

OBREROS EN MARCHA

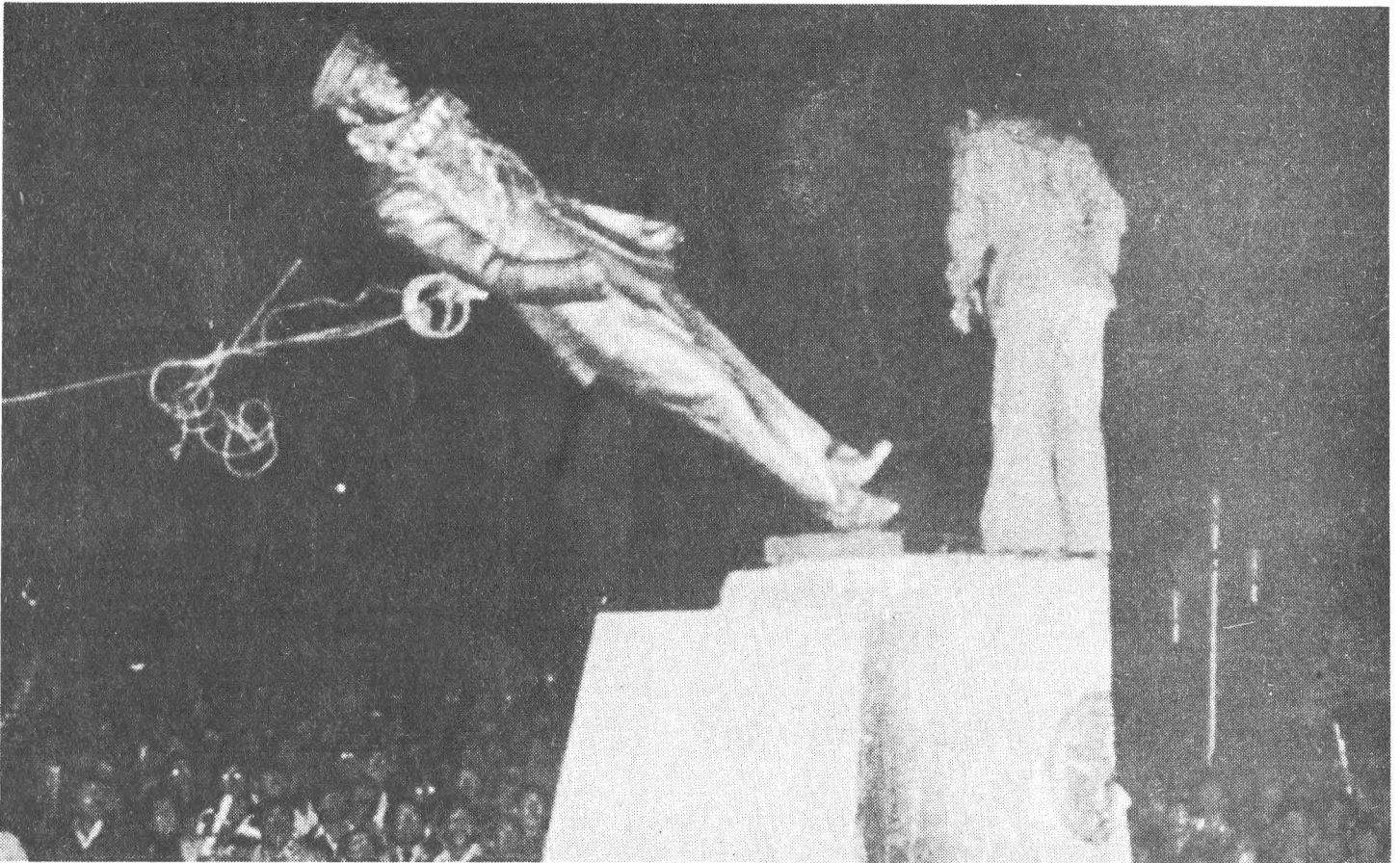
POLITICAL ORGAN OF
M.I.N.P. MOVIMIENTO DE IZQUIERDA El Comité
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EDITORIAL: **On the Puerto Rican Nationalist Prisoners**

IRAN: "DOWN WITH THE SHAH"



Iranian people pull down statue of Shah in Teheran

IN THIS ISSUE:

LOCAL:	STUDENTS, p. 10;	DAYCARE, p. 12
NATIONAL:		INFLATION, p. 8
PUERTO RICO INFORMA:	MSP ON STATEHOOD, p. 6	
INTERNATIONAL:	IRAN, p. 3; CUBA, p. 5	

OBREROS EN MARCHA

Obreros En Marcha is the central publication of El Comité-M.I.N.P. (Puerto Rican National Left Movement). El Comité-M.I.N.P. is a developing Marxist-Leninist organization which originated on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, New York. We formed in the summer of 1970 as a Latin community organization committed to the struggle to improve the living conditions of the poor, mainly minority, families who lived in that area. Our goal was to get decent, low-rent housing, quality education and improved health services for these families.

Two years after our formation we began to respond to the needs of Latin workers in the factories. We also started to organize students at the university level and to get more actively involved in the struggle for Puerto Rico's independence. Our participation in these struggles ultimately led to our transformation into a new type of organization with more defined political objective. Thus in 1974 we began a slow and complex process of transition into a Marxist-Leninist organization: an organization guided by the science of Marxism-Leninism and integrated into the struggles of working people.

As such an organization, we understand that an essential aspect of our work is to raise the level of political consciousness of workers in this country. This is one of the conditions necessary to develop the revolutionary movement capable of overthrowing the present order and building on its ruins a new socialist society. In this effort, we join with other revolutionary forces in the U.S.

Our political organ, *Obreros En Marcha*, has as its goal the development of revolutionary consciousness among our ranks, the advanced elements of the people, and among the masses in general. We attempt to accomplish this task by the examination and analysis of the developing progressive and revolutionary movements locally, nationally and internationally.

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EDITORIAL

FREE THE 4 NATIONALIST PRISONERS

In the past several months, one of New York City's major newspapers in the Latin community, *El Diario-La Prensa*, has run a series on the Puerto Rican Nationalists who, in the 1950's, forced the world to open its eyes to the colonial domination of Puerto Rico by U.S. imperialism.

In 1950, Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola attacked the residence of then-President Truman. Torresola was killed in the attack. In 1954, Andrés Cordero, Lolita Lebrón, Irving Flores and Rafael Cancel Miranda opened fire in the chambers of the U.S. House of Representatives. For their actions, all five were sentenced to life imprisonment. In 1977, Cordero, ill with terminal cancer, was pardoned by Jimmy Carter.

The *El Diario* series is part of a loosely-connected campaign to free the remaining 4 Nationalist prisoners being conducted by diverse social and political forces both in Puerto Rico and in the U.S. For several years, wide-ranging political and social groups in Puerto Rico have petitioned the U.S. government to release the prisoners. This spectrum includes elements from all the bourgeois parties, church groups, labor unions, student groups, etc., as well as 4 ex-governors of Puerto Rico: Hernández Colón, Sánchez-Villela, Ferré and Muñoz-Marín. In addition, both houses of the Puerto Rican legislature have passed resolutions demanding the freedom of the 4.

