

Newsletter of

# THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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Edited by MICHAEL HARRINGTON

## A Way Forward for Liberals

Americans for Democratic Action, the largest and most important liberal organization in the United States, meets in convention this month. When ADA endorsed Eugene McCarthy in 1968 and thereby lost the support of the trade unionists who follow George Meany, it was widely said that it had signed its death warrant. In the five years since then, ADA has confounded the obituary writers by adding thousands of new members and playing a lively and positive role in American politics. In anticipation of its convention we would like to develop two brief themes which may be of interest to its delegates.

First, liberals must now think of going beyond Keynes.

The New Deal was, of course, the greatest single triumph of American liberalism. Now, however, New Deal innovations have been so widely accepted that a Richard Nixon declares himself a Keynesian and uses New Deal techniques for corporate purposes. Therefore in the name of liberalism, liberals must think of advancing well beyond their own conventional wisdom.

Keynesian policies—and, for that matter, the Council of Economic Advisors under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson—assumed that the private sector and the market mechanism were the prime means of maximizing the common good. The government would intervene only to correct deficiencies in aggregate demand and to allow the corporations to function.

In fact this has become a system of massive public subsidies for a private sector which allocates resources and distributes rewards in ways which are often anti-social. The way in which American industry has resisted environmental controls is an obvious case in point. Therefore, liberals now must reconsider some questions of basic philosophy. ADA has, of course, long been in favor of national economic planning. Now, however, the underlying philosophy of that point of view—that more and more of the decisions which have been made in board rooms should now be subjected to the democratic process—must be integrated into the very center of the liberal program.

Secondly, if there is to be any hope of moving beyond liberalism, the split between anti-war liberals and Meany laborites must be healed. Now that the war in Vietnam is finally coming to an end—if the President can be stopped from bombing Indochina at will—that task may be a little easier.

In the struggles looking toward the 1974 Congressional and 1976 Presidential elections, Nixon's incredible mismanagement of the economy is going to be a major issue. If ADAers examine the program of the AFL-CIO in this

area, they will be surprised to see how closely it dovetails with their own. Thus there is a political and programmatic basis for reconciliation, difficult as that task is.

We do not want to simplify. The support given by AFL-CIO unionists to Rooney in his race against Al Lowenstein shows how deep the hostilities were. But if those, like the Coalition for a Democratic Majority or some of the more intransigent McGovernites, who want to purge either the anti-war or the AFL-CIO wings of the Democratic Party succeed, then the Republicans are a shoo-in in 1976.

We hope that American liberals realize that we have to bring together all the forces of social change in the next period—and that most emphatically must include the organized workers. ADA can be proud of its courageous stand in opposition to the war in 1967 and 1968; now it must be at least as audacious in helping the democratic Left win the peace. That means an end to a split which may have been necessary when it took place but cannot be allowed to dominate the politics of the Seventies.—M. H.

## The Grape Betrayal

Cesar Chavez' United Farmworkers Union is threatened with extinction because of a back-door, sweetheart contract signed by California Teamster officials and the grape growers of the Coachella valley. The grape pickers, formerly covered by the UFW contracts won through the long grape boycott of the late 60's, found themselves under Teamster contracts less than forty-eight hours after UFW contracts expired. No one consulted those workers; no one bothered to ask them if they wanted to switch unions. Some may insist that this is "just another dispute between two unions"; actually, it is a jurisdictional dispute only in the sense that a struggle between a legitimate workers' organization and a company association is. For that is what the Teamsters, yes the sometimes militant Teamsters, are in *this* case. They are behaving like a company union which sneaks behind the workers' backs to sign a dues check-off agreement with the bosses. And the Teamsters are so audacious that they are reestablishing what George Meany accurately describes as "the most vicious employer hiring practice—the use of labor contractors."

There is no question that the United Farm Workers union commands the allegiance of the farm workers themselves. Spontaneous strikes spread across the grape vineyards when the Teamster contracts were announced. Chavez is calling for supervised jurisdictional elections to show

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# Scapegoating Public Pensions

By David Kusnet

There was a report no one believed, a bill no one wanted, and enough high-powered propaganda to re-elect him four more times. Governor Rockefeller was leading the assault on public employee pensions.

As we go to press, a million-member coalition of public employees seems to have convinced the New York State Legislature to take a second, skeptical look at Rockefeller's plan to cut public pensions. But it was a close call.

Meanwhile, a national assault on public pensions is being geared up. The National League of Cities has urged mayors not to bargain with municipal unions over fringe benefits. In the new urban demonology, the grasping public employee is taking a place alongside the welfare chiseler.

