has placed upon a new generation the responsibility of further theoretical and practical growth. Missionary zeal and willingness to sustain self-sacrificing activity are only half of what is needed. Conceptions of new institutions must be developed at the same time as the old ones are opposed. Anything less will be ultimately reformist, and the maintenance of group activities will have to depend on directives which have only momentary effectiveness, leading at last to a sense of futility. There is need theoretically and practically, then, to be geared for the long haul, in which the successes come slow, fast, slow, and then fast again. The attitude which follows naturally from such an approach, “being in for as long as it takes and then some”, reflects a confidence that is properly consistent with the new era that began to open in the mid-1960s.

* The original form of the remainder of the article contained 27 parts.

I. Yesterday's Theory, Today's Reality

The industrial-union revolution of 1932 to 1941, out of which the CIO was born, allowed American radicals a very

high degree of identification with the official organizations and leadership of the labor unions. Communist, Socialist, Trotskyist, and anarcho-syndicalist parties and groups, each in almost exact ratio to their size, had members who became official labor leaders or who became influential advisors to new official leaders. Particularly from the time of the outbreak of general strikes in San Francisco and Minneapolis, through the inception of the CIO (first as a committee within the AFL and then as an independent federation), to the time of the outbreak of World War II, alliances between radical intellectuals, rank-and-file workers, and a new generation of labor officials came easily. Most often with different goals, though there were many illusions to the contrary, they agreed on one major issue: Industrial unionism as an institution was a progressive development. The alliances were unique and short-lived, but it was under the influence of this period that the American radical movement last developed a full set of attitudes and theories on the labor movement.

Now, thirty years almost to the day after the close of that period, there is no ideological basis for a healthy or ongoing relationship between the ranks and the officialdom of labor. And, it has been so many years since radicals have been a presence within the unions that it is difficult for them to learn and articulate clearly the ideological basis for the historically demanded re-alliance between themselves and the ranks. The once fresh and progressive young workers who rose from the ranks to the top positions of leadership in many of the unions have long since succumbed to bureaucratic conservatism.

The depth of the bureaucratic degeneration of the labor leadership and the speed with which the bureaucratization process occurred is a principal, and in some cases the principal, cause of demoralization, skepticism, and cynicism among labor militants and socialists — former, present, and potential. Without a full theoretical analysis of the causes of past examples of bureaucratic degeneration and a positive prognosis for the future that is scientifically

based, socialists appear to operate on no more than impressionistic assertions of faith in the working class. The volume of cynical academic literature on the question of bureaucracy grows, undealt with by socialists. Socialists seem unaware that works like Robert Michels' Political Parties, given ever new life by the work of Seymour Martin Lipset, provide a formidable challenge to the very theoretical foundations of working-class socialism as long as they remain unanswered. In fact, the tenets — both implied and explicit — on which the writings of Lipset and Michels are based have almost biblical importance for those who live in the ignorance that bureaucratism is an eternal inevitability. This crisis alone provides a major task for socialists and their theoretical publications. Failure to attack it means failure to win respect and support in the intellectual community.

From the outset of the industrial-union revolution, the followers of the Communist Party in the labor unions set the tone for radicals. Their primary focus was on obtaining official power in the unions. Marxist and other radical tendencies separated themselves from the Communists mainly by their adherence to the democratic principles of internal union government and their lack of opportunism, but their focus was still on obtaining official power for themselves or independent militants. The entire process was aided by the fact that rank-and-file militants were themselves focused primarily on the problem of who would obtain power over formal and official union bodies. It was natural that this should be their concentration because (a) official union machinery was needed just to make the new unions operative, (b) the unions were new in many industries and there were widespread and panacean illusions about what they could accomplish, and (c) the power of the informal work-group organizations in the work place was at a peak and they were able to exercise a great deal of control over the formal local union structures.

But the industrial-union revolution did not institutionalize

around the goals and aspirations that were foremost in the minds of the workers who made it. The primary motivation for industrial unions in labor's ranks came out of the alienation and indignities that workers experienced on the job. Almost spontaneously, it seemed, they formed unions in the work place; but they were dealing for the most part with nationwide corporations. The power of local unions in each work place had to be centralized in order to keep the employers from playing off the workers in one work place against the workers making the same product in another. The major fight to humanize working conditions had to be postponed until nationwide contracts were obtained. This facilitated the transfer of local autonomy to the top union leaders in the international headquarters. The postponement, with the aid of World War II, has lasted for more than a generation. The outbreak of rank-and-file revolts in the early 1960s served notice on a now case-hardened bureaucracy that the ranks intended to resume the fight to win dignity at work.

Disillusioned with their unions, though not about to reject them, rank-and-file militants today do not focus primarily on obtaining power per se within the formal union governmental structure. They have learned that that is not the means to the end they seek. Instead they often bypass that power fight and seek a direct and radical expansion of their powers or their democratic rights in the total collective-bargaining process. They want autonomy over the grievance procedure, the choice of bargaining goals, and contract administration.

Thus far the main tactics they have employed to pressure for these goals have been voting against the acceptance of contracts negotiated by their leaders, and wildcat strikes. At times these have assumed mass character, particularly as regards the former tactic. Neither of the tactics has been co-ordinated on a regional or national level in more than a handful of instances, and even then the co-ordination has not come out of strong centralized organization. No large-scale progress toward the goals has been made.

Dozens and dozens of local unions within an international have elected rebel delegates to conventions, and again because of the lack of regional or national co-ordination little advance has been made.

Does progress await the formation of stronger local rank-and-file caucuses whose power is then centralized nationally? Hundreds of locals have elected new and more-militant leaders from the ranks. This has helped, but it has been insufficient to achieve the needed degree of change. Is the problem again the lack of co-ordination of revolt on a national basis? If so, the task of militants is somewhat simplified and is one of building and waiting, seeking to win power locally and parlay that power by trying to unite rebel locals on a regional and then a national basis. The task would then be to use that power to put collective bargaining to work improving working conditions and real wages rather than for the distorted purposes the leadership used it for after winning multi-plant or multi-employer contracts. This view can only lead militants to resume the power struggles of the Thirties, albeit for different ends. It includes and speaks to only a small part of the change that has taken place in three decades.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF UNIONS

When collective bargaining institutionalizes, unions undergo qualitative changes ideologically, administratively, and even structurally. Bargaining did not institutionalize for the new unions of the 1930s with the signing of their first contracts. The process of bargaining could not routinize and solidify for any one of the new mass unions as long as any one of the major corporations in the industry they were organizing held out and sustained a threat to the rest of their contracts.

Also, the first of the major contracts obtained in steel, auto, rubber, or electric, for example, were most often documents guaranteeing little more than union recognition.

Signatures were applied, but the corporations in most cases continued to resist the process, and open conflict continued. In the steel industry the first real breakdown of resistance became noticeable after Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939. That tragic act caused a flood of orders for American steel from as-yet-uninvaded European countries. The crisis that the steel employers had experienced in 1938 was ended. The first real breakthrough and establishment of a contract more nearly resembling the detailed contracts of today was not accomplished until the signing of the Carnegie-Illinois contract in late 1941. And the rest of the steel corporations did not follow suit until the early years after formal American entry into the war.

The story was generally the same in auto, rubber, and electrical appliances. The differences can be measured by matters of months. The sitdown period in rubber did not end until 1938. Slim contracts were won at Sieberling (US Royal in Detroit), Goodrich, and General. Firestone continued resistance. Goodyear held out altogether, and not until it was put under contract in 1941 could the top leaders of the Rubber Workers begin to achieve stability in their lives. Collective-bargaining rights were won at General Motors as a result of the 1937 Flint sitdowns. Ford held out until 1940, and it is likely that Henry Ford and Harry Bennett would have resisted even longer were it not for the fact that NLRB investigators, most of them former members of the LaFollette Senate Investigating Committee staff, had uncovered evidence indicating Ford's use of Detroit's organized gangsters to fight union organization. In electric a contract was won with General Electric as early as 1938, but it was not until the early years of the war that the industry became organized in a substantial way.

At the start of World War II, the majority of America's top labor officials gathered before Franklin Roosevelt like "feudal princes offering their services to a king", and most of the leaders of the new unions were among them. The wartime restrictions that were imposed upon the ranks of labor freed the leadership to complete the organization

process begun by the ranks, but on a bureaucratic basis. Institutionalization of collective bargaining thus occurred on the worst terms. Compulsory arbitration of grievances became a general pattern through the initiatives of the War Labor Board that labor accepted seats on. The degenerative socialization process labor officials undergo was cemented through a tripartite arrangement between official labor, employers, and government bureaucrats. However, it is incorrect to conclude that the war was the major culprit. Its function was to accelerate the negative process that goes into high gear with institutionalization of bargaining.

The atmosphere in and character of the local unions in particular during the initial organizing period was one of conflict. The new self-organized federal locals of the early 1930s and the new and often self-organized locals of the CIO a few years later had a character that, for the US and Canada of that time, could almost be described as revolutionary. Open battle and constant confrontation were the methods of the employers and in turn of the workers. The



Women garment workers forcibly stop scab from entering struck dress factory, Memphis

sitdown strikes and the mass slowdowns were the more dramatic of the tactics used by the members and leaders of the new locals. Equally if not more important were the mass meetings held on company property -- in parking lots, in company cafeterias, and even on the work-place floor. The confidence and sense of security made possible by the very physical nature of these meetings freed the participants to release the depth of their feelings about their work and their employers and to put forth and consider the most radical and sophisticated ideas.

The early memoranda of union recognition and minimal wage and seniority awards could not immediately cause great change in the attitudes of the ranks or change the character of their locals. The formal contractual victories only whetted appetites for even greater ones. The momentum of "just yesterday" could not easily be stopped. A new consciousness was growing. Moreover, the employers regularly reneged on conditions to which they had agreed, or began new campaigns to quash the drive of the workers, necessitating immediate returns to direct action.