In the United States, interest in the case has been growing among several Congressmen. Last month, a Congressman from New York, Robert García (Democrat), together with 10 other legislators, submitted a letter to Carter requesting the release of the Nationalists.

While the efforts of García are a positive sign, we also understand that he and other forces separate the question of the Nationalists from the conditions which gave rise to their actions: the colonization of Puerto Rico and the exploitation and domination of the Puerto Rican people by U.S. capital. People like García support their freedom based on humanitarian reasons: that the Nationalists have been in jail long enough, that their sentences were too long compared to equivalent acts committed by others, and that, despite such denials of their rights, they have been "model prisoners." In this way these forces hope to avoid and negate the struggle to free the 4 political prisoners. This approach diffuses the political significance of their actions.

Progressive and revolutionary forces, both in Puerto Rico and in the U.S., have the responsibility of placing the actions of the Nationalists and the question of their release within the context of the overall struggle in Puerto Rico for national liberation and socialism. At the same time they must pinpoint the relationship of the struggle of the working class in Puerto Rico to workers in this country. Yet in the recent period, forces in this country have failed to take up this responsibility consistently. Although efforts have been made to build campaigns among the broad sectors of workers, students, intellectuals, etc., these campaigns have been sporadic, inconsistent and short-lived in character.

The criticism we raise here we pose to ourselves as well. Although from its earliest years, our organization initiated work around the freedom of the Nationalist prisoners, in recent years this work has suffered from inconsistent practice. In this coming period we propose to develop the political and organizational mechanisms which will create the conditions to overcome these weaknesses. These efforts will form an integral part of the tasks which our movement, M.I.N.P., will take up in the next period. We understand that it is the responsibility of all Marxist-Leninists in this country to raise consciousness around the struggle for independence and socialism in Puerto Rico and its relationship to the struggles of the U.S. working class.

In Puerto Rico, the campaign to support the demand to release the Nationalists has gained impetus among significant sectors of the petty-bourgeoisie and leadership of the trade union movement. At this time, conditions exist for the continued growth and consolidation of a broad-based movement in support of this demand. However, in the U.S. progressive and left forces have not been able to take the lead in rallying support for the demand to free the 4 Nationalists. Furthermore, they have been unable to utilize the present juncture to advance the task of building a broad-based movement rooted in the working class, within the oppressed nationalities and particularly among the Puerto Rican national minority.

Thus at present, there is no organized force within the working class that can pressure Carter to release the Nationalists. We think our organization can contribute to generating within the Puerto Rican national minority the need to raise this demand, and to take this issue to other sectors of the oppressed nationalities to build a broad-based support.

At this time, Puerto Rico is low on the agenda of President Jimmy Carter's concerns. Neither the liberation movement on the island nor the solidarity movement in the U.S. is presently strong enough to force U.S. imperialism to respond to its demands. If the Carter administration is going to make a "humanitarian" gesture, such as freeing the 4, there has to be a material force or reason pressuring it to do this. This material force has to be not only a movement in Puerto Rico calling for the release of the Nationalists, but also a movement in this country, solidly based within the working class and oppressed nationalities.

INTERNATIONAL



"DOWN WITH THE SHAH"

IRANIAN PEOPLE REBEL AGAINST REGIME

For more than a year and a half Iran has been in a state of seething rebellion. It started in June of 1977 when in Teheran, Iran's capital, the shantytown dwellers resisted government-ordered evictions. Since then, the rebellion has escalated, absorbing all sectors of Iranian society and seriously curtailing the Shah's political power.

Beginning with the initial resistance of the shantytown dwellers, the acts of protest have spiraled to include many forms of struggle. In October of 1977, massive poetry readings featuring ex-political prisoners were held. Demonstrations protesting poor living conditions and heavy political repression became a daily occurrence. With each passing month the demonstrations became bigger and more defiant. Most marches were called by the mullahs, priests of the Shiite religion. But workers, students and shantytown dwellers have frequently taken over the leadership thus raising the militancy of the protests. By the fall of 1978, strikes also became a daily occurrence. Workers in construction, oil, steel, communication, health, education and post offices demanded higher wages to keep up with inflation and freedom for all political prisoners. As the rebellion intensified, guerrilla and mob attacks destroyed over 700 banks and many SAVAK (the notorious and greatly despised Iranian secret police) offices. Despite the varied class background of the protesters, all acts of protest put forth the same slogan: "Down with the Shah!"

By December of 1978 the Shah's only solid base of support was his 700,000 man army. But in the last few weeks, even this stronghold has weakened. First some of his troops refused to fire on demonstrators. Desertions from the army began to increase. Then came the ultimate act of insubordination. At the end of December, several soldiers, loyal to Ayatollah Khomeini, the exiled religious leader, opened fire on their superiors. The Shah's last base of support began to crumble.

ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY AND REPRESSION: ROOTS OF DISCONTENT

The fact that the opponents of the Shah are led by religious leaders and that demands of respect for Islamic traditions

have received most of the publicity, might lead one to conclude that the rebellion is motivated by religious fervor. But both the intensity and widespread support for the rebellion indicate that more tangible motives are at play. The current climax of opposition to the Shah has its roots primarily in the economic straitjacket binding Iran known as dependent capitalism.

According to capitalist logic, oil-rich Iran should be well along the way in transforming its economy into an industrially developed one. Indeed, the Shah's propaganda machine has until recently been claiming that the country was on the threshold of a new "Great Civilization." The Gross National Product was 8% during the 60s and has jumped to a spectacular 30% during the 70s. Oil revenues have gone from \$817 million in 1968 to \$19,000 million in 1976.

But despite the tremendous increase in oil production and the millions of dollars pouring into the country, Iran's economic woes have remained and in many ways have been aggravated. The regime's social

base—the bourgeoisie, the officers of the armed forces and the higher echelons of the state's overbloated bureaucracy—has demanded that the bulk of oil revenues be spent on the purchase of sophisticated arms technology, on an increase in the importation of luxury items and on the needless expansion of the bureaucracy. The industrialization that has taken place—e.g. automobile and steel industries—has increased the country's dependency on western imperialist countries, in particular the United States, because of the consequent need to import advanced technology.

The historical backbone of the economy, agriculture, has deteriorated because of neglect and mismanagement. The Shah's unwillingness to put forth a comprehensive agricultural policy (wanting to keep the support of the large landlords who form part of his social base) has resulted in a situation where the country imports over 15% of its food; more than 20% of its oil revenues is spent on food imports. The increasing distortion of Iran's economy is further revealed by the growing



One of the many massive anti-Shah demonstrations taking place in Iran today

dependency of the government on oil for its revenues: 77% of the government's revenues come from oil. The danger of this situation becomes evident when one remembers that Iran's oil deposits will be depleted by 1985.