Private business is looking for a way—any way—to divert attention from the scandal of workers retiring without the pensions they thought they'd paid for. And some state and local officials are also looking for scapegoats after they fell for the Nixon revenue-sharing shuck, and the cities remained in as tight a financial squeeze as ever.

The New York experience offers a guide to the strategy of irresponsible business and government leaders joined against public employees.

1. *Suspend collective bargaining.* In keeping with home rule, the State Legislature always approved pension plans negotiated by New York City and its unions. But, in the spring of 1971, Rockefeller ordered the Republican majority to vote down a pension package won by American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

## So, Who Needs Housing?

Peter Brennan's special assistant, Robert M. McGlotten, may have telegraphed the permanent abolition of federal housing and community development programs in an unnoticed speech. Addressing, of all people, the National Association of Minority Contractors, the Labor Department aide told the black builders not to gear their firms towards receiving public housing, Model Cities, or even school contracts. Instead, he continued, they should begin to compete for contracts in the prosperous \$130 billion industrial and construction field. "It's a whole new ballgame," McGlotten told the stunned audience, "and in construction, you go where the money is."

McGlotten didn't advise the contractors, mostly small firms that started to handle construction work resulting from urban social programs, how they can compete with larger, well-established commercial and industrial contractors. He did urge the contractors to begin paying dues to the three major associations for general, electrical and mechanical contractors. Discouraging dues-cheating, he said: "If you want to make money, you've got to get into them."

Footnote: after the eruption of the Meany-Brennan fight, McGlotten announced his plans to resign from the Labor Dept. and return to his position as assistant director of the AFL-CIO civil rights department.

PRIVATE PENSION = PENURY . . . "An institution built on human disappointment," says Senator Javits. "Comprehensive consumer fraud," reports Ralph Nader. No matter whom you listen to, even honest businessmen, private pensions are a scandal.

White Motor's Minneapolis-Moline Division, New Jersey's P. Ballantine and Sons, and Sargent Industries Cleveland division all closed down last year—and workers didn't get a cent in pensions. Nader estimates that only 10% of workers enrolled in private plans get benefits. Republican Senator Schweiker places the figure higher—6.3 million out of 6.9 million in a sample of 51 plans. And the average benefit is \$1,200 for workers who get pensions at all.

District Council 37 (coincidentally a leading opponent of his re-election bid). He appointed a commission to study the "pension problem."

2. *Orchestrate a civic outcry.* For two years every civic booster group warned public pensions would bankrupt the city. When the Governor's committee report came out, it was almost identical to the City Club's, the Chamber of Commerce's, and the rest. No wonder—its members were typical civic leaders—all white, male, from management backgrounds, over 60, and eligible for fat pensions.

3. *Take a far-out position, then offer to compromise.* Rockefeller's commission proposed a bill to remove pensions from collective bargaining. Its stated intent was to "prohibit further improvements" in the pensions. Current employees were to lose all their benefits that aren't guaranteed in the state constitution. And all new state, county, and city employees throughout New York would have been placed in a single new plan, giving them proportionately lower benefits when they retire thirty years from now than today's retirees enjoy. When the plan bombed in Albany, the Republicans offered to compromise if only the unions would also be reasonable.

But, before the legislative bargaining started, public hearings demolished the commission report. The report said most longtime employees "receive more in retirement than in working." In fact, only 1% of city retirees receive a 100% wage retirement benefit. Most get half of an average salary of \$8000—or near the poverty line. To read the report, you'd think the taxpayers pay every cent of the pensions when the plans are contributory. And, even at a low rate of interest, only \$64,000 need be put away to pay a retiree \$5000 annually for 20 years.

An early turning point in the pension battle came after the legislative Black Caucus spotted the racism in the two-class plan. Almost half of the newly hired public employees are black or Puerto Rican—and they'd do the same work, under the same conditions, but retire to inferior pensions. Too many of us think of public employees as white, middle class, overpaid, insensitive to minorities, and probably suburbanites. The pension battle should teach one lesson to the academics who attack city workers in the name of the poor. When scapegoat politics starts, no one knows who'll end up as the victim.

## Blacks In the Labor Movement

"We are not a civil rights movement . . . we are a workers' movement," said Bill Lucy in his opening address to the New York regional meeting of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists on April 14. Delegates to the Coalition's third regional meeting discussed plans to organize against the Nixon budget and plans for the Coalition's first national convention to be held late May in Washington.