Only when the employers recognized that they no longer had the needed legitimacy to act as the full disciplinarians of the people in their employ, and that the union leadership could be used as a substitute disciplinary force, were they willing to join in building the institution of collective bargaining. The beginnings of qualitative change in the character of the unions from the international to the regional and finally to the local level followed upon this fact.

The process by which union leaders become disciplinarians of the rank and file need not and seldom does involve conscious and overt dishonest conduct at the start. The process becomes a natural one once the employers decide that it is possible for them to live with the unions. The establishment of systematized collective bargaining and of "full range" contracts is usually viewed as the cure for most if not all current problems by both ranks and leaders of labor. Unavoidably the hope grows that the contract will allow the making of gains against the employers without the

constant conflict, insecurity, and disruption of personal and family lives that characterize the organizing period for new unions.

For the ranks, this is an illusion that must soon vanish. Routine, home life, and income may become more stable after bargaining is institutionalized, but the conflict at work goes on. Grievance bargaining that denies the right to strike at the local level mutes it and makes it less explosive. There is no record or official admission of its existence unless the production process stopped. There is even the pretense that some major slowdowns or brief wildcats did not occur, after they have been ended, and in the new world of make-believe that is created, bargaining occurs under unconditional no-strike pledges and compulsory grievance arbitration. It takes some time, however, to intimidate the ranks into an acceptance of that make-believe world.

As soon as the employers accept collective bargaining as a fact of life and their signatures are put on contracts that they do not intend to break in other than a piecemeal way, the top labor leadership particularly must undergo a full change in attitude. For a time they may remain bitterly angry at some or all of the employers or their representatives, but they must now show concern about the employers' competitive position. The successful delivery of all of the things in the contract that have for so long been striven for cannot be made unless the firms under contract prosper and grow. The open and total conflict relationship of the pre-contract days has to go. Now, a care has to be shown for how hard an employer is to be hit. The new situation demands "flexibility" and attentiveness to what the limits are or "you might kill the goose that lays the golden eggs". The rank and file by its very size and the nature of the condition in the work place cannot, of course, be expected to show the needed care. Decision-making powers in the grievance procedure must therefore be placed outside the reach of the ranks and in the hands of the union officials who are responsible for the administration of the contract so that those grievances which if won would set precedents

to undermine the competitive position can be watered down or discarded.

The ranks, however, do not share the change in attitude of their leaders. They too want to retain and maintain the contracts, but they see no reason for pulling back from a struggle to win a grievance that is legitimate. Their method for fighting a grievance is one of continued battle until won or lost. For moments at a time in the meetings down at the union hall it is possible for them to see the logic of their leaders on the necessity to keep the company in business. That reason is destroyed the moment they physically or mentally return to work. The attitude of the company toward them is one of total antagonism and disrespect whenever the production process is in motion. Schizophrenia cannot live in a reality where there is so much immediate pain and unhappiness. For each one of them and their immediate associates the task becomes how to cheat the employer out of what is expected. If the company survives it will have to come from the labor of the others in the work place besides themselves. The local-level leaders developed during the organizing period find it difficult to act any longer as a link to the top leaders. If they continue to work daily in the production process, they share the attitudes of the people who elected them. Even if they are freed from work, it is they, the local leaders, whom the ranks will move against first in a showdown, and not the leaders at the regional or international level. They must stay with the ranks in order to survive.

The union administrators of the contract at the top cannot tolerate this situation. "Yes, the work is hard and the damned foremen and supervisors of the companies are so stupid that they continue to cause our people to be boiled up; but can't they see that if they continue in bull-headed battle, the contract and all they fought for will be lost?" The ranks will have to be disciplined. The hottest heads among the leaders will have to come around to a reasonable attitude or be eliminated. "It's a hell of a thing to have to do, particularly after all the hard work those guys did; in fact,

without some of them we never could have done the job in the first place....but a few cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the welfare of the many....this after all is the real world." And for the leadership it is, if the contract is to survive under existing relationships. It is true that when workers in a work place begin to make justifiable inroads on the ability of their employer to exploit them, they can put that employer in an uncompetitive position, or make it difficult or impossible for that employer to become competitive.

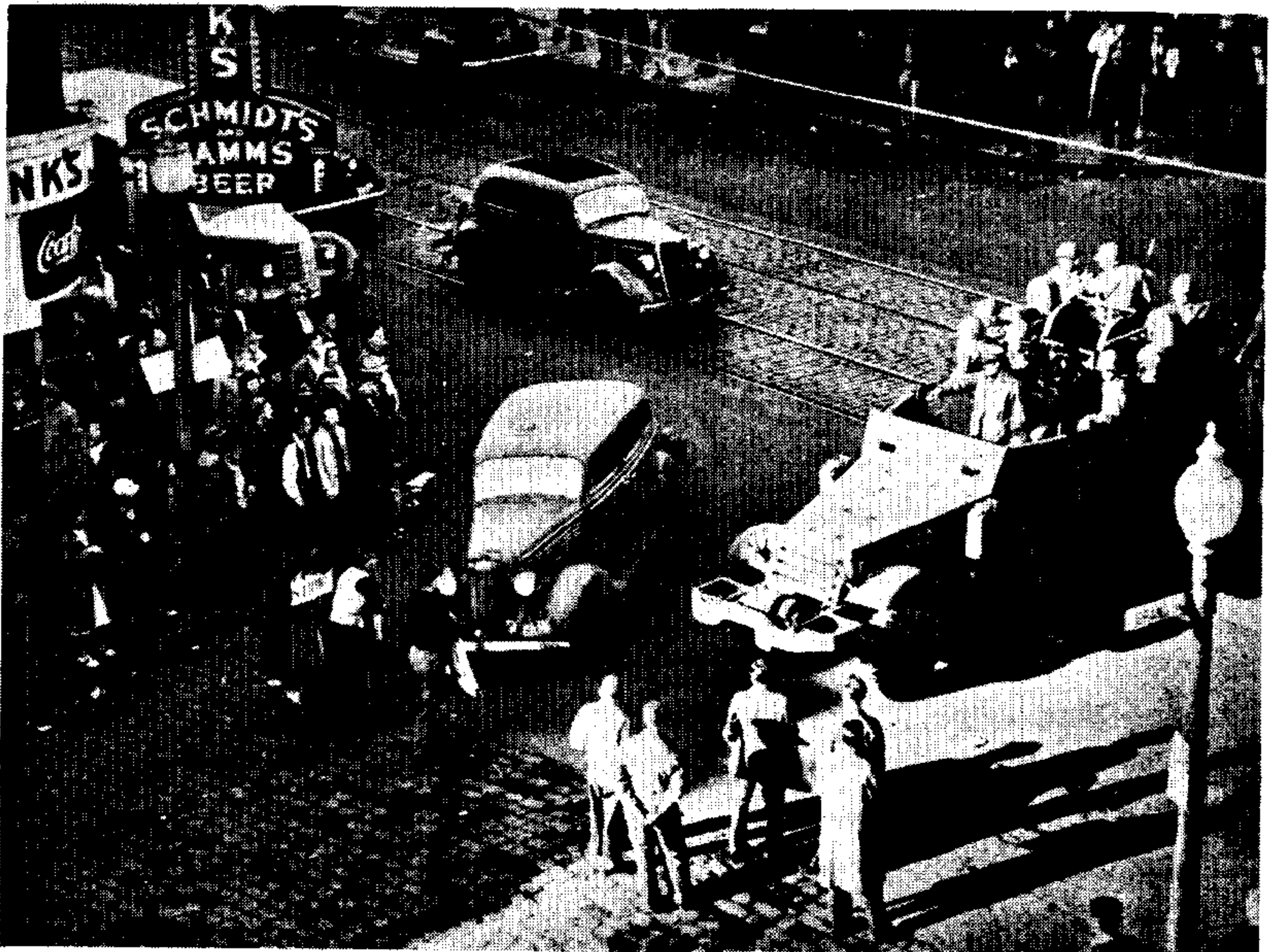
So unassailable was the new logic of the new bureaucrats' new world during the transition period that was the early 1940s, that they spoke openly about their new role due to the existence of contracts. So without alternatives were they that it did not occur to them to show shame. In 1942 Clinton Golden and Harold Ruttenberg wrote a book entitled The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy. In it they describe in detail how the leadership of the Steel Workers Union dealt with militant leaders who resisted compromise. The book is a unique document not only because of its contents, but also because Golden was at that time the veteran director of the Eastern Region of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee and Ruttenberg was the educational director of the entire union.

The title they chose to give their book provides some indication of their ignorant innocence. Their self image was a good one. They were key figures in the building of a giant union that was going to benefit and had already benefitted hundreds of thousands. Their ends, both present and potential, for them justified any means. The social-political value of their long-out-of-print document has increased with time, yet it has been forgotten except by students of management. In the wisdom of our retrospection it seems incredible that not one organization on the Left has ever grasped it for the tremendous educational tool that it is. It is probable that the book was passed over because even the most top-flight of revolutionaries are prone to resist

recognition that a period of peak revolutionary activity is past and a transition period of Thermidorian reaction has begun.

The outward pacification of the rank and file requires that the official power center of the union have control over all staff jobs. There is no easier way to remove a dangerously "hot-headed" militant from a sensitive area than to appeal to his or her sense of responsibility to the larger struggle. And so rank-and-file militants with roots deep in their native work places accepted organizing jobs that took them considerable geographic and psychological distances from their home bases.

But though the number of staff jobs is relatively large, it is never large enough to allow the officials to divert the militancy of more than several score at a time. The staffs of the Auto Workers and Steel Workers are each just under one thousand, and the workhorses on those staffs can carry only a limited number of newcomers at one time. Thus, other avenues have to be found for handling militants who resist making the transition to the Thermidor and beyond.