The workers, peasants and other oppressed sectors of Iran have not had to wait until 1985 to feel the adverse effects of the oil boom. For the last several years they have faced an annual inflation of 30% on food items and 200% on urban housing. The gap between the rich and poor has been widening: the top 10% of the population has increased its share of the national income from 32% to 40% over the last few years. The most vivid evidence of the oil boom's impact on the oppressed and exploited of Iran are the hundreds of shantytowns that ring the country's largest cities.

The great concentration of wealth has had two natural offshoots: repression and corruption. Official corruption is so rampant that the government has declared itself



Ayatollah Khomeini

helpless to curb it. Bribes, kickbacks, and embezzlement have become normal everyday practices.

SAVAK is one of the largest and most infamous of secret police agencies in the world. The country's political prisoners number 100,000. Amnesty International has stated that Iran has "...the highest rate of death penalties in the world, no valid system of civilian courts, and a history of torture which is beyond belief."

The father of Iran's economic dependency and accomplice of the Shah's heavy repression is and has been the United States. This fact is well understood by the opponents of the present regime. From the training of SAVAK to the presence of over 500 U.S. corporations, the U.S. has made its support of the Shah well known.

IRAN: PEARL OF THE GULF

Oil is a synonym of Iran's importance to U.S. and western imperialist countries. Iran's particular importance is that it supplies 90% of Israel's oil. Since Iran and Israel are the two pillars of U.S. imperialism in the Middle East, any long-term interruption of oil deliveries would be catastrophic for Israel and therefore for

U.S. interests. A second aspect of Iran's "oil importance" has been its conservative role in OPEC, helping to minimize the increase in oil prices.

Iran's oil wealth has made it a favorite market of U.S. multinationals. As one of the largest importers of arms in the world, Iran spent more than \$19 billion in the last five years on sophisticated military technology. This has proved invaluable in recycling funds back to the western imperialist countries after the dramatic rise in oil prices sent tremors through their economies. More than \$4 billion has been spent on industrial technology and luxury items in the past year. Investments and as teachers; and laws of the country were based on the Shiite legal code.

This helps to explain why the mullahs have played such an important role in the uprisings and why Ayatollah Khomeini has become both symbol and spokesman for the opposition. His antagonism to the Shah arises principally from the reduction of religious influence in state affairs. But he has also voiced scorn for the high level of government corruption and the excessive dependency on the U.S. He has called for the abdication of the Shah and the creation of an Islamic republic. The extent of his influence is such that none of the opposition's political leaders dare court his disfavor by joining a coalition government with the Shah.

The country's bourgeoisie is made up of the large land owners, the top military officers, the industrialists and financiers. So far the officer corps has been staunch in its support of the Shah. Although some elements of the bourgeoisie are active in the National Front, as a class they have not been too visible throughout the year of rebellion. Their most visible act has been the enormous transfer of capital to Switzerland.

The Union of National Front Forces is a coalition of political parties representing the petit bourgeoisie and elements of the bourgeoisie. The parties which form the coalition have their roots in the 1952-53 period, during which a strongly nationalist government overthrew the Shah and nationalized the oil industry. This government was toppled by a CIA-led coup and all of its participants were marginalized until now. The program of this coalition, essentially nationalist, calls for the nationalization of major industries, development of an independent foreign policy, and establishment of a society which is neither "communist nor capitalist." However, members of the coalition have been carefully courting Washington, and have succeeded in establishing themselves, in the eyes of the State Department, as a viable ally or alternative to the Shah.

bank loans reach into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Thus, Iran's importance to U.S. imperialism goes beyond oil. Its geographic location and new-bought military power have made it a regional deputy of U.S. in-

terests. The U.S.'s wholehearted support of the Shah is based on its conception of Iran as a linchpin in U.S. global strategy. Iran's sophisticated military technology and 1,000 mile border with the U.S.S.R have made it one of the best observation posts of Soviet activities. In addition, Iran has been entrusted with the role of guardian of the sea routes through which passes most of the oil to the Western powers. Lastly, its military power and concurrent diplomatic weight are used to influence a pro-imperialist stance on the part of other countries in the Middle East (e.g. Egypt).

THE CLASS CHARACTER OF THE OPPOSITION

The leadership of the current rebellion has been provided by the hierarchy of Iran's official religion, the Shiite faith (a form of Islamism); the Union of National Front Forces, a loose coalition of political parties representing the petit-bourgeoisie; university students; and the Tudeh, the



SHAH

Communist party of Iran; plus two guerrilla organizations.

Iran entered the twentieth century as a feudal country. Because of the alliance of the feudal lords with first British and later U.S. imperialism, social change has been slow. Even today over half of the population remains rural. Remnants of feudalism are still strong, particularly the overwhelming prevalence of religion. Until recently bazaars accounted for the bulk of industrial and commercial activity in the country. Bazaars, which were and still are to a great degree today the heart of every town, were built next to the mosques. Thus, the mullahs (the priests) and the merchants always worked in close cooperation, with the latter providing economic support for the former. In addition, the mullahs served

The peasantry and the working class are in a low level of organization. Due to the rapid rate of industrialization and urbanization, the peasantry is in a state of decomposition. Moreover, the Shah's recent agrarian reform created a substantial number of rich peasants thus dividing that class. The proletariat, which forms a quarter of the country's labor force, finds itself predominantly in small shops and organized into official unions headed by SAVAK agents. Yet because of its long tradition of militancy, the Iranian proletariat has historically borne the brunt of the Shah's repression. The history of the organization of the Iranian proletariat closely parallels that of the Tudeh.

The Tudeh, the Iranian Communist Party, along with two guerrilla organizations make up the third force providing leadership to the rebellion. The Tudeh was born in 1920. Its members were instrumental in the establishment of the first trade unions. In spite of heavy repression, the party continued to grow and by the 1940s it estab-

Cuba Begins Dialogue with Exile Community

The Facts

In an unprecedented act in the history of the socialist countries, the Cuban government, after 20 years of revolution, has decided to establish communication with Cubans in exile. As a result of these talks 80% (a total of 3,600) of all political prisoners will be pardoned. In the same spirit all past and present political prisoners as well as their families, have been given the opportunity to leave the country if they so wish. Nevertheless, it is estimated that about 40% will decide to stay in Cuba.

This gesture is an example of the humanism that characterizes the Cuban Revolution and this is not the only consequence of the negotiations between the Cuban government and the 140 representatives of the exiles. At the first meeting in Havana on November 20th and 21st, the reunification of families was discussed and was approved by the Cuban delegation headed by Fidel. This transaction allows people living in Cuba to leave the country to reunite with their immediate families in exile, (father, mother, spouse, or children).

A third topic of importance for the exiles, the possibility of visiting Cuba, was another concession granted by the Cuban government. The visits will begin in January 1979 and people can come in groups or as individuals for humanitarian reasons. A second meeting in Havana on December 8th drew up and signed a document ratifying the agreements.

How did the dialogue begin?

The steps towards dialogue began September 6th of this year with a surprising press conference by President Fidel Castro

lished the country's first national labor federation. After 1945 several of its members served in the government's cabinet. In 1953 it provided important support for the nationalist regime of 1951-53. Three years later, with the Shah firmly in power once again, the government revealed that a group of 600 officers had been meeting secretly with the Communist Party. The repression that ensued devastated the party and forced the survivors into exile. In the recent period, however, the Tudeh has reemerged as a force, although still very weak. In recent declarations it has called for an "alliance of all anti-dictatorial forces" to overthrow the Shah and set up a democratic government.