The meeting opened with a sparsely attended press conference where Bill Lucy, Secretary-Treasurer of AFSCME, levelled blasts against the Nixon Administration ("a national administration that shows hostility to organized workers, the poor and the blacks") and Secretary of Labor Brennan ("who achieved infamy as a hard-hat trade unionist and who now stands shoulder to shoulder with the President against the aspirations of working Americans"). Lucy also criticized the labor movement ("... that has been piecemeal and lethargic in approaching the legitimate concerns of minority groups and the poor in this country").

Unions participating in this Coalition have roughly a million black workers, according to Lucy. With a steering committee that includes Nelson Jack Edwards, United Auto Workers, Charles Hayes, Amalgamated Meat Cutters, Cleveland Robinson, Distributive Workers, William Simons, AFT, it would seem that the Coalition has a real chance to grow.

*Question: Let's start with the basics—the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists was formed last fall to support the McGovern candidacy. You intend to stick around. Could you speak briefly as to what your purpose is?*

Lucy: Let me make two points. We were not formed necessarily to support George McGovern, but we were formed out of the frustration that came from the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO assuming a neutral position on the question of McGovern vs. Nixon, which was a position absolutely in contrast to the needs and aspirations of black workers and the black community. It was clear that there was need not for a temporary organization, but for a permanent, ongoing organization to deal with issues that are peculiar to the needs of black workers and secondarily to the needs of the black community as a whole. At this point, we are convinced of the very great need for the organization. There is a very broad role we can play in interpreting the trade union program to the black community, and, in reverse order, making the black community a meaningful partner in the role that the trade union movement has to play in the national sense.

*Question: Turning to the question of your relationship with the labor movement—when the Coalition formed last fall, Don Slaiman, head of the AFL-CIO civil rights department, told the New York Times that your group was completely unnecessary and simply duplicated functions already performed by the civil rights department and the A. Philip Randolph Institute. Could you comment on that statement?*

Lucy: The typical thing that happens when any organization comes about out of need is that, particularly if it's black, it's related to civil rights. That's the least of our concerns; what we are concerned with is a viable trade union movement that relates to the aspirations of workers. If Slaiman wants to exercise himself in talking about whether we're necessary or not, I think the 1200-1500 people who came to Chicago out of concern for a lack of a

vehicle to express their point of view speaks to that issue.

We have said very clearly that we're not talking about any separate movement. We're not talking about anything which will damage the trade union movement, rather than strengthen it. And what Slaiman's concerned about is that if there is a black group, he wants to control it, not only its thinking, but its actions.

*Question: The Coalition's Steering Committee seems to be composed of people from unions which are not always in agreement with the AFL-CIO Executive Council. Is that a result of how and why you started? Do you think it will change?*

Lucy: The steering committee came about as a result of people just coming together to work. I just want to point out that we have a number of people from across the spectrum involved in the Coalition itself. You're right in terms of the steering committee, there are no painters, no plumbers, but I would point out also that there are representatives from the IUE, from the IBEW and from a whole host of unions whose policies may well be different from what the Coalition would think. There's no attempt to be "anti" in terms of a structured organization. On the contrary, there's an effort to be a plus in terms of strengthening the trade union movement. But I don't think you strengthen the movement by being go-along guys and agreeing with everything for the sake of not having controversy. That's the issue. And, if you look at most black and poor communities, they are basically anti-labor simply because the trade union movement has not related to their needs over the years. When you take a look at the political involvement on the national level, the trade union movement is constantly asking the black community—which is probably the most dependable section of the Democratic vote—to support its program. At the same time, it never sets out to build a structure within the black community that is an ongoing structure. The black community is never a part of the decision making process in terms of what candidates will be supported.

*Question: Are you saying that when the AFL-CIO decides where to place its lobbying strength in Congress, the bills that affect black workers and poor workers aren't fought for as hard as some of the other bills?*

Lucy: I'm saying that if there's a need for a compromise, the form the compromise takes is generally inimical to the posture and positions of blacks workers and the black community. A good example is Brennan's support of the sub-minimum wage. Now there's no question about the fact that if Brennan had not been quasi-supported, loosely supported or at least acceptable to the AFL-CIO, he wouldn't be Secretary of Labor. I'm saying that that kind of trade off is injurious to the position of black workers.