It is at this point that sections of the union leadership enter into collusive relationships with the employers. Employers are always in need of talent to fill management vacancies. The recruitment of a rank-and-file leader not only removes a thorn, but usually provides management with someone of top capabilities and energy. No one on the union side need ask them to conduct these raids. The corruption of the union results when by its silence it gives tacit approval to them.

Neither is it necessary for union officials to make formal arrangements with management in order to designate a rank-and-file leader whom they would like to see removed from the job. A staffer comes into the local and baits a particular militant. The news leaks back to management. It is during this aspect of the reaction process that the fearful, the conservative and opportunistic rank-and-filers, receive signals and come forth as an alternative leadership to the one that organized the local.

Even the names of the bulk of the work-place heroines and heroes of the industrial-union revolution have been lost to us. The new and more conservative local leaders are the ones who survive to accept credit for the gains made by the formation of the unions. They are generally — accept during periods of rank-and-file assertiveness — in debt to officials on the staff, and thus are in a weak position in relation to the employer. They owe their new office and status to their willingness to concede local autonomy in the bargaining and internal governmental apparatus to the upper echelons of the union. In short and in a sense, they are willing to abide by Bonapartist relationships, and to see whatever change and reform that occurs be initiated bureaucratically from above.

The transition caused by the turnabout of purpose of the labor leadership that was necessitated by the agreement of the employers to institutionalize collective bargaining, in time instills in the leadership a contempt for the ranks. Add in the guilt that has appeared half-recognized and unadmitted, and all the ingredients for a recipe for cynicism

are present. Ingestion of it for any extended period frees the leadership to exploit their new position to in turn improve their economic and social status. Externally or internally, there is no longer anything present to help ward off full infection by the virus of bureaucratic conservatism. Kafkaesque metamorphoses occur. Consciously corrupt elitism can now be pursued.

The establishment of contracts with what appear to be comprehensive grievance procedures establishes a formal dual power within an industrial-type local union. Now not only is there an entire set of officers, headed by the president, vice-president, treasurer, and recording secretary, all holding offices divorced from the work place and process, but there must be a series of committeemen, committeewomen, and stewards inside the work place to administer the contract and grievance procedure. They are the most accessible to the ranks and thus potentially the most dangerous to the bureaucracy. They have no responsibility for presenting the face or the official policy of the union to the public. They cannot be trusted to assume full authority in the grievance process. By contractual definition the international or staff representatives had to be given the power to determine with top local management the destiny of all grievances that departmental-level management denied.

The on-the-job officers of the union are not immune from bureaucratic conservatism. If they are freed from the oppression of the work process to spend all or part of their time at work processing grievances and handling union business, both management and the international union get in position to cheat stewards and committeemen and committeewomen of their basic militancy. As bad as the buying and selling that goes on is the change in plant union structure from that which existed during the organizing period. The early period of the union's life demands that the union have at least one key person, representative or steward, for each foreman so that a maximum number of workers in every corner of the work place get signed up

and stay organized in the union. Most of the good ratios of steward representation established in the 1930s have been eliminated. Ratios as low as one to fifteen have become as high as one to several hundred. The ranks in such cases were promised that full-time stewards with their own offices and telephones in the plant would allow better representation. But experience has shown the opposite. Their aristocratic position and the impossibly-large size of the work-place territories they represent negated the advantage gained in their becoming full-time, along with the negation of the freedom gained by the checkoff dues system and union shop.

Despite the estrangement caused between ranks and union work-place officials and the increasing number of contracts which widen the ratio of steward representation, they remain the most accessible, the most often challenged and changed, and the most important stratum of official leadership to the rank and file of the unions. It is no accident that there are few unions that provide the work-place officials with any automatic standing in the local union governmental apparatus. That government is officially controlled by the officers elected to preside over the business of the union that can be conducted outside the work place. It is the president, vice-president, and so forth who are most likely to side with the international in any conflict between the local and national center, particularly if the local is large enough to afford part-time or full-time employment positions for one or more of its outside-the-work place officers. The 1967 wildcat strike of GM workers in Mansfield, Ohio provides the classic example. The disenfranchisement of the shop stewards in turn disenfranchises the ranks.

The reactionary changes in union structure that began apace in the early 1940s continue to this moment. The reform of the Steel Workers grievance procedure that I. W. Abel has been promising the ranks of that union since 1965 is right now being instituted. It weakens the right of the stewards to bargain with the foremen and places that right solely with the assistant grievers or grievance committeemen. This automatically changes the representation ratio

from roughly one to thirty to one to two hundred or more. In the face of these changes the ranks of labor are demanding a reversal. Since the early 1960s, and particularly at the Special Bargaining Convention of the Auto Workers in April 1967, the demand for a ratio more like that of management, or one to fifteen, has been in the forefront of the rank-and-file demonstrations. The right to strike at the local level has become a major issue all over the mass-production industries as a result of the upsurge in militancy. The steel workers have not yet had the opportunity to respond to Abel's latest move. By contract, union government and ideology, the relationship of the ranks of labor in the mass-production and transportation industries to their officials is today very different from that period in which most radicals last defined attitudes, long-range programs, and perspectives.

Another factor in the weakening of formal rank-and-file democracy has been a major population shift. Since the early 1940s Americans have been a population on the move. The old ethnic and cohesive working-class neighborhoods nearby the industrial work places have become all but extinct. Informal organization in the work process no longer has supplemental aid from informal organization in the neighborhood. Only as racial and ethnic minorities in the central city cores gain more employment in city industry does the advantage return. Thus, on two counts separated from and in addition to changes already discussed above, the institution that is the local union, using the monthly meeting to legitimize its authority, has lost much if not most of its use value and authority within the ranks of labor.

The post-World War II automobile "explosion" and high employment levels have (a) destroyed living-area organizational formations that were used to promote attendance at union meetings, and (b) created working-class suburbs that are distant from the work places. Not only have they atomized former living-area concentrations, but they have made it a considerable physical and nervous strain to get to and from union meetings in city core areas. With the

disappearance of the "taken liberty" to meet in mass on company property when necessary, it was the local union meeting that was supposed to provide a total forum for the ranks. No substitute has yet been conceptualized.

II. Centralization of Capital and Internationalization of Labor

In 1966 a total of 98 firms with combined assets of \$4 billion were acquired by large mining and manufacturing companies. Of these, the top 200 US industrial corporations alone acquired companies with assets of \$2.2 billion. At the end of 1964 the 20 largest manufacturing corporations had \$83 billion in assets, one quarter of the total assets of all US manufacturing companies. The 200 largest firms accounted for 57% and the top 1,000 for approximately 76%. The Federal Trade Commission Report for 1967 estimates that if the current merger trend of that time continued (and thus far it has), 75% of all corporate assets in the US will be in the hands of 200 corporations by 1975.

The nation's 50 largest firms have a power of their own. Such companies — like GM, US Steel, Goodyear, Alcoa — have not been engaged in a mad rush to acquire firms that manufacture products different from their own. However, the next 100 to 150 firms have been growing in large part through joining firms in entirely different branches of industry. Much of the growth has come through financial manipulations, through the kind of speculation in which the opportunities for big financial gains and for growing financial power are the chief motivating factors. In other words, the mergers have been based not so much on gaining more efficiency and greater control of the market for particular products, expanding the company's interest within a particular industrial domain, but rather on insiders, speculation, and empire building. There is no real transfer of skills when an aerospace firm takes over a meat-packing or a sporting-goods company, or a coal company combines with one in copper. When Kennecott Copper took over Peabody Coal the owners acquired the sort of power in regions of

Utah, however, to exert political domination of the state's legislature.

Just below is the percentage of distribution of mergers by type of merger between 1948 and 1968. The figures are from the Federal Trade Commission Report of March 1969.

Date	Horizontal	Vertical	Conglomerate
1948-51	42%	20%	38%
1952-55	37%	10%	53%
1956-59	28%	19%	53%
1960-63	12%	25%	63%
1964-67	12%	9%	79%
1968	4%	7%	89%

Below is a diagram of the more than 15 different international unions involved in collective bargaining with a classical conglomerate. The number of separate contracts geometrically exceeds the number of international unions, because different locals or groups of locals within a particular international union have different labor contracts.

Ling-Temco-Vought (LTV)

Braniff Airways

Jones and Laughlin

Airline Pilots

Steelworkers

Teamsters

Mine Workers

Machinists

Electrical Workers (IUE)

Many Unorganized

Railroad Crafts

LTV Electrosystems

LTV Ling Altec

Auto Workers

Electrical Workers (IUE)

Allied Industrial Workers

Auto Workers

Many Unorganized

Machinists

LTV Aerospace

Okonite

Auto Workers
Many Unorganized

Wilson Pharmaceutical

Meat Cutters
District 50
Chemical Workers

Wilson and Company

Meat Cutters
Others Unorganized

Electrical Workers (IBEW)
Rubber Workers

Wilson Sporting Goods

Meat Cutters
Textile Workers
Chemical Workers
Clothing Workers
Teamsters
Leafer Workers

The tremendous increase in the trend toward the conglomerate-type merger listed just previous to the diagram above has slowed somewhat since 1968, due to breakdowns in both Ling-Temco-Vought and Lytton Industries and resulting pressures from the courts as new mergers have been applied for. Few corporations have such a spectacular collective-bargaining schedule as does LTV. Hundreds of corporations, however, deal with a dozen or more unions in unrelated industries. If there is a strike in one set of work places owned by a firm of this sort, the other work places are free to continue to work and profit and cover strike-incurred expenses. General Electric, which is not so widely diversified, whipsaws labor with a variation of the same tactic. GE negotiates over 90 different contracts with different sets of union representatives, although some of them are in the same union. Thus, when dealing with any of the many variations of the conglomerate-type corporation, the different unions or sections of unions are faced with the fact that their different contracts come due at different dates and are administered by union representatives not in regular communication with one another. Management picks the weakest possible unit in order to arrive at a pattern contract, and then uses that pattern to bring the rest into line.