The two guerrilla groups—the Marxist Feda'yi and the Islamic Mujahedin—are numerically larger than the Tudeh. Their influence is greatest among university students, which is important because these students have been directing many of the demonstrations. Because of their recent appearance little is known at present about

their programs.

WEAK OPPOSITION: POLITICAL IMPASSE

The disunited efforts of the opposition have managed to handcuff the Shah's regime. Due to the intensity and length of the demonstrations and strikes and country's economy is paralyzed. The Shah's last bastion of support—the armed forces—is showing signs of defection. But the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois opposition do not have the power to immediately replace the Shah. The low level of organization of the peasantry and working class limits their participation in the resolution of the current confrontation. Whatever convulsions Iran goes through, the most likely outcome will be a coalition between the Shah and the National Front forces or a National Front government without the Shah. In either situation, the military will play a major role. The hour of the working class is yet to come.

with mainly Cuban-American journalists.

In this meeting Fidel announced that the Cuban Government was willing to meet with representatives of the Cuban community, which they no longer consider a homogenous group of enemies of the Revolution. He also mentioned that as a result of the trip by the Antonio Maceo Brigade, the first group of Cuban youths to return to their country, he better understood the differences as well as the problems that exist in the heart of the exiled community. Fidel also emphasized that the more important points to be discussed, the political prisoners, reuniting families, and visits of Cuban immigrants to the island, "were a question of national dignity and sovereignty, we did not discuss it nor will we ever discuss it with the government of the United States."

What do the Cubans here think?

On the other hand, what was the reaction of the Cuban community here to the offer for a dialogue? As expected, the news caused outcry and controversy. The news headlines ranged from "I do want a dialogue" to "Red carpets lead to Marxist gallows." In opposition to the dialogue, the Cuban organizations here cracked with the usual anti-communist rhetoric. As usual, the counter-revolutionary terrorists, a vile desperate minority, tried to sabotage these efforts by planting three or four bombs and rendering personal threats.

Nevertheless, in the "People Speak Out" section of the New York daily, *El Diario*—September 29, 1978, six of eight Cubans interviewed declared themselves

against the self-proclaimed leaders that opposed the negotiations: "I agree with the release of the prisoners and the reuniting of Cuban families. Those that oppose this, embrace foreign interests that do not go along with the spiritual sentiment of the Cubans," stated one of those interviewed.

Most people want to be reunited with their families. In the same column seven of another eight interviewed want to return for a visit.

It seems that the average Cuban is happy with the results of the dialogue which is the most logical and humanitarian position.

Historical Outcome of the Dialogue

It is certain that history has left behind those cackling "leaders" and frustrated terrorists. In spite of them the dialogue had embarked on its course and will profoundly affect the life of many Cubans, especially in respect to the visits to Cuba. We think that after twenty years the meeting of the Cubans in the island with those that return from exile after living in a capitalist society will show the ideological strength of the Cuban people.

In respect to the Cubans here, the contact with the true Cuban reality will transform, little by little, but in a positive way, their conceptions about the Revolution.

As these trips begin to neutralize the typical propaganda of "terror and hunger" that is used to describe Cuba, the reactionary role that the Cuban community has played among the hispanics with which it lives, will begin to disappear.

STATEHOOD: A SOLUTION FOR PUERTO RICO?

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THE "ADVANTAGES" OF STATEHOOD

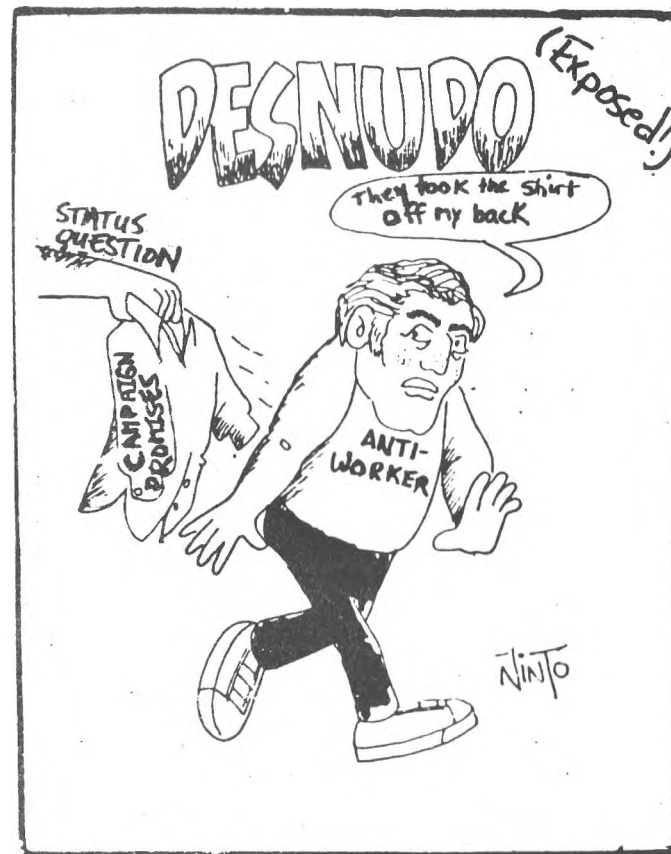
Those who favor statehood claim that it will place Puerto Ricans on an equal political level with the American citizens of the states; in particular Puerto Ricans would have seven representatives and two senators in the Yankee congress. This first advantage, as we will see in the following, is only an apparent truth.

If Puerto Rico had the right to seven representatives and two senators in Congress, this would not significantly alter the situation of the working masses. The only thing that would be achieved would be an increase in the possibilities of lobbying directly in Congress in relation to the lobbying now taking place through the Resident Commissioner. Instead of one "spokesman," we would now have 7 in the chamber out of 442. What can 7 achieve against 442? What can they obtain that hasn't already been obtained?

The same can be said of the presidential vote. In real terms, this signifies nothing more than a formality for the Puerto Rican people. Neither the representatives nor the President can do anything to eliminate the causes of the economic and social crisis in Puerto Rico. The Congress, the President, and the entire political structure of the United States have been the godfathers of the exploitation and imperialist dependency to which the Puerto Rican people have been subjected. They will not act against that control because imperialist power is derived from there. And they, as trustees of the State, defend the big industrial and commercial monopolies which dominate this country.

The state directly represents those big monopoly interests who grow rich through their exploitation of the labor of the North American working class and through their domination of the fabulous natural resources of the United States. Those interests are the same who exploit and rob the riches of the people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America who are subjected to their domination. In sum, North American political and economic domination is the result of exploitation and pillage. This all takes place under a constitutional cover which pretends to represent the interests of the entire North American people, but which in reality, is the instrument of domination of a group of big capitalists who control the factories, banks, commerce, land, and of course, the State in that "promised land."