*Question: In terms of your relations with the AFL-CIO as a pressure group within organized labor, how do you see yourself relating to, for instance the Building Trades, which have had a poor record in admitting blacks?*

Lucy: Well I think the labor movement has the ability to police itself and what we intend to do is this: on basic policy and program positions to participate in the formulation of those policies and programs through our convention activities, through resolutions and through outright pressure. The trade union movement has long had this great

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# The British Left: Their Problems — and Ours

By Michael Harrington

London—It would be preposterous to pretend expertise about English politics on the basis of a short visit here. But I can share some impressions and report some conversations with members of the mainstream British Left, from all wings of the movement.

The Labour Party is, of course, the mainstay of the Left and that is a huge difference between England and the United States. Even after a serious defeat, there is this massive, solid and often lively institution which is an alternate government. Now three years after the stunning defeat of 1970 there is a spirit of militant opposition and enthusiasm for beating the Tories at the next general election.

None of the Labourites to whom I talked regard the fairly spectacular successes of the Liberals in by-elections as the harbinger of a basic realignment. It is, they argued, a typical, if particularly vigorous, example of protest voting in elections which do not really affect the political balance.

Nor does the Labour Party appear to be heading for a split. Dick Taverne, a pro-Common Market Labour member of Parliament who was dropped by his constituency party, successfully recaptured his seat as an independent “democratic socialist” but neither he, nor any of the other pro-Marketees give any sign of bolting the Party.

Yet it would be wrong to say that all is well. On all sides of the Labour Party there is a feeling that the Wilson Governments of the Sixties simply did not do well enough. A leading Labour MP with whom I talked, a spokesman for the Right Wing, made a trenchant analysis of that failure: the 2% growth rate during the Wilson years was too low to satisfy the aspirations Labour had awakened. The rate was so low, he thought, because Wilson failed to devalue the pound until much too late in the game. And his conclusion was that it may well be that British socialists will have to insist on fairly high levels of profit income in order to encourage investment.

On the Left, that point of view is, of course, contested. There is a recrudescence of “Clause Four” socialism with its emphasis on nationalization; support for this comes, not from the youth or the professors, but from unionists.

Indeed, the situation is quite different from that in the United States. Because two of the largest unions in the country are under Left Labour leadership, the left wing in the Party orients toward the official labor movement and is distrustful of middle class intellectuals who are seen as the source of rightism in the Party.

To complete the contrast with American labor, it should be noted that a Communist steward is generally recognized as the most effective spokesman for shipyard workers (I got this opinion from Labourites who had no sympathy with the Communist Party) and the Trotskyists continue to have a certain influence on the building trades.

More seriously, the unions and their allies on the Labour Left are opposed to any form of an incomes policy. That is understandable since all previous incomes policies—whether Labour or Tory—have wound up helping the affluent more than the working people. But if one thinks, as

I do, that in the coming period a crucial task of the Left, in America and all of the advanced countries, is to develop an incomes policy that will simultaneously combat the inflationary tendencies of full employment and help redistribute income, this intransigence is not a good sign.

I also heard some discontent from friends on the Labour Left with regard to social services. There are private medical insurance plans which supplement, and perhaps weaken, national health care. They are, a producer of television documentaries told me, becoming larger. And there is still a feeling that the school system, with its class inequities, was not really challenged by the Wilson governments and that this must be a top priority the next time the Party is in power.

Harold Wilson, I was told on the Left, Right and center, is still in command of the Party and has no real challenger. It seemed to me that there was considerable dissatisfaction with his leadership, but no personality in any wing of the Party who has a chance to replace him. As things stand now, the Labourites with whom I talked expect him to lead the next attack on the Tories.

There is, I found, a healthy skepticism, an attitude of criticizing the Labour experience of the Sixties. At the same time, there does not seem to be any clear new direction, either in leadership or program. But the Left in England, even during what is hardly one of its happiest moments, has the Labour Party and that is an enormous advantage compared to our anomalous situation in the United States. If only, I thought, as I left London, if only we had the luxury of the British Left's problems.

## *Teamsters Truck Over UFW*

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the strong support the UFW has among the field hands.

George Meany accused the Teamsters of a “vicious and disgraceful” campaign to destroy the UFW, and seconded Chavez’ request for a full investigation to determine whether there were actual payoffs to Teamster organizers from growers. Meany also pledged to bring the matter of support for the UFW boycott up before the AFL-CIO Executive Council in early May. With Meany’s support, there is sure to be a strong statement and resulting mobilization from that meeting. In the meantime Meany has dispatched Bill Kircher, director of organizing for the AFL-CIO to the west coast to aid the Farm Workers.

The Farm Workers will work on the lettuce boycott exclusively until late June or early July. Then they will ask stores which agree not to carry lettuce not to stock non-union grapes. Thanks to the California State Supreme Court ruling that this is not a jurisdictional dispute, picketing and striking in the fields can also continue.

