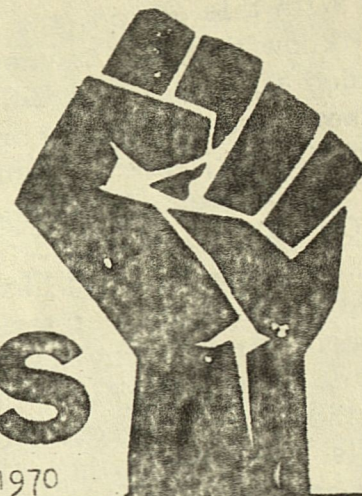


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EXTRA! COLUMBIA:

Workers Lead CWSA Struggle, Win Demands

James Graham, a black cafeteria worker in Johnson Hall, a graduate women's dorm, was fired arbitrarily just two days before the end of his union probation period. He had heard of the campus worker student alliance, and came to a meeting called by SDS. This meeting was attended by more workers than ever before. Mr. Graham told the people there what had happened to him. After an extended discussion of the situation, a secretary pointed out that we weren't going to get anywhere by talking. "This man has no job," she said. "I think we should go over to confront his supervisor tomorrow. I'll take off work to go with him." This livened up the meeting immediately. Other workers volunteered to round up people to go to the demonstration, and students followed their lead. We agreed to hold a boycott of Johnson Cafeteria, if he was not rehired.

Despite a steady downpour on the day of the demonstration, about fifty people, at least half of them workers, showed up. People from the rank and file caucus of Local 1199 led the march over to the cafeteria and demanded to see the supervisor. She came out, but refused to give us straight answers to any of the questions about the firing. People eating in the cafeteria heard the exchange, and were largely sympathetic. With this kind of support, we thought we could go ahead with the boycott and announced this plan to everyone in the room (including the supervisor). A janitor standing nearby remarked that he was glad to see the supervisor in hot water. "She gives all of us a hard time," he said.

The next day, we were all ready to set up the picket lines, but we heard that Mr. Graham had been rehired with back pay for the week he was out of work. Even at this point, the manager could not refrain from making a racist comment: "With sufficient training, he could be brought up to the standard required of the permanent staff." What kind of training do you need to be a porter?

With this action, the CWSA has taken a big step forward. Workers on campus now know that SDS is unequivocally on their side. When another worker was suspended a week later, SDS was immediately notified to join in a meeting of campus workers. About forty people were called together in half an hour. This worker, a plack janitor, was also unconditionally reinstated. He had come to the SDS meeting to speak on behalf of the maids who were threatened with massive layoffs. Clearly, the Columbia bosses did not like this. Equally, they saw that they wouldn't be able to get away with firing him. It is worth noting that both of these workers are black. (Most janitors and cafeteria workers are either black or latin.) However, they were supported strongly by many white workers in higher paying jobs. Columbia's efforts to split up workers along racial and occupational lines aren't succeeding any more than their attempts to split up workers and students. Racial divisions among students are also breaking down. The Third World Coalition (TWC), a group of radical third world students, has been a leading force in the campus worker-student alliance. They led the meeting to discuss the maid situation, and supported the demonstration to rehire James Graham. With this kind of unity between students and workers of all races, the campus worker-student alliance has real potential at Columbia. Workers will be more militant with the knowledge that students are backing them up. And the combined force of workers and students, properly deployed, can eventually force the university to its knees.

Columbia has come up with a clever ruse in an effort to split students from workers. They have offered students a choice between losing maid service (i.e., firing the maids) and paying a \$50 rent increase next year. This puts the students in the position of having power over the maids' jobs, and leads them to feel that if the maids are fired, they cannot blame the administration. Students have rejected this decision. If the University wants to fire the maids, let them take the consequences. If they want to raise the rent, don't let them blame it on the maids. A closer examination of the proposed \$50 hike reveals that it isn't paying for maid service anyway. The calculations are as follows:

Each room is cleaned once a week. This takes 15 minutes. There are 2 students per room. Maids are paid \$2.06 per hour. Therefore, a maid is paid \$15.60 per year for each room. Yet the University would be raking in \$100 per room per year.