The colonial status of Puerto Rico or its culmination into statehood, is part of that imperialist domination which seven representatives and a presidential vote could not alter. What's more, these representatives are not going to legislate in favor of the Puerto Rican workers, but rather, in favor of and in defense of the native and foreign capitalists who control the economy and the government. They will be spokesmen for the rich and will only remember the workers at the hour of elections when they need the workers' votes to ensure that they continue warming their chairs in Congress. The supposed advantage is not more than a way to



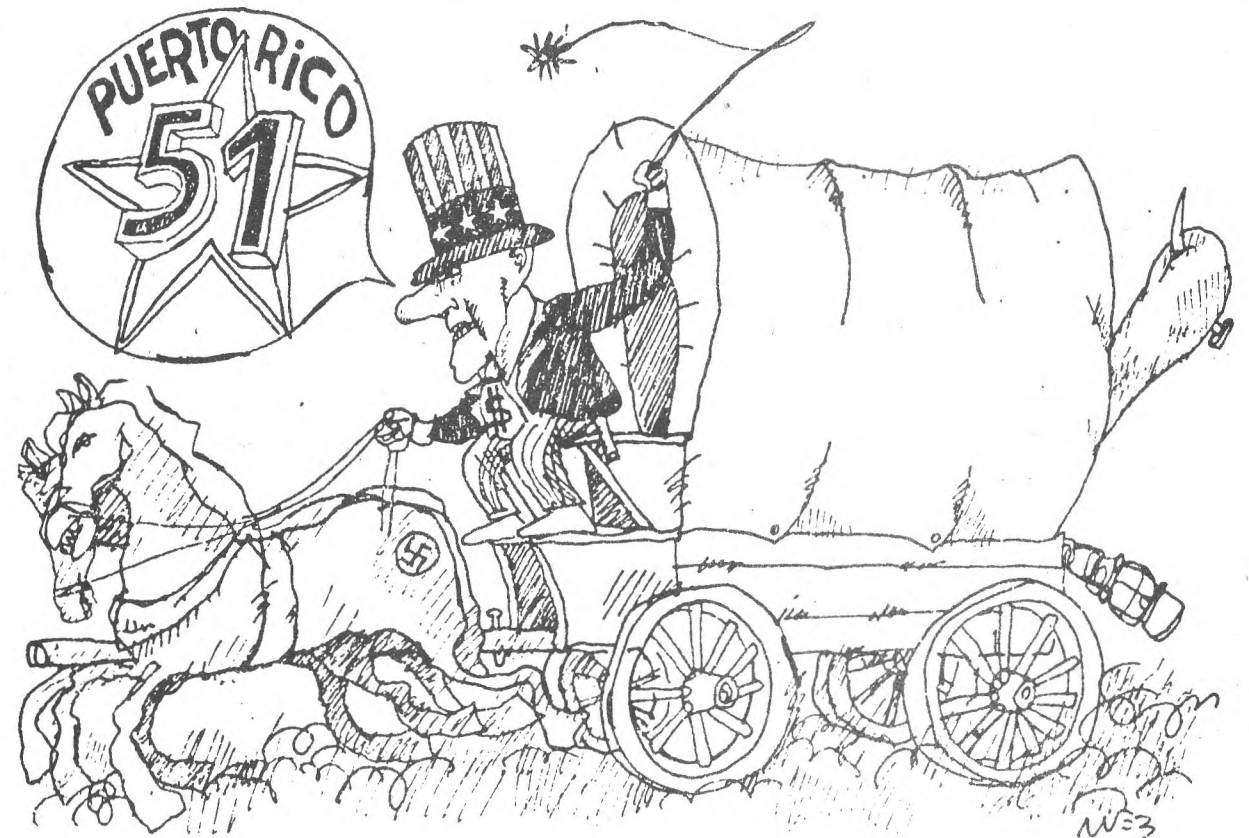
trick our people with an apparent, and non-existent "equality."

EQUALITY AND STATEHOOD

On the other hand, the defenders of "equality" with statehood should ask themselves how equal are Nelson Rockefeller and a Chicano or Black worker from Alabama. For Chicano and Black workers, "equality" never has existed, even though they have lived for many years under statehood. They have only seen racial discrimination, violent repression, horrible conditions in health and housing, starvation wages, and, not infrequently, lynchings by the Ku Klux Klan. And they have representatives in Congress and vote for the President of the United States!

And if all the former were not sufficient, one need only look at the horrible conditions of life and work that almost two million Puerto Ricans, predominantly workers, suffer in the United States. They have the worst housing and health services. They suffer racism and can only get the worst paying jobs in the entire North American "social ladder." They know statehood well and enjoy the same "equality" as do the Chicanos and Blacks. National oppression and racism are the daily bread in the ghettos of the Metropolis. Romero Barcelo, Ferre, and the other pro-annexation leaders know this very well.

To summarize, linking equality to statehood, as with all bourgeois political formulas, presents a class question. There will be equality for the rich capitalists, but for the workers, there will only be inequality and exploitation.



LIKE IN THE "GOOD OLD DAYS"

WHAT THE MINIMUM WAGE WILL BRING

The second "advantage" which the supporters of statehood claim the applicability of the federal minimum wage and that of "putting the economy on its feet" is pure demagoguery. The applicability of the minimum wage in Puerto Rico is not an advantage in itself and doesn't depend upon whether we are a state or not. Even under the ELF (Free Associates State), the minimum wage could be applied without this implying any change in status. Such a measure has not yet been legally adopted due to the strategy of *Fomento* (an agency for economic development. Ed).

Fomento was created to promote labor intensive businesses, those with a low organic composition of capital. As an incentive, the agency "offered" to U.S. businesses the low salaries predominant on the island. Based on this, in 1940, the system of Special Committees was instituted, which recommended minimum salaries for industries, according to their capacity to pay. However, due to the intervention of Congressional amendments, legal jurisdiction was extended over businesses that had previously been exempt, which implemented automatic raises of minimum salaries.

Meanwhile, due to the rise in the cost of living, economic struggles of the workers for higher wages raised the price of labor, reducing the incentive of low salaries. The increase in salaries, along with the increased cost of raw materials and maritime fleets, has caused many businesses to close shop in Puerto Rico and to establish themselves in other countries where the operating costs are lower, insuring a higher level of profit. From the early 60's, *Fomento* has been promoting a different type of business whose emphasis is not on labor, but rather, on the investment of constant capital (machinery, raw

materials, etc.) which implies that it can pay some higher salaries since its profits are greater.

All of this is to say that salaries are already not as low as in the past. Many businesses already pay salaries equal to or above the minimum wage. To offer such an advantage as an argument in favor of statehood doesn't make much sense, and will make less, if industries with a high concentration of capital continue to be promoted.

On the other hand, as for the "advantage" of "putting the economy on its feet", pro-statehood leaders do not even believe this themselves. The question that the defenders of statehood must answer is: How are they going to achieve this objective? With an endless flood of food coupons? "By selling flowers?" as Luis Ferre said.