To support the UFW:

- don’t cross picket lines set up by the UFW.
- call your local UFW office to find out how to help;
- send a contribution to the UFW, P.O. Box 62, Keene, California 93531.

# Meat Boycott:

## Consumer Power

By Sharon Sherman

Phase One of the meat boycott is over; now we must assess its accomplishments and consider what remains to be done.

While most of the media labelled the boycott a failure, I disagree. Of course, meat prices have not dropped, but boycott organizers (unlike the *Wall Street Journal*) never blamed high food prices on excessive demand, and hence never expected the boycott to cause a direct decrease in prices. What we sought to make was a political statement, to show the power of consumers to the President and Congress. Our real aim was governmental action, a rollback of meat prices to December 1972 levels.

At the invitation of Congressman Benjamin Rosenthal, boycott leaders met in Washington on April 11 to discuss future actions. Most of those present were ordinary consumers who had formed consumer protest and pressure organizations. (Up to the April 11 meeting, as one observer put it, the only communication among consumers had been "AP and UPI"). The meeting established a new consumer organization, the National Consumers' Congress (NCC). The Congress' first decision was to call for a boycott of meat on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We chose May 5 as a day of national protest, and reaffirmed our demand for the im-

### Let Them Eat — Industrial Commodities?

The *Wall Street Journal* of April 23 reported that top Administration officials have been trying to convince the labor movement and the general public that the jump in the consumer price index for March wasn't so bad. Treasury Secretary George Schultz noted that, excluding the 30% price increase in food, the rate of price advances "was very moderate."

mediate rollback of prices to their December levels. The Congress also seeks an extensive investigation into high prices.

In the main, we've avoided naming villains. Instead, we've demanded a complete Congressional inquiry into the high cost of food, hoping that recommendations from the Congressional committee would bring government action for lower prices. The NCC also called for repeal of the Meat Import Quota Act, so that foreign producers can increase their supply of lean beef to the United States, and asked that export of meat from the United States be restricted.

While, at this writing, neither Congress nor the President has taken action to satisfy boycott leaders, the boycott is significant because it represented the first time that consumers protested in an effective national action. Although the movement was directed mainly by middle-class women [in New York City, much of the boycott's direction came from the municipal employees' union, District Council 37—editor], the goals of the boycott were formulated to benefit working class and poor families as well. (That the poor did not participate actively in the boycott should surprise no one; they had been boycotting meat involuntarily for months.)

In short range terms, the April meat boycott was not successful. But consumers may be discovering that they can affect the quality and price of goods and services offered; they may also discover that governmental planning and regulation of major industries (points implicit in present consumer demands) can be to their benefit.

*Sharon Sherman is a consumer activist in Syracuse, N.Y.*

## Baloney!

By Henry Bayer

Everybody's talking about high meat prices, but no one's doing anything about them—not even the millions of housewives who participated in the week-long boycott.

The movement was impressive for its spontaneity. Middle-class women acted as impromptu leaders, but the boycott clearly spread to working-class homes. The poor received little attention—a sad reflection on our times.

Administration reaction was predictable, alternating between the crude ("eat fish") and the slick, ceilings placed at high levels on wholesale and retail prices. Had the ceilings not been imposed, retail prices would probably have dropped, reflecting the 16% drop in wholesale prices in the week before the boycott.

The *Wall Street Journal* joined the chorus of reaction, editorializing quaint notions of excessive demand as the cause of skyrocketing meat costs. The business community, rather than attempting to explain the high prices, responded with threats of higher ones.

Even sadder than their public-be-damned attitude is the fact that businessmen could make good on their threat unless there is a change in national agricultural policy. Ninety percent of the increase in meat costs was due to higher feed grain prices over which the government exercises considerable control. Nixon has increased expenditures on feed price supports and continued payments to agri-business for not growing crops. Thus, consumers are not only paying high prices at the check-out counter, they're also being taxed to keep meat costs artificially high.

Unless boycotters utilize their protest as a catalyst to focus attention and pressure on the Nixon Administration, rather than on meat middlemen, their massive demonstration will have little effect.

It's surprising that up till now, neither the Nixon Administration nor the press has made the usual charge that "high wages" are to blame for the high cost of meat. The truth, of course, is that butchers, along with all other workers in the food industry, have been singled out for a 5.5% wage-hike ceiling under Phase III. Undoubtedly, when their contracts with the major packers near expiration this fall, the butchers will be in for a public whipping.