In order to be able to check this process that so weakens the strike — labor's primary weapon, the official union leadership at the very top has been forced to try to co-ordinate the efforts of all unions under contract to a single multi-corporation. The greatest single example was led by IUE in its dealings with GE and Westinghouse. Ultimately 10 other unions were brought into negotiations. GE claimed that this was co-ordinated bargaining which forced it to negotiate 11 contracts simultaneously, and walked out. A US circuit court ruled on behalf of the union after the union claimed that it was merely engaged in coalition bargaining. In other words, the IUE was the only contract negotiated, and experts from 10 other unions were merely aiding it at the table. Since the corporation has always been allowed to bring anyone it chooses to the table, labor was also granted the same right — with the proviso that if unions actually began co-ordinated bargaining the court would rule against them. This coalition development thus represented progress, but unions will have to go through the same process repeatedly at great cost in finances and energy. Moreover, IUE represented the one great successful example of the development. Only in one or two instances has the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO, formerly headed by Walter Reuther and now headed by I. W. Abel, been able to get four or five unions together and negotiate a single contract-expiration date for them. Since the UAW left the AFL-CIO, the IUD has declined in strength. The crisis remains, compounded by the development of the multi-national type corporation which requires international co-ordination of the bargaining process, again by the present labor officialdom, if the unions are going to maintain their bargaining strength even at no more than present levels.

The multi-national corporation is not a small additional problem for the labor leadership. Already it is a major one — inseparable from that created by the development of the conglomerate. The IUD publication Viewpoint (Summer 1971) estimated that foreign operations "accounted for at least

one quarter of sales, earnings, and assets, or employees of 80 of the top 200 US corporations at the end of 1970." In that year they produced an estimated \$200 billion worth of goods and services overseas. In the 20 years from 1950 through 1969, the value of US investments abroad increased almost fivefold, from \$31.5 billion in 1950 to \$143.4 billion in 1969. \$108 billion was private investment, of which \$70 billion was direct investment by US-based multi-national corporations in subsidiaries abroad. Much of the last sum was in mining, smelting, and petroleum, but \$30 billion was in manufacturing — a threefold increase in a decade. The centralization of capital was but one of the major factors following this growth. New transportation technology now enables the swift movement of producers, goods, machinery, and technical skills over great distances. And the development of instant communication systems has made pos-



sible the centralization of decision-making by the new giants. In fact, the more the corporations have spread out on an international scale, the more the power of decision-

making within them has been centralized. With their new world view it is easy for them to pick the country in which they can produce goods at the lowest costs, and pick the country in which to declare profits because of low taxes.

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To organize all the major work places owned by a corporation within the US and Canada is no longer sufficient even for the needs of the labor bureaucracy. The new mobility and flexibility of the corporations threaten the ability of officialdom to produce for the ranks at the present levels of success — particularly in the areas of wages and fringe benefits. The loss of jobs to foreign countries poses still greater threat to their power base. In sum, the very basis on which they have maintained their position in the tripartite arrangement established between themselves, the em-

ployers, and government bureaucrats is being chipped away.

If the present official labor leaders are to make a beginning at a solution of the crisis presented to them by the development of conglomerate and multi-national corporations, they will have to make considerable changes in the structural, governmental, and administrative forms of the unions they lead. If they do, it is highly improbable that they will make efforts on their own to increase the levels of rank-and-file participation. The real likelihood is that if left to themselves they will attempt to parallel corporate change and further centralize the decision-making processes within the total union structure. The questions are: Will rank-and-file militants simply counterpunch by only putting obstacles in the path of the changes, offering no alternatives to the present structure? Or, will they take the opportunity to fight for long-overdue changes in institutional forms from bottom to top of the unions, changes that centralize the power of the working class through structural forms and procedures that for their very success demand the full participation of the rank and file?

INTERNATIONALIZATION

Due to the changes indicated above in regard to the globalization of American capitalism, for the first time in American working-class history objective conditions demand that workers develop a consciousness of their international role and lead in the establishment of international solidarity. The direct inter-relationship between Nixon's floating of the American dollar on foreign exchanges together with the imposition of the 10% surcharge at the end of last summer, and the further introduction of wage-price controls based on productivity, dramatize this need by revealing the unity of the domestic and international crises. Through the Nixon Administration, American employers have provided the nation with its first great issue for class struggle since the Depression, and have at the same time precipitated the first international crisis which has made

clear that American labor is a commodity on the international labor market.

An example of the need and objective possibility for solidarity is presented by the relations of US and Canadian labor. In the 1930s and through World War II there was a widespread sense of national inferiority among Canadian workers. They resented being far more aware of US politics than Americans were of theirs, and, sensing that they were still to a degree under the domination of Britain, resented higher levels of material consumption just across the border. It was common in the 1930s to hear Canadian workers hold forth for the elimination of the border and the creation of one big country, since this would bring a quick expansion of American capital and an increase in jobs. (Canada, it should be remembered, remained in the depths of the Great Depression right up to her entry into World War II.)

In the post-World War II period and with the American domination of Britain on a world scale, US corporations moved into Canada in large numbers. Today the economies of Canada and the US are inseparably intertwined, so that a social crisis in one is automatically transferred to the other. The high degree of industrialization in contemporary Canada has given its working class a sense of its own power. There is a new militancy of Canadian youth and workers



Members of the Canadian Chemical & Textile Union being arrested in the Texpack strike in Brantford, Ont. August, 1971

in general, reaching the point at which an official journal of the Canadian Department of Youth publishes an analysis of "The Coming Youth Revolt in Labour" (Labour Gazette, November 1971). And the attitudes of independence and self-determination are by no means limited to French-Canadians. As a result of rank-and-file pressure for independence the Canadian Labor Congress, in summer of 1970, adopted a series of guidelines for the pursuance of autonomy. Last summer the Canadian Caucus of the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphate, and Papermill Workers went to the International convention and proposed (a) that only Canadian delegates elect the three Canadian vice-presidents; (b) that a per-capita levy be administered by the union's Canadian director rather than the union's US officers; (c) that the Canadian director be authorized to approve Canadian contracts; and (d) that a supplementary strike fund be established in Canada. The convention delegates rebuffed the Canadian caucus on all four proposals, thus strengthening the position of rebel locals like the one in Gatineau, Quebec that are seeking near-complete independence. Meanwhile, the Canadian pulp and sulphate union has wired Nixon protesting wage controls and the surtax, and has come out for its merger with the United Papermakers and the Printing Pressmen.

As these examples and others demonstrate, Canadian workers are no longer willing to tail-end American unions in the old ways, and any solidarity in the future will necessarily come on an equal-partner basis. American radicals still know little of Canadian politics, labor, and society in general. The elimination of that condition would be of great value to the American working class, and for socialists would be the first step toward a direct alliance with Canadian socialist organizations.

III. The New Work Force

American society has experienced only a fraction of the social change that automation must inevitably bring. We

have but to look backward. The introduction of the assembly line on a mass basis began as early as World War I, but not till the mid-Twenties were there enough semi-skilled jobs to create the basis for large-scale industrial unionism. Regardless of all the education to the idea accomplished by socialists like Eugene Debs and the Wobblies, the workers who could benefit by industrial unionism had not until that time the power to make the vision a reality.

Three further ingredients were necessary before industrial unions could appear and stabilize their existence nationally. A societal shock was needed to jar the feelings, ideas, and consciousness to such an extent that Americans could free themselves relatively to break with the routine, traditions, values, institutions, and ideas on the basis of which they had been operating. The outbreak of the Depression in 1929 provided that shock, a break in the continuities and a release that allowed workers to begin creative construction of new institutions. Independently organized industrial-union locals formed by rank-and-file workers, who



had the day before been on the bread lines, made their appearance with the first upturns in employment in 1932. Through the Twenties and earlier, they had endured the disruption, exhaustion, and anxieties that assembly-line methods brought to their lives without being able to retaliate openly or on a large scale. For this new level of struggle they not only had to establish their union securely at the work place, but also had to reach out to obtain economic and social solidarity with those in other work places of the same industry. An entire communications network had to be created. To accomplish this, the workers needed to acquire very rapidly a second ingredient: a source of writing, legal, and other technical skills, which were ready and available in the radicalized sections of the middle class. Freed to leave their class mainly by the Russian Revolution and the plague of unemployment that had hit the middle classes, intellectuals in hundreds of large and small industrial cities offered themselves to the industrial-union revolution. Although radical political organizations many times played a role in this development, it was not essentially accomplished on the basis of national directives from the side of either the workers or the intellectuals. Who made the first contact with whom is not important for the discussion here. What is vital is that the basis for an industrial-union network stretching over the US and Canada began with independent alliances between workers and radicalized intellectuals on a city-by-city and region-by-region basis.

By 1935, the viability of the industrial unions had been proven to the point that a section of the labor bureaucracy was compelled to recognize and incorporate the movement. Rebellions and revolts in the steel plants had already forced the companies to improve conditions somewhat in the hope of keeping out unions, or co-opting the newly formed unions that had just appeared. Consequently the coal operators were often losing numbers of workers to nearby mills. John L. Lewis, leader of the United Mine Workers — the only large, fully industrial union on the continent — thus

found his own position unstable and needed unions in steel particularly with which his own union could deal easily. As the independent and often federally-chartered union locals demonstrated the inevitability of unionization in mass production and transportation, Lewis through the coal miners provided the third ingredient. To establish industrial unionism on a North American continent officially dominated by Anglo-Saxon law, tradition, and values, the UMW provided funds and personnel for the creation of a national organizational structure in the US and Canada. When Lewis and the cadre of young organizers with whom he had surrounded himself inside the AFL's Committee for Industrial Organization walked out of the old federation's convention to set up the independent CIO, they signaled the end of the automatic domination of the aristocratic building-trades unions over organized labor.