In the two years that the New Progressive Party (PNP) has been in power, it has not been able to take one step in that direction. The only thing that it has done is to raise the flow of food stamps. An economy which is bleeding to death cannot be reconstructed with food stamps. The PNP has not been able to do anything for the same reason that the populists (PPD) couldn't do anything: the economy of this country is completely integrated into the North American economy and dominated by the big industrial and commercial monopolies of that country. The economic and social collapse of Puerto Rico is the legitimate offspring of that imperialist control. To "put the economy on its feet" would be to free it from the clutches of the principal Yankee monopolies. This, no bourgeois colonialist party either can, or wants to do, much less a party like the PNP, which is pleading for total annexation. Now, or with statehood, they may be able to patch up the situation by tricking many people, but in the long run, the weaknesses will show, and they won't be able to fool anyone anymore.

Economy Slides Toward Recession

As we enter the new year, we find Jimmy Carter and his administration continuing to grope about for a solution to the economic crisis—but it's a fruitless search. The inherent, deeply ingrained contradictions of this capitalist economic system are becoming increasingly more difficult to deal with. Some of these contradictions can be clearly seen upon examining Carter's last two major economic moves. The first was his "anti-inflation program" and his second move, which he announced on November 1st, was his new "tough" monetary policy. Despite the flowery rhetoric, the real, overriding concern of these or any policy moves is to do what will best insure continued profits for the corporations despite the unstable condition of the economy.

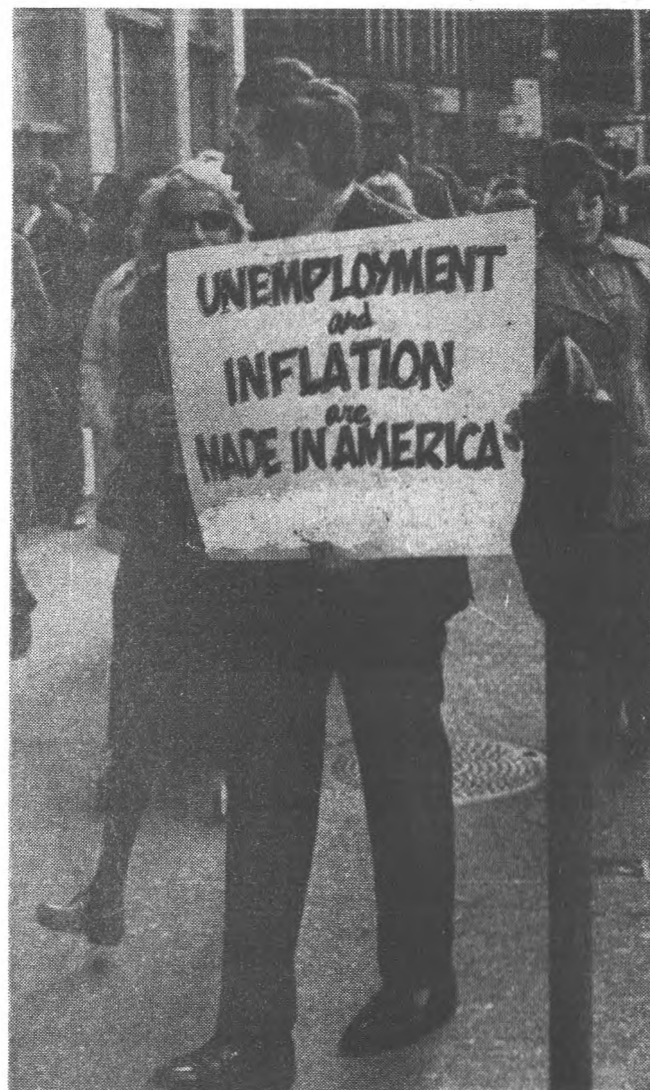
"ANTI-INFLATION" MEASURES

The first of Carter's actions to examine is his anti-inflation program. This program has two main parts — wage and price controls, and the reduction of the budget deficit by slashing federal service programs. The wage and price restraints purportedly calls for the corporate sector and working people to both tighten reins on their demands and join in a united effort to curb inflation and rejuvenate the national economy. What the program does in essence, though, is to guarantee further attacks on the standard of living of workers, the unemployed and the elderly. At the same time, it gives the corporate sector and federal agencies free rein to continue along the path of wage restraints, service cutbacks and giving systematic blows to the power of organized labor and rank and file militancy.

The major thrust of this program lies in Carter's call to restrict annual increases in wages and benefits to 7%. Increases above this standard would be acceptable only if major productivity improvements are guaranteed to the companies (so their profit margins will not be cut by the wage increases). Companies, on the other hand, are urged to limit price increases to 1/2 of 1% below their average annual rate of price increase in 1976-77. (This doesn't apply to specific products but to a company's overall price index.) This means, for example, that if a company's average price increase last year was 10%, it should be "drastically" reduced this year to a 9 1/2% average increase.

As demonstrated in a recent quarterly survey by bourgeois economists of 548 major corporations, after-tax profits had risen by an average of more than 20%, with the greatest advances in the steel industry and airlines. General Motors experienced its most profitable quarter ever. Essentially, the strength of corporate profits are attributable to three main factors: (1) unprecedented price increases, the majority of which occur in consumer products; (2) higher productivity from workers; and (3) maintaining wage and other costs at the minimum level possible so as not to dent profit margins. This process was aided all along by government policies.

The newly-created agency to insure that this program performs smoothly is the Council on Wage and Price Stability (CWPS). Utilizing loopholes and the bureaucratic intricacy of the program, the CWPS has already "legally" allowed many companies to raise their prices above the limit. Two examples are the Hershey company, which



raised the price of their basic candy bar over 25%, and the New York *Daily News* whose Sunday paper has gone from 35 cents to 50 cents, a 43% increase. All this was done and accepted because of "increased productivity costs."

AFL-CIO SUPPORTS WAGE CONTROLS

AFL-CIO president George Meany's position of instituting wage and price controls that are mandatory instead of voluntary in order to make it "fair" for labor is, in essence, an anti-worker position. History has given the American worker an object lesson in this, in that anything that is made mandatory will only be so for the worker. What happened from 1971 to 1974 with Nixon's mandatory wage and price controls? Firms that felt they weren't getting high enough prices simply stopped producing, causing shortages of important products. This forced a lifting of the controls. When the controls were lifted prices quickly went skyhigh. Yet during all this time mandatory controls were strictly enforced to the detriment of the worker. Yet this is what Meany poses as labor's position.

In the arena of government spending, the Carter Program calls for substantial cuts and restraints in the federal budget for next year. These cuts and restraints will occur in social services and federal aid programs for the poor. Already the Carter administration has ordered a \$15 billion cut in federal programs in the 1980 budget, including cuts in Social Security, disability insurance, medicaid and medicare, the water and sewer programs of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Labor Department's public service jobs program, and some of the automatic cost-of-living increases for Federal employees' retirement programs. The welfare program is now undergoing consideration for further cuts.