The boycott did cause layoffs, estimated at between 20,000 and 100,000, for workers in the meat industry, but many workers are cushioned by guarantees of thirty-two to thirty-six hours of work. If the boycott resumes and is extended for long, or if there is a serious decline in meat purchases, then workers will pay a heavy price, and friction between worker and consumer could become great.

Both would do well to remember that Nixon's still the one.

*Henry Bayer works on the staff of the Amalgamated Meatcutters and Butcher Workmen.*

# The New Old Left: Stalin Lives

By David Bensman

"Stalin, Stalin, Stalin" is the chant, and it's no joke. A move is afoot to unite veterans of the dying New Left in an unashamedly Stalinist movement, spreading from the West Coast to the Midwest and Northeast. A March forum, sponsored by the *National Guardian*, to discuss "Building a New Communist Party" drew 1200 people in New York.

At the movement's center is the Revolutionary Union, one of the four factions in the SDS of 1969. RU, a "revolutionary, democratic centralist," semi-underground organization, is joining with "friends of the National Guardian," the Black Workers Congress, the Young Lords, and the campus-based Attica Brigade, to create a "New Communist Party."

RU looks to the industrial proletariat as the key to worldwide revolutionary upheaval, but believes that racial minorities must be organized separately at present, because "of the racial antagonisms fostered by the imperialist ruling class." RU's ability to build alliances with the Young Lords and Black Workers' Congress has been the key to its prestige among white radicals.

Seeing China as the leader of the anti-imperialist movement, RU supports China uncritically, justifying even the shameful China-Pakistan alliance against Bangla Desh. Unlike the "old communist party" (CPUSA), the RU sees the Soviet Union as a traitor to the anti-imperialist movement. It is RU's analysis of the reason for Soviet bureaucratic malformation that makes RU seem so bizarre and gives its current vogue a somewhat grotesque aspect. Unlike the hated Trotskyists, the RU blames Soviet degeneration, not on Stalin, but on Stalin's successors. "Revisionism," as embodied in the evil Khrushchev, is viewed as Russia's undoing. With the vilification of revisionists comes deification of Stalin, ranked with Marx, Lenin, and Mao in the proletarian pantheon.

As a "democratic centralist," revolutionary organization, the RU takes discipline and security seriously. Drugs, considered a hindrance to discipline and a threat to security, are proscribed for RU members. In fact, the new communists have turned their backs on the youth culture almost entirely. Revolution, not mind expansion, nor pleasure, nor interpersonal communion, is RU's priority.

RU members are now working and organizing in factories in Cleveland, Chicago, Pittsburgh, etc. Unlike old New Leftists, RUsers tend not to be adventurist in their industrial work; they try to act as loyal fellow-workers at the same time that they try to foster "class solidarity, anti-imperialist sentiment, and anti-union leadership feeling." In fact, RU's tactics tend to be far less rigid than its ideology, a combination that recalls the Browder era of the American Communist party. Some RU members have even been elected shop stewards.

This new Stalinist movement began in the late 60's, when young radicals were beginning to realize that "youth" could not make the revolution by itself. After a brief flirtation with "Third World Peoples," many turned to the "working class."

Ideological factors also played a part. Until 1968, SDS lacked a comprehensive ideological perspective. At that

point, the Progressive Labor Party, an ultra-revolutionary sect which ultimately denounced Mao as a sellout, began to challenge the SDS' non-ideological stance, presenting a highly schematic, dogmatic line. Pressed to defend themselves, SDSers began reading Marx, Lenin, and Mao and from them developed an ideological line far removed from their experience in American politics. (The "workers" that SDS vowed to organize in 1969 were abstractions, not people).

SDS became rigidly ideological not only because it developed apart from the actual experiences of young activists, but also because it occurred in an American left which lacked a strong tradition and sense of continuity. Radicals, and former radicals, who had debated the questions of imperialism, Soviet authoritarianism, and American working class consciousness, twenty and thirty years ago, had little contact with the New Left of the 1960's and were respected less. How else can one explain the sudden glorification of Stalin, who is now anathema to a vast majority of adult American radicals?

A tendency to distrust themselves, and the people they grew up with, has been crucial to the development of authoritarianism among young radicals. (Of course, many non-revolutionary middle class students also lack faith in their values, but the dogmatic form in which the young communists express their self-distrust is ironic.)

For several years we are likely to see this weird movement dominate the sectarian left and some of the campuses. Don't expect it to last forever. Like SDS, PL, YSA, and so many others, this new Communist movement will collapse when its members discover the workers won't mount the barricades on schedule. In the meantime, many serious and talented young radicals will waste their time on counterproductive activity. Hopefully, a few will learn enough from the experience to contribute new ideas to some radical movement of the future.