We know today that the combination of new levels of mechanization and computer science which have come to be identified as automation have caused and will cause further technological unemployment and dislocation. We know that automation de-skills workers, technicians, and professionals. These realities have been argued by liberals and radicals to the point at which they bore readers of liberal and radical publications: To continue simply agitating against these negative results makes a humdrum cliché of human tragedy. But what are the feelings and attitudes of Canadians and Americans who have experienced automation, or who sense that automation could soon reach into and disrupt life in their work places? What shocks have occurred and what forces have been broken loose? Is it possible that the terror of automation exists without at the same time freeing the thinking of those in the experience to consider new ideas involving basic institutional change? What new ideas are already being "batted around" among past, present, and future victims of automation? What new ideas does the new objective and subjective condition call forth for possible testing that have not as yet been articulated or conceptualized? Does automation present the possibility

for the creation of new vehicles for social change as did the introduction of assembly-line techniques? Charles R. Walker claims that when a work place changes from labor-intensive to capital-intensive or continuous-process techniques, there is a consequent shift in the attitudes of workers: They want to increase their powers of participation in the work-place decision-making processes. (See Walker's article in the Harvard Business Review, January-February 1958.)

What other possible positive conditions are created by automation? We must ask if automation has for example done anything to create the basis for a new alliance between sections of the working and middle classes. If so, why, on what magnitude and level, and what type or types of organizational vehicles are needed to make it operationally progressive and stable? Even potential answers to these questions will develop our ability to stimulate enthusiasm among our public and ourselves.

A historic parallel of considerable importance exists. Eric Hobsbawm asserts that the period of industrialization in Britain (roughly 1790 to 1840) and the present period of automation are more like each other than like any of the periods in-between, from the point of view of the eruptive changes in working-class and middle-class consciousness and work life and the consequent potential alliances between the two classes. Industrialization created violent ruptures in the nature of work and the ability of workers to make decisions about the planning of work processes, creating technological unemployment for both cottage-industry workers and middlemen. In the resulting "Luddism", middlemen joined workers in the bands that roamed in search of new machines to destroy. The destruction was not, however, wanton as many historians have reported. Rather, the bands directed their activities against the giant looms built for factory use, but not against the smaller ones in use in the cottages. Giant harvesting machines were dismantled and their full introduction delayed until the 1840s, when an expanded labor market could absorb the surpluses created by

the new machines. All labor-saving machines were considered reactionary as long as their introduction hurt the human condition of the workers. The British Government put a larger army into the field against the bands than it sent against Napoleon. American socialists have yet to appreciate the importance of this parallel, to integrate the ideas of Hobsbawm, E. P. Thompson, and George Rude on Luddism and mob action into a view of current reality.

PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS

The unionization and radicalization of workers in the public sector, particularly at the state and city levels, is directly related to the national crisis in urban and suburban centers. In the last two decades city professionals like social workers and teachers have been forced to do the dirty work of the society in a way similar to that of police. Professionalism survives with great difficulty and sacrifice. In sections of many of our cities it is impossible for city employees to perform their jobs without fear. To solve the tax-base crisis would provide only partial solution to the problems of city, county, and state employees. For them a decent work life cannot be obtained without a democratic stabilization of city and suburban life. In this fact, more than their low salaries, is the reason for their radicalization, present and future. The relation of state employees to city and county employees is not primarily the indirect one created by conflict over allotment of tax monies. The most substantial section of state employees in most industrial states is involved in mental health. Life inside a mental-health hospital provides a stark realization of the actual conditions of city life. Mental-health employees work every day with humans cast off by the cities. Often they see people forced in because ghetto police can use the institution to get around habeas corpus. In only a slightly different way, the employees in state penal and reform institutions get the same underview of society. It is no accident that AFSCME is among the most socially-oriented of unions, and that the

union's members are among the most involved in politics as conducted today. At the same time, it should be no surprise to Marxists that the same unionists are also the most ready for a progressive third-party development.

Despite wages that are in most instances below official poverty levels, the primary motivation for the new unionism comes with the need to improve working conditions. Monetary considerations enter, but in the following way: Only a society willing to treat its mentally ill and most uprooted in a decent and human fashion could offer decent working conditions for the employees providing the direct treatment. Skeptics may ask if there is such a consciousness among state employees in general. The consciousness varies, as in all situations, but is verified by the increasingly political character of the new public unionism. It is the task of socialists to make direct contact and help to provide concrete proof.

An understanding of the new public unionism and of the angers and enthusiasms behind it demands recognition of still another phenomenon only indirectly related to low wages. For over two decades, from the beginning of World War II until the mid-1960s, civil servants were bilked through a set of widely-held myths. During the Depression and before, millions of working-class and middle-class civil-service workers traded off higher hourly wages for what amounted to a guaranteed annual wage. But in the War and for twenty years afterward, near-full employment destroyed these workers' "trade-off" advantage. In private industry workers were now employed year-round, while civil servants were stuck without the right to strike, generally without union protection, and with what appeared to be permanently depressed wages. As the myth crumbled, government workers at all levels grew impatient with life-long commitments to compromise on what were socially considered low-status, stodgy jobs.

The radicalization of the American working class in the 1930s had found little open expression from public workers. Now, with workers in the private sector, they seek new

values and demand more gratification from their work. A small, tidy home with a good roof, a lawn, and a surrounding fence is no longer considered the formula for happiness. Public workers are in fact, by the recentness of their self-earned release from old prejudices and by their objective position in a social crisis, in a vanguard position of today's class struggle. Their ranks contain occupations ranging from professional categories to blue-collar and unskilled classifications, including Third World Americans in great numbers. The bulk of them perform their labors in the large central city cores abandoned at night by most people of middle and upper incomes. They do away with the city's refuse, run the transportation systems, and provide all the services necessary for the performance of business and industry during the day and the entertainment services of the evening. As the bedroom communities begin to fill, the cities are left to them and in a sense appear to be theirs — a quite different condition from three decades ago when the middle and upper classes maintained the constant visibility in the "downtowns".

Historically, great advances have been registered in the class struggle on a national basis, within particular industries; but the most dramatic manifestations of advance have been within single metropolitan areas. The Seattle General Strike of 1919 was the highest point reached in the class struggle of that time. The San Francisco and Minneapolis General Strikes of the 1930s encouraged the growth of the CIO. The Oakland General Strike led by city transportation workers and truckers after World War II raised the level of its participants tenfold more than those whose industry-wide strikes created the 1946 Strike Wave. Since the 1940s, no private-industry struggles have individually shaken the ruling class as much as those of public employees at the city level. In city after city, as in St. Louis in June of 1971, union officials not known for revolutionary conduct have entered city council chambers with council in session to observe crucial votes of city monies and, after witnessing decisions that denied their members' demands, exited to

make immediate strike calls.

In Spring 1970, a strike of San Francisco city nurses threatened changes in the city charter and thereby threatened the established bargaining system for all city workers. A near-general strike situation resulted. For short periods over a four-day span sections of Lower Market Street were used for workers' parking. Mayor Aliotto owed his office to labor support, and particularly to the longshoremen and Teamsters. He was faced with a city council that was unwilling to make the necessary concessions that would allow him to maintain his support. The longshoremen and truckers became involved in support of the city workers, but it was the work stoppage of the city transportation employees that began to shut down the entire city. That strike was called not by direct mandate from the ranks, but by an international representative of the Transport Workers Union in New York City. If the terms spelled out in the city charter were manipulated by the city fathers in order to beat the nurses, his union's officialdom might have had future trouble getting their cut of the "city pie" in the usual manner. They bureaucratically issued a strike call. With the threat of a general strike, Aliotto was able to go to the city council and obtain the concessions that would keep the peace.

The Memphis Garbage Workers' (AFSCME) strike of 1967 offers another important but too-little-known case. It is improbable that any strike of several hundred industrial workers in the South could have propelled into motion a large section of a major Southern city's population. The tragic assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in connection with the strike has tended to push aside recognition that even without King's murder the strike would still have had regional, national, and international significance. American labor has not obtained full value from this experience, due to the failure of AFSCME to bring full organizational support to the garbage workers in the early stages of their unionization effort. But again, this should not dull the importance of the development and what it presages.

An even more dramatic example of the explosiveness of "routine" unionism among public employees is provided by Manhattan workers over the last five years. Here as elsewhere, negotiations and strikes of teachers, sanitation workers and police, subway and food-produce workers all immediately take on a political character and challenge governmental authority — all the more so because of the breakdown of legitimacy and credibility of governmental authority at the national level. (Big city mayors, it should be noted in passing, have become national figures of importance, and city workers are in a position to make or destroy their aspirations for national office.) In last year's strike of New York sewage workers, water workers, and bridge tenders, called by locals of the AFSCME and the Teamsters, the purported original strategy of the unions was to first shut off the water in Rockefeller Center and Wall Street, as a direct warning to Governor Rockefeller, who was holding up monies for already negotiated pensions. If that failed to be effective, the sewage systems were to be shut down, followed by the shut-down of many of the bridges connecting Manhattan to the mainlands. This strategy was supposed to have become fouled when the bridge workers pulled out first, thus creating an immediate near-general strike. The results were instantly felt in public worker-management relations across the nation. Plans for collective-bargaining bills pending in many state legislatures were halted in panic and indecision. Not for some time will the full effects of this new spectre on the power establishment be known.

"PROFESSIONALS" AND THE NEW UNIONS

Volumes have now been written about the appearance of "professional" unions on a mass basis during the 1960s. For socialists, there are some especially pertinent aspects to this phenomenon. There is now an independent base in organized labor for artists and intellectuals who have a working-class orientation and are no longer dependent on

labor officialdom. Moreover, because school teachers and social workers particularly are simultaneously city workers and "professionals", these sectors provide a bridge between the unskilled and semi-skilled workers and highly trained white-collar workers.