Carter also imposed severe limits on the hiring of federal employees to "cut the federal deficit." Yet on the other hand, he recently signed a budget which allocates more money than ever before in U.S. history to military spending ("the defense budget")—\$128 billion. Programs to protect the environment and consumers will be drastically reduced because in the words of the President, though these programs are "vital" they "should not place unnecessary burdens on the economy." Thus, in the "national interest," the government will continue to award multinational oil corporations and arms-producing industrialists inflated contracts. While working people can anticipate further deteriorating health and safety conditions corporate profits will continue to soar.

Yet for all their tough words, these new policies failed to convince anyone that inflation would slow down. In particular, holders of American currency abroad believed that their dollars would continue to lose their buying power. They began to rid themselves of American dollars by the millions in favor of other major currencies. This situation finally pushed Carter to implement his new monetary policy in order to "save the dollar."

What this monetary policy does is make money "tight," or in other words, limit the amount of money circulating in the economy. This is basically accomplished by increasing the amount of interest that banks have to pay in order to borrow money from the Federal Reserve Bank. This will in turn restrict credit (the taking out of loans) and raise interest rates.

CARTER ATTEMPTS A "CONTROLLED RECESSION"

What this monetary policy is meant to do is to slow down the economy and attempt to engineer a mild recession that can be controlled by the government. The reason for this is that the bringing on of recessions has become an accepted method by the bourgeoisie to slow down inflation that is cutting into their profits. Unemployment is instrumental to achieving this goal. Reducing the availability of money slows down economic growth, which in turn results in higher unemployment. As unemployment goes up, this creates the conditions to lower wages of the reduced and weakened labor force. Yet all the while the capitalists will continue to raise prices. This is, in a few words, the "logic" of recessions.

On the one hand, politically, Carter does not want a recession on his hands because of the public outcry that will result. The wage and price controls was an attempt at portraying stability internationally, without the effects of a recession. Yet, on the other hand, the government is now trying to bring about a "controlled" recession. Already an increase of more than one percent in the rate of unemployment is predicted in the next few months. This means millions more workers without jobs.

The ramifications of this impending recession will hit the poor and working people very hard at all levels. In particular, the basic services of health, education and other

"I'D LIKE TO EXCHANGE THIS FOR SOMETHING THAT WON'T SHRINK"



community services will further deteriorate. Among all the sectors of the working class, the oppressed nationalities will suffer the most from these new blows.

What can be done? The objective situation that the working class is in must first of all be taken into account. The high level of disorganization, the low level of class-consciousness, the entrenchment of the labor bureaucracy and the obvious absence of any substantial communist integration and influence are part of this reality. Yet even within the widespread apathy and cynicism that has developed within the class we find an incipient rank and file movement and a resurgence of some community activity.

At present communists and progressive forces have only a limited experience within the working class. Thus we should not be so arrogant to think we are in a position to come on the scene and "direct" the masses' fightback against the capitalists. It is only through our consistent and correct practice that we will win the leadership of the class. What must be begun and intensified in this coming period is the integration process at all levels of the working class, both where they work and where they live. We must deepen our experience and knowledge and earn the respect and leadership of the class by our ability to utilize correct tactics and raise the demands that reflect a scientific and concrete analysis of the developing struggle.

As a key part of this we should concentrate our efforts on doing agitational and educational work among the masses. We should attempt to give an understanding of the crisis; expose it as a product of the capitalist system, begin to make the connections between the different struggles and most importantly, thoroughly involve ourselves in the masses' struggles, learn from them, and in the process, begin to give direction. This is how progressives and revolutionaries will be in a position to generate a fightback for the coming recession.

Student Movement: Lessons and Perspectives

In the past few years our organization M.I.N.P., has been involved in organizing students in several universities and high schools in Long Island. In the struggles for bilingual education, open admissions for oppressed nationalities and poor students in general, and against administrative and police harassment of students and youth, we have sought to stimulate students, parents and communities to respond aggressively to the efforts of government and private forces to restrict student rights.

Throughout the 1960's and early 70's we saw tremendous activity and upheaval among students in this country. Many advances were made, particularly among Puerto Ricans and Blacks (Puerto Rican and Black Studies Programs, open admissions, financial aid, etc.) In recent years, because of the crisis affecting the U.S. economy, those in power—the ruling class—have attempted to take back the gains and concessions won in the 1960's. For students from working class backgrounds, this has meant attacks on their rights and needs, and thus on their opportunity to receive an equal and quality education. Special programs are losing their funding, open admissions and free tuition have practically been eliminated, well-qualified and progressive faculty are being fired and high school and university administrations are once again becoming repressive and heavy-handed.

The efforts to democratize the universities and schools have undergone serious setbacks because the level of organization and unity among students has been greatly diminished and fragmented. Student and community response to the accelerated attacks has been weakened by the absence on the campuses and in the schools of strong and dedicated forces who have a militant mass student direction and guidance needed to build a militant mass student movement. But in embryonic forms, in small pockets across the country, a renewed fightback is beginning to emerge. Organizing attempts to defend and expand affirmative action programs, to protest against U.S. government and corporate interests in South Africa and Rhodesia, to demand special programs to secure educational opportunities for working and poor people, etc., are being made by serious organizations. But all of these groups must become critical of their practice to avoid the pitfalls and weaknesses of the past.

The Struggle of C.O.W.

As a case in point, our work at the State University of New York College at Old Westbury (C.O.W.) in Long Island has provided us with three years of organizing experience. At C.O.W. the students are working to maintain the "mission," of the school. The "mission," as defined in the University's Charter, represents the fundamental objective of the school—to provide a quality education to the "traditionally bypassed students," meaning minorities, women older people, veterans and working people. Though this was the main objective of the school at the time of its formation in the early 70's, the student population in the past few years has had to steadily battle the administration's numerous and varied attempts to transform the school into a "traditional" college, thus denying education and proper facilities for the "traditionally-bypassed." The past few years the students have been through various boycotts, demonstrations, rallies, two strikes and a multitude of other actions. (See OEM, Vol. 2 #5). Issues such as changes in the open admissions policy, the firing of progressive faculty and an unwanted mandatory meal plan are all linked to the

overall attack by the administration to destroy C.O.W.'s special "mission" and transform the character of the school.

The students at C.O.W. have had many victories and achievements. In the process of organizing themselves, they have demonstrated a high level of unity and militance. Old Westbury students who are intimately involved in the life and struggle at the school have learned some invaluable skills in the areas of propaganda, public speaking, negotiating abilities and development as leaders overall. Many students on the whole strongly identify with the "mission" and have come out to defend it time and again and to pass on their experience and ideas to students at other schools.

One of the crucial elements in the development of the struggle at C.O.W. was the formation of the Student Union. Through our student sector, Frente Estudiantil Puertorriqueño (F.E.P.), our organization was able to play an instrumental part in the Union's formation. The Student Union's purpose was to function as the forum for discussion, debate and planning among all the students organizations. This would insure increased communication and



Students on strike at Old Westbury, Spring, 1977



Students in California demonstrate against apartheid in South Africa

coordination with the most actively-involved student organizations and would effectively combat the administration's attempts to divide the student body and pit one group against the other. Today, we view the Student Union as the political arms of the student body. Its objective has now broadened to become the voice of all students in the college community, to grow into an effective fight-back mechanism directed at meeting the particular needs of all the groups involved, and to forge unity among faculty and students.