## Blacks and Labor

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posture of being open to everybody at the same time we all know that there are entities of it that are closed not just to blacks and browns, but closed to *people*, so we've got to do something about that. It's clearly a need to increase the organizational strength of the trade union movement by, one, going into areas and organizing people just to begin to develop some additional political strength. Well, if you look at the South, the Southwest there's no organization to speak of going on. There's a real need to bolster that up and we think we can play a role in that. Our own union, for instance, that grows at a rate of something like 1300 people a week; now if we can do that, it's clear that somebody has lost the desire to organize and I think we've got to get back on that track.

*Question: What about in terms of your political action vis a vis the AFL-CIO; how do you think you will be relating to COPE in the future?*

Lucy: I think where the needs and aspirations of the black community and black workers are consistent with the AFL-CIO, we'll work together. Where they are inconsistent we won't work with them.



# Enriching Jobs — or Bosses?

By Franklin Wallick

The media have found a new fad: boredom. There has been a run of stories, some of them very good, about worker boredom. Would that the national magazines, networks, and other media cared as much about blue collar tax burdens as they care about blue collar monotony.

The whole condition of working people—the tax burden, the quality of neighborhood life and schools, employment prospects, and the work environment—is unfortunately, not catching any publisher's or reporter's fancy. No genuine working class books have made the big time. Brendan and Pat Sexton's excellent *Blue Collars and Hard Hats* got a condescending put-down in the *New York Times*, and my own *The American Worker: An Endangered Species* rated reviews only in the labor press and among some of the fringe environmental publications. The blue collar topic is a bore to the jaded media, even though boredom is an "in" subject.

The question of worker alienation is real enough. Doug Fraser, a UAW vice-president, reports that Chrysler had to hire 44,000 workers in a single year just to maintain a work force of 100,000. The UAW's weekend strikes in the General Motors Assembly Division chain were huge successes—and the rank-and-file is begging for more. A Lords-town strike which lasted a few weeks set off a round of front page stories about "the new, younger worker in revolt against the work ethic" but the longer (*the longest in GM history*) 170 day walkout at Norwood involved middle-aged workers over the same issues, and was of no interest to the trend-setters in the daily press.

Humanization of work—which means various ways to liven up jobs so workers have more responsibility and feel happier about their work—is a new catch phrase which excites many sociologists and is making a lot of management consultants rich. It is also causing many trade unionists to voice loud skepticism.

Such thoughtful trade unionists as the UAW's Irving Bluestone are saying:

It is important for workers to have the ability to have input in their jobs, to exercise their own creative abilities, their innate intelligence. And while there are workers who much prefer the repetitive monotonous job, doing the same thing day in and day out, over and over again, just so long as they can get the hell out of that plant and go home, an increasing number of workers think quite differently.

Participation in management of the job doesn't necessarily mean redesigning assembly jobs alone. That's part of the problem. There are operations, for instance, which are not auto assembly operations which are nevertheless assembly types, merry-go-rounds, for instance, where experiments have been undertaken to involve workers in setting up the job—what ideas, what input do they have—and by participating in the decisions relative to the makeup of the job, to the layout, even to the layout of the operation in the plant, in that section of the plant, the workers obtain a sense of participation, of inclusion, so to speak, which gives them a proprietary feeling about what they've been doing.

Like it or not, a great many of the biggest industries in the U.S. are deeply involved in experiments to jazz up the workplace, mix up jobs, give workers a feeling "they count" for more than punching a press. Sadly, few unions are in on the planning of these humanization schemes, and some unionists believe U.S. management will move so fast the unions will be left in the lurch.

The UAW has been sympathetic to plans for reducing monotony on the job, but has also deplored the unilateral attempts by management to move on this without consulting the union—and without grappling with immediate problems of job safety and health, a constant threat to workers' well-being on the job.

Slowly some of the scientists and environmentalists who have warned about deterioration of the world's air quality are directing their competency to the noise, dust, and untested chemicals which workers face on their jobs every hour of the working day. But it has taken a long time.

Some of the most humane thinkers and doers in labor-management affairs are currently engaged in devising humanization projects for business enterprises. Some of them are in unionized situations, most of them are probably not. Experiments in Norway, Sweden, and Yugoslavia are far and away the most advanced. The widely-publicized Pet dog food plant in Topeka, Kansas, is a strictly non-union project, described by a company insider as "an industrial kibbutz" and contains noble concepts—but is a unique phenomenon and like much paternalism revolves around some unique personalities.