Simultaneous with the appearance of mass "professional" unions has been an increase in unionization among other white-collar employees and technical workers. The unionization of the engineering staff at Chrysler Corporation is particularly significant. The effect of unionization of all white-collar sectors will considerably change the nature of future class struggles. During the labor struggles of the 1930s the national power establishment could count on active or passive support for its position among the counterparts of those who are now themselves forming unions and becoming involved in strikes, frequently breaking injunctions. This traditional popular base of support for the ruling class within the general public has now been visibly narrowed.

Professionals have been organizing into unions for many of the same reasons that have caused a new radicalization among public and blue-collar workers. Technological advances and the long period of relative full employment have raised expectations of the rewards they expect from life and work. Many of them join unions with untarnished enthusiasm and very high hopes. They find, however, that their unions are run by men who do not share their enthusiasm, but rather run these institutions on the basis of ideas that are very nearly those of the labor officialdom in the long-established unions. More than most blue-collar workers, they expect unions to be politically involved. The salaries of many professionals are determined by legislation as in the case of teachers and social workers. Freed from the control of conservative bureaucrats, they have conducted struggles in which the best union veterans could take pride. If corraled by a capable but traditional union bureaucracy, an incident such as Oceanhill-Brownsville can result. But even in developments like the latter the tremendous new

power of professionals is clear. The meaning of that power has not been integrated into the perspectives of American socialists, either in relation to the forces for progress or in relation to the mobilization for reaction within the middle class that is bound to occur as the rulers seek counter-organizational vehicles comparable to the new unions.

The growth of the number of white-collar, technical, and professional workers in the labor force and their radicalization has led some radical sociologists like Lucien Goldman, Serge Mallet, and Andre Gorz to develop theories on "the new working class", and there is now a sizeable body of literature on the subject. Almost all the new theories contain revisions of Marxism. The failure of socialists to deal with these theories seriously and in detail has created an ideological clutter, confusing those in search of radical solutions. The competition they represent, however, presents only one of the reasons why the new phenomenon must be dealt with. Contrary to the belief of some, the new radicalization in the middle class is not simply the result of the mechanization, routinization, and computerization of what formerly were relatively gratifying career positions. With the growth of the demand for workers with greater amounts of formal education and the simultaneous deterioration of the quality of work experience has come the inevitable social response. The system as it is equips ever larger numbers of people with sophisticated skills and then places them in jobs where they are denied the dignity of making the most elementary decisions connected with their work. Consequently they develop many of the same strivings and attitudes as workers on heavy industrial assembly-line jobs. Thus, as never before there exists a basis for working-class and middle-class unity. Moreover, it is possible to project hypotheses about the actual merging of sections of the two classes in actuality as well as in basic interests and needs. This both supplements and complements the Hobsbawm thesis mentioned above.

Still another and different problem of ideological clutter exists due to the growth of white-collar and professional

jobs. Liberal social critics have for more than a decade been using official census statistics in order to announce the shrinking percentage of blue-collar jobs in the labor force. Often gleefully, they predict that the number of industrial workers will shrink to a point at which they are no more than a hindering minority. Some of the statistical juggling goes so far as to project the virtual extinction of industrial workers, and is generally accompanied by the glib conclusion that the necessity to consider Marxism seriously has been ended once and for all. The vulgarizations are relatively easy to deal with, particularly with the growth of working-class militancy. But in varying degrees these theories have created cobwebs of doubt in the minds of many. Andrew Levinson has recently provided socialists with a valuable tool to begin the needed clean-up. In "The Working-Class Majority" (Nation, December 13, 1971), he exposes the myth of the middle-class majority. Among other things he unjuggles the statistics of the Census Bureau, which has been classifying distribution and service workers in the white-collar category; garbage workers, waiters, waitresses, elevator operators, municipal workers, and many more as "service workers"; and farm workers in a special category. By placing all manual workers in the same category, Levinson finds that over 56% of all jobs in the labor force are blue-collar in content. Consideration of white-collar and professional jobs aside, he has in brief supplied arguments that revisionists of Marxism cannot stand against — providing that socialists expand upon his analysis.

IV. Youth and the War

Analysis of radicalization or change in attitudes among working-class youth has yet to be assembled. The best opportunity so far provided to allow a start is presented by the crisis earlier this year in the General Motors plant at Lordstown, Ohio. The Lordstown workers, whose average age is 24, have supplied the first pure test of the generation

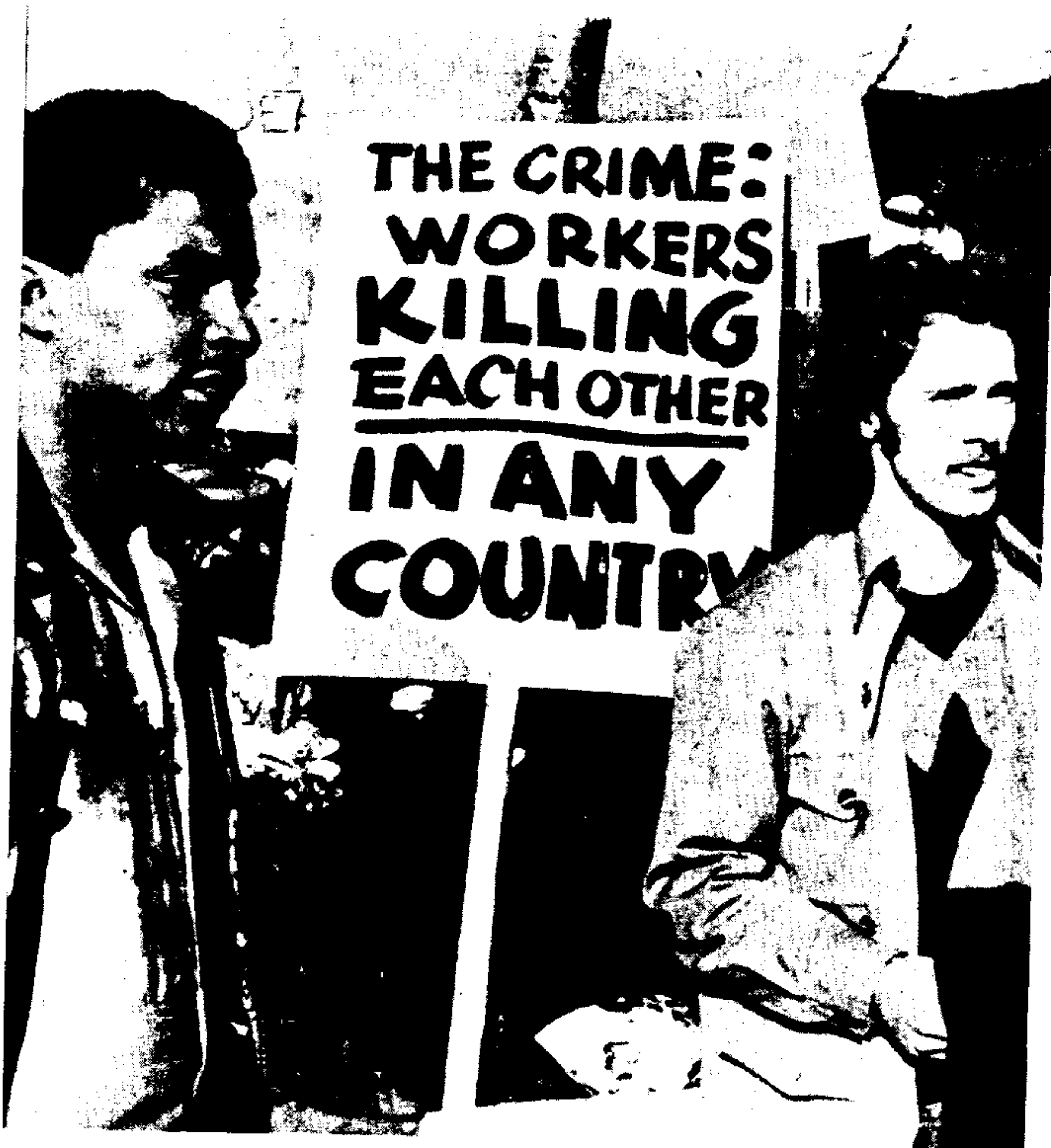
of workers who entered the work force in the last decade and who experienced the accelerated motion for societal change that began in the mid-1960s. The weakness of the test lies precisely in its purity. Few work places have so low an average age, and no other assembly-line technology is as "advanced" as that in Lordstown. Nevertheless, it is the one real test available. The strike occurred in the largest corporation in the world and in the industry that has made the United States unique among industrial countries, for in all other industrial nations the heaviest capital investment is in a producer's-goods industry. For these reasons as well as the questions posed for the entire working class and society by the participants, the Lordstown strike, its background, and its aftermath demand full study.

From press coverage alone it is known that the Lordstown workers made attempts at the beginnings of working-class solidarity both on a national and on an international basis. They wanted to send a rank-and-file delegation to the ILWU to get the longshoremen to extend their strike in order to temporarily keep off the market the small Japanese cars that compete with Vega. They also wanted to send a rank-and-file delegation from their plant to Japan to talk to auto workers about the necessity of establishing humanized work standards in auto production on an international basis. Their attempts were frustrated by the leadership of the UAW, but the important aspect is the effort to break out of established, conservative, and official methods of labor struggle.

Prior to the outbreak of the strike the GM management went to press with elaborate stories about how their work force was attempting to restrict the output of autos. Just before and during the strike, the media interviewed numbers of Lordstown workers about their attitudes toward their jobs. With no further information, it is already clear that the new generation of workers has in some respects junked the work ethic that their parents and more-distant ancestors developed prior to World War II.