At the same time, there are many weaknesses in the work taking place at C.O.W. The most active student leaders and organizations too often function in isolation from each other. There is not enough communication and coordination of work. As a result, the collective strength of the students is dissipated. There is a lack of a centralized leadership; in recent times, cynicism among many of the students has increased. A consistent leadership, capable of organizing, mobilizing and unifying the student body is essential to provide the framework within which the relationship among the many single issues can be better understood.

Like thousands of high schools and universities across the nation, the struggle at C.O.W. needs greater student involvement on a day-to-day basis. The call for participation and involvement will be effective in mobilizing students only when issues are clearly put forth to the student body and when the potential guiding forces come together and establish a consistent practice and example.

Despite these weaknesses, the student body at C.O.W. is recognized and respected throughout the State University system by progressive individuals and organizations because of its long history of struggle and outstanding example as a highly organized and responsive student body.

Because of this state-wide recognition, the Student Union along with other formations at C.O.W. should use their influence in a productive way to call for debates, conferences and workshops (particularly within the statewide Student Association of the State Universities—SASU) to help stimulate communications and unity among the more progressive student organizations in the state.

LINKING THE CAMPUS WITH THE COMMUNITY

Through F.E.P., our organization has developed a perspective to help guide and direct our work with students, based on our experiences not just on the campuses, but also with youth in high schools. On Long Island we have been able, to an extent, to link up youth work in our communities and high schools to the work going on at the university level—to coordinate and demonstrate the similarity in the struggle among these different student and youth groups. In its practice, F.E.P. has attempted to provide an analysis and understanding of the links between youth and student struggles and the overall struggle of the working class.

It is the objective of our student sector to involve itself in the work to build a mass student movement. It is a bitter reality that the gains and concessions won in the 60s have been eliminated today. But it is this reality that demands the development once again of a united mass student movement, but one that must learn from the errors of the past. The student in the 60's and early 70's fought for student rights, but failed to understand its relationship to the workers' movement and people's struggle for democratic rights. This separation is a basic problem still facing students today.

Besides learning from our own history, we can also learn from the experiences of others. Members of our student sector are beginning to study the revolutionary role students are playing in Latin America and South Africa. These studies provide us with rich experiences of student movements that have contributed to the overall working class struggle in those countries.

In the coming period, we commit ourselves to linking our work in the student movement to the struggles for democratic rights taking place both in the community and in workplaces. This is the perspective and the practice that will push forward the development of a strong student movement placed within the overall struggle for social liberation.



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DAYCARE PARENTS WIN VICTORY AT CENTER

For three years, parents and staff of the Association Daycare Center in Manhattan's Lower East Side have been fighting to win an increased voice in the decision-making process and overall functioning of their center. They have been fighting a so-called community board, composed mainly of dishonest and opportunist individuals, who used the daycare center as a springboard for their own political ambitions; they cared little about the daycare center itself and whether or not it met the needs of the parents and children using the center. Over the course of the three years, the goals of the parents broadened, so that their main objective soon became to throw out the "community board" and install a parent board.

A small core of parents and staff decided that the first major step in the struggle was to elect a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) that could lead the struggle of the parents and demand from the Board that it be responsive to their needs. This decision proved correct. The election of an active and dedicated PAC in 1977 and the effective efforts of organizers on the staff served to accelerate the struggle at Association against the Board of Directors. The PAC played a leading role in exposing and isolating the Board.

ORGANIZING THE PARENTS

Joint parent-staff campaigns were frequently utilized as powerful means to mobilize and broaden the influence of parent leaders, as well as to create favorable conditions for educating the general parent and staff body. Leaflets were written, pickets organized, and discussions held collectively to raise consciousness around the existing conditions in the center and in daycare in general.

The parents grew to acknowledge their own leadership abilities and were able to respond effectively to the irresponsible actions of administrators and board members. The participation of several Marxist-Leninists was key in terms of providing the perspective that the struggle at Association had to be seen within the larger context of an overall struggle for democratic rights—quality education, improved housing conditions, and quality health care.

Since its election a year and one-half ago, the PAC has organized and mobilized parents and staff to insure that their children receive a good education. Through the example of its militancy and firm commitment to quality education, the PAC has been able to incorporate many parents into functioning committees, such as Fund-raising, Recruitment, and temporary Ad-hoc committees. Most importantly, the PAC has mobilized parents to take an active

interest not just in the center, but in improving the conditions in the Lower East Side community overall. A number of parents participated in the struggle last spring to bring the union to the NENA health center in the community (see OEM, Vol. 3, #4). Furthermore, the PAC has been able to sustain the level of struggle at the center, despite consistent harassment by the Board members (i.e., their attempts to divide the PAC from the general parent body, parents from staff, staff from each other, etc.) and the few backward parents and staff who support them. The PAC has also been able to deal successfully with the ongoing difficulties of maintaining peoples' interest, energies, commitment, etc.

Throughout this period, in conjunction with the PAC's determination not to be manipulated by opportunist forces, the basic unity of parents and staff has been maintained. Because of this, the parents



were able to win their major goal. In December, a parent Board was officially installed at Association Daycare Center.

PARENT CONTROL

In a parent-controlled daycare center, parents are active in the daily and long-term aspects of the center. This means they are involved in determining their children's education. All decisions and policies (administrative and educational) are made by a leading representative body of parents (the Parent Board). To guarantee broad parent involvement, a clear understanding of the responsibility and implications of "parent control" must exist both among the parent leaders as well as the general parent body. Education has to take place among the parents as to the role they must play in running the center. The Parent Board must remain responsive to the parent body and the parents must demand accountability from the Board.

The installation of a Parent Board does not mean Association's problems will now disappear. The daycare center exists in the real world of today's national economic crisis and the attacks the government and rulers of this country have made on the standard of living of the working class. The struggle at Association has taken place within the context of cutbacks in government funding both locally and on a national scale. In New York City, \$75 million has been cut from the daycare budget, forcing the layoff of hundreds of daycare employees, the defunding of nearly 100 centers, and the denial of daycare services to thousands of working parents.

At present there is no organized group or movement that can raise the issues confronting daycare. Such a movement is vital and it must be capable of linking this fight to other democratic rights struggles. However, and particularly in these times

when there is little ongoing mass movement anywhere, the call for quality services begins in our communities. Within daycare centers, an organized body of parents and staff is essential to deal with budget cuts, layoffs, restrictive eligibility regulations, and dishonest and self-serving boards.

With the establishment of the Parent Board, the struggle at Association moves onto a higher and more difficult level. M.I.N.P. actively supports the work of the parents and staff at the center to consolidate the Parent Board, and broaden their leadership within the community and to other daycare centers. We view the victory and ongoing efforts of the staff and parents at Association as a stepping stone for further work around education in the Lower East Side. The Association struggle, a gain for the entire Lower East Side community, clearly shows that **IN UNITY THERE IS STRENGTH, IN THE WORKERS LIES THE POWER.**