The best approach in humanizing work still requires union input, else the worker will be but a manipulated pawn in the hands of businessmen seeking greater profit and productivity.

Humanization can be either a momentary craze or a lasting cause—depending on how much the trade union movement takes hold and is a part of the process. And humanization must not be fragmented—any more than humanization itself is an attack on job fragmentation. It must be part of a wholesale attack on all working class problems—from taxes to the quality of schools for working class families, from neighborhood safety to decent working conditions.

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Newsletter of

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# Jimmy Higgins Reports...

"LIKE THE FOURTH OF JULY"—that's how one close observer described the atmosphere around AFL-CIO headquarters just after George Meany delivered his stinging blast against Peter Brennan. Meany said he was "shocked" that "this lifelong union man delivered the discredited line of the United States Chamber of Commerce" on minimum wage legislation. To the staffers in Federation headquarters, that indicated that the period of softness on Nixon was over. Most of them had been privately pro-McGovern, many had felt extremely uncomfortable with the soft-on-Nixon line. Now, some are hoping that maybe, just maybe, they're seeing the re-emergence of Meany's anti-Nixon militancy.

NOW THAT THE FLING WITH NIXON is over, Meany is reportedly ready to throw massive resources into building the Democratic Party for 1974 and 1976. Here the picture is ambiguous. Clearly, AFL-CIO political action director Al Barkan is still playing a highly factional role on the Democratic National Committee. He's not only going after the "nuts" (his phrase to describe early and enthusiastic McGovern supporters), he's out to diminish the power of trade unionists who differed with him in the last election. Thus, a recent issue of the Democratic Planning Group's newsletter reported that Barkan had ordered a purge of all Democratic Party Executive Committee members who voted for the UAW's Olga Madar rather than Barkan's nominee. His efforts failed. But the AFL-CIO also seems anxious to heal at least some of last fall's wounds. And the reformers want to go along. At a recent meeting, the consensus which emerged between a unionist who had associated with the Coalition for a Democratic Majority and some of the guideline writers for the McGovern reforms surprised everyone present. "No delegate quotas, but we'll accept affirmative action," was the labor line. The liberal response (from some who had been identified as the "extreme" reform wing) was "OK, that's fine with us."

UNITE AGAINST NIXON seems to be Albert Shanker's current battle cry. Unfortunately, the president of the NY teachers' union (UFT) is issuing this clarion call not to do real battle with the Nixon budget cutters, but to defeat AFT President David Selden in the current teachers' union faction fight. In response to a *New York Post* interview in which Selden took issue with Shanker on such matters as



the relationship of the AFT to George Meany and the AFL-CIO Executive Council, Shanker replied that Selden has his enemies confused. But Shanker's slogan is for those with extremely short memories—specifically those who forget that Shanker, contrary to the decision of the AFT convention, declared "neutrality" in last fall's election. Selden also charged that Shanker was moving to take over the union. Shanker's public reaction was that Selden was wrong on that count, but he clearly wants Selden's job, and has demanded that Selden resign. Meanwhile, Shanker is carrying out factional war. His latest maneuver was to place four propositions on the AFT referendum ballot, all of which would strengthen the power of the large locals (like New York City). Given the way Shanker runs the UFT, that would add up to virtually unchallengeable control of the AFT if he succeeds Selden. And while he nobly claims to be for uniting all teachers, Shanker is showing some more parochial sentiments, appealing to the narrowest fears of New York teachers. In a recent factional mailing on the referendum, Shanker warned UFT members that if his referendum proposals were defeated "the AFT Convention [could] endorse the quota system or total community control, or any other of a number of positions damaging to our interests."

**THE COALITION FOR HUMAN NEEDS AND BUDGET PRIORITIES**—is the name of a new organization formed to combat the Nixon budget cuts. The Coalition is supported by a number of liberal, labor and consumer groups including the National Organization for Women, ADA, The League of Women Voters, Common Cause, the United Mine Workers, the Auto Workers, the Machinists and AFSCME. The Coalition hopes to develop a legislative strategy for its member groups, organize local pressure to continue social programs, and inform the media and the public about the effect of the budget cuts. With the high powered lobbying currently being done by the oil companies, the auto manufacturers, and the representatives of corporate agri-business, many people are coming to realize the need for a strong citizens' voice.

To contact the Coalition write to: the Coalition for Human Needs, 1717 Massachusetts Avenue N.W., Washington D.C. 20036.

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