Most important, the Lordstown crisis revealed a widespread basis for a real consciousness of class. In their fight against "Gee-mad" (GMAD), the General Motors Assembly Division, and the computerization of work they have made clear: "We don't want to end up like our mothers and fathers who have worked for you, worn out by the time we reach middle age. We want to make this a better job and a better life." Contained in this message is the realization that they are stuck in industrial employment, not far from the further realization that the division of labor is institutionalized on the basis of class and perpetuated largely on a hereditary basis. Secondly, the Lordstown strike momentarily revealed what American mass-production workers have been attempting to accomplish since the 1930s: the escalation of the drive against the speed-up to a drive for obtaining power over the standards of production. The gigantic amount of publicity given Lordstown made it impossible to avoid this revelation or bury it (as has been done before) through institutionalized collective bargaining. Finally, the national press attention served to dramatize the counter-cultural life-styles of young workers. Perhaps no other single event has done so much to increase tolerance of such styles among older generations of workers.

In many instances it is clear that the appearance of counter-cultural styles in the young working class is related to the War in Southeast Asia. Viet vets appear at plants in increasing numbers with clothing and hair styles more similar to their middle-class peers than to their parents' styles. In general, they have become accepted and respected by older workers. Yet they have no organizations, forums in the unions, or other vehicles to talk out their experiences among themselves. Unions have done nothing to help assimilate them socially or to help them overcome the trauma of their war experience, and politicals have made no apparent effort to push the matter. Yet it is certain that these veterans, like those of previous wars, have a commonality of experience and will seek to establish some sort of common external identity.



Fifth Estate photo by Ken Fireman

In the struggles of the 1930s, one of the major bases for reactionary attacks on unions were the war veteran organizations. Whole posts of the American Legion commonly acted as strike breakers, as in the infamous attack on San Francisco maritime workers in 1934. Today, on the other hand, Asian war veteran committees in local unions around the country could become the basis for a new labor-oriented veteran organization which could, among other things, reunite the working-class and middle-class youths who fought that war. Continued recession and deepening economic crisis will further unite the veterans as an autonomous force. If progressive and socialist forces fail to gain these young workers' allegiance, reactionaries will make their own bid more successfully. An attentiveness to working-class youth

as an entity in itself as well as a part of the total work force is essential to success in this struggle. As in other areas, young socialist workers have a great deal of listening and learning to do so that they may in turn teach others who do not have the same benefit of exposure.

Copyright by Stan Weir

The preceding article represents excerpts from a longer discussion prepared for International Socialists, somewhat revised for publication in Radical America.

Literature Available from Radical America Includes:

Counter-Planning on the Shop Floor, by Bill Watson: Reprint of popular RA article depicting the creativity of workers in an auto plan maintaining their independence vis-a-vis management. (16 pp., 10¢)

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New Literature Catalog Free. 1878 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Ma. 02140.

Primary (Informal) Work Groups

By. M. Guttman

Recent developments in American labor have struck a decisive blow against the myth of the "satisfied" and "affluent" worker and have silenced those in the midst of proclaiming a new era of "industrial peace", or, as Daniel Bell expressed it, the "Welfare State of the Proletariat". (1) Beginning with the slowdowns and walkouts in steel in the early 1950s and the wildcat contract rejections that have plagued auto since 1955, the rising militancy of the rank and file has manifested itself in almost every corner of American industry. The Philadelphia Teamsters wildcat of 1965, which saw guerrilla warfare by truckers on the Pennsylvania highways; the San Francisco painters revolt of the same year, which ended only with the assassination of its leader, Dow Wilson; the unofficial strikes of the Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio coal miners in 1965-66; the airline mechanics' five-week strike in 1966, continued in the face of industry, union, and government pressures against it.

These are just a few of the eruptions that signaled the end of what had appeared to be an era of worker apathy during the "Fabulous Fifties". In addition, the scores of localized revolts forced changes in the top offices of half a dozen unions, including the United Steel Workers, United Rubber Workers, International Union of Electrical Workers, and American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. There is not now a major union that has not had

its experience with the "new" attitudes of the ranks. There has been a disappearance of the old work ethic. Contract rejections remain high. Wildcat and "quickie" strikes are commonplace. In private industry the workers have found that the rebellion forms they tried in the 1960s did not force their leadership to move to the degree necessary to make the fights that would again make their unions effective against the employers. Dissatisfaction remains, awaiting the development of new methods of struggle to force union officials to lead, and come up with bold new programs, or move out of the way. Wage controls have not intimidated any section of the workers. In the public sector a new dimension has been added to the class struggle. To win straight union demands, city employees in New York and San Francisco in the last two years have conducted near general strikes. Moreover, professional workers and white-collar workers, including telephone workers, museum workers, symphony musicians, and teachers, plus postal and other federal employees, are forming unions in labor struggles that rival those of the 1930s. The drive to unionize includes even the policemen. (2) It has become increasingly clear that, while some of these rank-and-file rebellions have contained demands for higher wages, many of them have not, and the principal demands have been for better working conditions and against speed-up, layoffs, and compulsory overtime. In those cases where the wage issue was important, as in the airline mechanics' strike, the demand is more often than not for simple parity and equity with similar occupations in other industries, or for a raise to offset inflation. (3)

While most of these labor insurgencies have been duly reported in the national press, coverage has largely ended at the headline. Little attempt has been made to analyze either the detailed or the overall structure of these revolts. Both the union leadership and the intellectual community around it have remained, so it seems, strangely silent. (4) In fact, however, the silence is not so strange, for the recent revolts in labor have brought into relief the fact

that the unions, with their huge press, and the industrial social scientists, with all their research, have produced a relatively tiny body of literature which deals with the actual organization of a strike, or even a union. The union press, says a major labor historian, exists chiefly to "glorify the leaderships in power and to defend their policies. Their historical value is chiefly as a source of viewpoints, policies, and official programs advanced by union leaders." (5) The majority of industrial sociologists remain wedded to the concepts of "industrial democracy", which sees management and union working out their differences in a friendly fashion, or at least well-manneredly, over the collective-bargaining table and through the grievance procedure. (6) Clearly, in this framework there is little room for wildcats, slowdowns, and other direct-action forms of struggle.

Literature dealing with the sociology of the strike, such as it exists, seems to confirm the idea, illustrated by the recent strike waves, that, contrary to popular viewpoint, it is issues of working conditions, line speed or equivalent, and job security (including seniority) that are uppermost in the strikers' minds. In Alvin Gouldner's Wildcat Strike, written in 1954 and the only work of its kind, the strike was initially caused largely by a change in the supervisory management that created hostility among plant workers by breaking up established working patterns. The fact that the wage issue assumed some real importance as the strike went on, Gouldner puts to largely outside and structural pressures; the demand for higher wages tended to pacify wives and creditors, it unified the various unsatisfied elements of the plant, it was a more easily handled factor to bargain with management for, and it tended to give the strike more legitimacy in the union bureaucracy's eyes. (7)

Bernard Karsh's unique work Diary of a Strike deals with a somewhat different situation in which a plant is organized from the outside by a member of the staff of a large AFL union. In this particular instance, the wage scale of the company was far below par, and the fact that this was

forcing down wage scales generally in the area led to the organizing drive by the union. However, even in this case, where the wage issue was decidedly central, it was not the deciding factor for many of the workers who joined the union and supported the strike. Despite the relatively high importance of the wage issue, as compared to other strike situations, gripes about rough treatment from supervisors, lack of job security, and the general run-around given a grieving worker were just as important to rallying workers behind the union. (8)

Even more revealing in Karsh's book is the fact that, far more than their own belief in the issues, the larger section of the rank and file rallied to the union in support of certain key respected leaders who had decided to join the union. These individuals had been work group leaders long before the union began the organizing drive, and the unofficial power accorded them in the plant by the other workers was an essential factor in the organization and maintenance of union support. (9)

This suggests that central to each worker's mind was not a particular issue or set of issues as such, but rather a desire to conform to the decisions of his or her informal work group and, by extension, the decisions of that group's informally delegated spokespersons. In Gouldner's study, in fact, it was the attempt of the supervisors to take over the control that the workers considered within the bounds of their own informal organizational structure that caused the primary tensions.

While Karsh's and Gouldner's studies deal only with workers under special stress conditions, there is ample evidence in other academic studies to suggest strongly that the discipline of informal work groups has a major effect on day-to-day relations on the shop floor. Ever since the Hawthorne Experiments at Chicago Western Electric in the 1920s and 1930s, sociologists of the management-dominated "worker-satisfaction" school have come to the conclusion that worker participation in decision-making is necessary to maintain and increase worker morale. Attempts to achieve

this within the management framework have not succeeded too well, however; at a certain point the autonomy of the workers begins to threaten "management's rights" and the experiment ends. (10) This leaves open the question of the real potential of the organizational powers of the work group, but has proven fairly conclusively that, as far as it has been allowed to function, it can easily take over the work-area functions of management. Another factor which contributes to the failure of management-worker relations schemes is that workers prefer to be left alone to do their work without interference from management, even if it is presented as a helping hand:

Just as the factory worker, when he was at school, regarded the teachers as management and went on strike or slowdown against their well-intentioned or class-biased efforts, so in the factory he does not take the glad hand held out by the personnel department. Indeed, while the manager believes that high production attests to high morale, the opposite may be the case...if the workers feel united in solidarity and mutual understanding — which they would define as "high morale" — the conditions exist for facilitating slowdowns and the systematic punishment of rate-busters. (11)

The system by which the work group disciplines members is complicated and often very subtle. The principal weapon is social isolation. Those who won't go along with the group have no one to talk to, joke with, or eat with. They are barred from the shop grapevine, which often has important news. The work shortcuts learned by other workers over the years will remain unknown to them. Further, they or he or she will receive little help from management, who will note their lack of co-operation with other workers and will frown upon their inability to "get along" with the majority, thus unconsciously aiding the work group in its restriction of output. The non-conformer(s), working under the hostile gaze of both peers and management, finds work far more

difficult and unrewarding. In the end the "rate-buster" often ends up earning less than the members who have jointly restricted their output, and paradoxically, his or her level of output sometimes falls below the norm. (12) In order to assure a steady rate of production and thus escape the scrutiny of the higher-ups, the foremen or forewomen will often aid the workers in production restriction, and in this way they serve as a buffer between the work group and the rest of management, and secure the rule of the work group over its own production. (13)

The reason for restriction of work output is not limited to the desire to maintain levels of incentive pay. Output restriction discipline serves much more than a purely economic function. The function of discipline within the work group takes on a social tone as well, as the comment of a worker will attest :

Sure, I think most of us would admit that we could double our take-home if we wanted to shoot the works, but where's the percentage? A guy has to get something out of life. Now my little lady would rather have me in good humor than have the extra money. The way it works out none of us are going to be Van-Asterbilts, so why not get a little pleasure out of living and working together? (14)

From the standpoint of the worker, the control by the work group of production is closely bound up with wage stability, job security, working conditions, social interaction, work satisfaction, relation to management, and even psychological satisfaction. There is no clear line that can be drawn among the actions of the work group or among the factors they affect. It is for this reason that any encroachment by management which severely attacks the authority patterns traditionally established by the work group can cause an incident or conflict which has the potential to spread to all areas of friction in the shop, and cause a considerable lowering of shop morale.

To protect itself from such attacks from the company management, the work group uses a variety of devices, the most visible of which is the union. The union is formed when the work group realizes a common area of interest exists with other work groups. Having established this bond, the work group does not disappear into the larger grouping of the union, but maintains its autonomy. The work group's relationship to the union is described by a team of top government labor analysts :

Our observations suggest that participation in formal union activity — such as attendance at meetings, voting in elections, and serving in office — is not the full measure of awareness and interest on the part of the membership; that on the contrary, these formal activities, although carried on by only a few of the members, are outward manifestations of an interest in and awareness of union affairs of most of the shop society. The so-called "active members" who participate in union affairs are also in close touch with the rest of their fellows in the shop. There is no organized selection of the active participants, but they are in fact representatives of the whole group, and so we call them "informal representatives". The shop society and the union organization are related to each other through the informal representation of the members in the shop by the active participants in formal union affairs. (15)

This reveals that formal participation in union activities is only one area of real shop interest, and hardly the best indicator. Far more revealing, however, is the fact that the average rank and filer receives his or her information by way of shop talk with his or her informal work group and its informal representatives to the union. This tends to color the worker's evaluation of union policies not by their effect on the union as a whole so much as by their effect on his or her work group. Another set of industrial-relations

analysts believe that the views of a worker toward the policies of his or her own work group are far more important than his or her views of the union :

It was quite clearly understood in each of these factories that a man might think as he pleased about labor-union organization, but that he must conform to the commonly accepted pattern of output restriction. (16)

The point is even clearer in light of the fact that the union in question was working with management to break down the output restriction system. (17)

A split of interests along work-group lines within the union occurs repeatedly at contract-negotiation time. In his article on "Fractional Bargaining Patterns and Wildcat Strikes", David R. Hampton explains this process :

Bargaining by work groups and subsections of management, or fractional bargaining, as the process is sometimes called, arises because the divergent aspirations and powers of multiple units within complex unions and corporations meet over issues about which there is disagreement. These dynamics exist within collective-bargaining relationships and are analytically separable from them. (18)

Further :

Slowdowns and wildcat strikes may also be viewed as tactical variations in the exercise of power by work groups in fractional bargaining. Inasmuch as containment of disruptive tactics is a necessary sub-goal for bargaining relationships which are to continue, identification of factors which condition work groups to engage in disruptions poses a problem of general interest. (19)

It is clear that for the union leadership to effectively negotiate a contract, sell it to the workers, and maintain its enforcement for its duration, the power of the fractional bargaining units — that is, the work groups — must be broken. The process by which leaders of troublesome work groups are weeded out, often enough with the help of management, is as old as industrial unionism itself, as this case study from Golden and Ruttenberg's The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy indicates :

On Sunday, March 2, 1941, Stanley Orlosky, life-long union worker, a pipe fitter in a steel mill, was expelled from the union after trial on charges of "violation of obligation to the Steel Workers Organizing Committee" The talking for which Stanley was fired consisted of charging the incumbent union officers with "selling the men down the river" Stanley's leadership was essential to the establishment of the union against bitter resistance, but after it had been fully accepted by management such leadership was a handicap to the development of co-operative union - management relations. (20)

This process of elimination of "irresponsible" elements of rank-and-file leadership does indeed promote industrial "peace" of a sort, but at the cost to the union of undermining the very base of its support, the power of the work group and the authority of its leaders. Authority within the union, therefore, must be transferred bureaucratically to the upper stratum of union officialdom, an action which facilitates the negotiation of a uniform contract, but also creates a political and social cleavage between the ranks and the bureaucrats. In order to maintain support or even acceptance among the ranks in the absence of a real political and social base, the bureaucracy of American unions have increasingly adopted a stance of pressing for the most broadly based, tangible, and easily negotiated demands,

principally those centered on wages, vacations, and fringe benefits. In the period 1939-1960 the tremendous rise of national productivity made it comparatively easy to gain such demands, and the atomization of traditional work groups during World War II and the atmosphere of political repression during and after the Korean War kept rank-and-file resistance at a minimum. As the following quote from David McDonald, former president of United Steel Workers, illustrates, the myth of the generally satisfied but wage-conscious worker was solidly entrenched in the uppermost section of the union bureaucracy:

I found solace in the conviction that the impact of almost forty-two years of a philosophy learned at the knee of John Lewis and administered first with Phil Murray and then on my own could never be lost on the workingmen of the steel industry. That was my satisfaction — that and the knowledge that there was little left to seek for my steelworkers except periodic wage adjustments. We'd done it all ... I knew I was reaching, and therefore I knew also that the Steelworkers had achieved just about everything a union could provide them with under Murray and me. (21)

In this light, the present period of rank-and-file revolt in organized labor can be seen as an attempt by the rank-and-file work groups that have reconstituted themselves since the late 1950s to regain some of the power and authority they lost within organized industry under thirty years of bureaucratic leadership. This struggle is an absolutely necessary one for industrial workers, who have been experiencing a marked decline in working conditions and real hourly wages in the last ten years, and increasing unemployment in the last five, a set of conditions which the present union leadership and institution of unionism has been ineffective in fighting. The "new era of labor revolt" is likely to continue until it places in union office a leader-

ship which concerns itself more with the needs and demands of the work group than with the sanctity of the collective agreement with management. And, this is impossible given the present government and structure of the unions, given the present government of contracts, the compulsory arbitration of grievances, and unconditional no-strike pledges. The pattern of the rank-and-file revolts indicates that institutions as well as the people who lead them will have to be changed, and that the process will take place on a scale as broad as, if not broader than, the upheavals that formed the industrial unions in the 1930s.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Barbash : Unions and Union Leadership, Page 46.
- (2) Weir : New Era of Labor Revolt, and Jacobs : UAW Settles With Ford (1967).
- (3) Weir : New Era of Labor Revolt, Page 3.
- (4) Ibid., Pages 19-20.
- (5) Preis : Labor's Giant Step, Page 522.
- (6) See Blumberg : Industrial Democracy, and McDonald : Union Man.
- (7) Gouldner : Wildcat Strike, Pages 34-37.
- (8) Karsh : Diary of a Strike, Pages 29-45.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) See Zalesnik : Workers' Satisfaction and Development.
- (11) Reisman : The Lonely Crowd, Page 107.
- (12) Collins : Restriction of Output, Pages 9-12.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) Ibid.
- (15) Kovner : Shop Society and the Union, Page 2.
- (16) Collins : Restriction of Output, Page 8.
- (17) Ibid., Page 7.
- (18) Hampton : Fractional Bargaining, Page 100.
- (19) Ibid.
- (20) Golden : Dynamics of Industrial Democracy, Pages 60-61.
- (21) McDonald : Union Man, Page 324.

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walking around

My leg asleep dreaming it is a white fish
the other twisting insomniac beneath the thigh
the one leg bulging thinking it is a root
the other shaking thinking it has been trapped
when the one leg is arrested it is demanded that the other leg
account for itself
it cannot account for itself it has been asleep

the legs are clapped in irons and sent to the tombs
there they grow very close feeling they know each other for the
first time

in prison they become thin and pale but very steady
at night they pace and plot or sleep dreamlessly
or dream they are transfixed inside a milky diamond
one day they escape disguised in plumber's pants

the streets glow with fury but they are not found
police songs play on all the radios
they keep moving leaving no footprints
always the memory of silence inside the milky diamond
soon the authorities assume they are dead

after getting a good tan they move to Hoboken
they find work the one making slippers the other boots
by now they have hidden thoroughly they have changed their names
the one is called Patience to Fight the other
Impatient to Win

Coughing, coughing I am always coughing in New York
nothing but rain and dogshit and people falling down
and trucks playfully banging each other
looking out on nothing else, a city of nothing else
except for a few cabs, gesturing like yellow fingers of a
shattered hand
and below, the subways, the people in them coughing
only the pressure of coughing holding up the city

an end to it

Suddenly all the
subways slide back to their origins
the husks of our names swarm out of us
our hands move toward one another like tiny maggots
from the mouths of men and women alike
small mottled cigars crawl out like iguanas

necessity

The threads were taken out of dollar bills and the tapestry
woven of them
the picture was one color and called Necessity
it was put into the sky which was made into a museum
its threads were counted and their names given to children
the things that occluded it were carefully catalogued
what was beyond it was uninteresting
which was where the animals came from

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