

INTRODUCTION

Our current strategy in steel is the following. Sadlowski's bid for the presidency is the single focus of our work. We campaign around the election campaign, and we are instructed to relate all issues to the Sadlowski campaign. Our immediate goal is to become leaders of the campaign, to be the best builders of Steel Workers Fight Back, to be hard working campaigners. We do this to gain influence that we can then turn around and use as an opening to begin to convince steelworkers of our broader perspectives on Sadlowski, the union movement, and revolutionary politics.

Meanwhile, to not hide our politics, we openly associate ourselves with our paper, and attack red baiting with the line that socialists have a legitimate place in the labor movement. This strategy follows directly from the so-called mass work theory passed at the last NC, and is based on the same ideas that guided our work in the CGC. The problems with the work stem from the mass work perspective, not from personal weaknesses or inexperience of comrades carrying out the line, or even from sabotage of comrades who disagree with the line.

We are writing this position paper to you, comrades, because we continue to see our strategy forcing us to miss real opportunities for important political work in the mills. Also, the mass work strategy contains some big political blunders that we must not repeat in other work if we want to maintain real rank and file work based on class struggle unionism.

While the strategy for steel listed above may seem sensible on the surface, it doesn't fit the realities of the steelworkers union, of where steelworkers heads are at, of the strengths and weaknesses of the Sadlowski campaign. In fact, we maintain that while this strategy in a different union and a different time might make sense, today it is so far off base as to begin to call into question some fundamental IS politics.

Specifically, our work is creating an unnecessary division between our politics and the organizing we do by being shaky on three important points. (1) We are abandoning our orientation to the shop floor and to the militant minority and shifting our orientation to other lefties, out bureaucrats, or to an "average steelworker" that only exists on paper. (2) We are abandoning our orientation to change from the bottom up, and beginning to claim that the union can be significantly changed from the top down. (3) We now claim that the immediate problem blocking the formation of a rank and file movement is the absence of effective leadership (ours), rather than a problem of steelworkers consciousness, i.e. steelworkers are not convinced of the necessity of fighting.

WHO IS ED SADLOWSKI

The most striking fact about steelworkers today is their deep cynicism. It is not that they have any great faith in Abel, McBride, or business unionism. It is that they have NO faith that an alternative exists. Union politics are the same as any politics, they say. Greased palms, con jobs, horse trading, and sell outs are the name of the game. Since they're all crooks, either don't vote or vote for the slickest crook -- he may be able to put one over on the company as well.

In this view, Sadlowski's gimmick is his claim to wear a white hat. Our Hero. His attempt to appear as just another steelworker has earned him the snickering nickname, "Shot and a Beer." McBride has been able to play on this cynicism by publicizing the fact that Eddie receives political and financial support from the "limosine liberals" (people like Raugh, and many who were part of the Kennedy administration). In fact, his support by these people is more of an issue than his support by REDS. Because people ask, just why are these wealthy types supporting Eddie? What's in it for them? And that, comrades, is a damn good question.

But really, who is that masked man? Ed Sadlowski was one of (if not the) youngest local union president in the history of the steelworkers. He was then appointed by Abel as a staffman in District 31, and from there launched his campaign for District Director at the urging of several longtime oppositionists. He ran against Sam Evett, the successor to Joe Germano, one of the most hated and corrupt business unionists in the entire union. Through vote fraud, he lost the first election, went to court and sued for a rematch, and overwhelmingly won the second election.

Sadlowski is a genuine reformer trying to break up what he sees as a Mayor Daley style machine. He thinks he's a socialist, but only tells that to certain audiences. In the left press, he bitterly attacks the no strike deal, demands elected staffmen, and argues for a strong attempt to organize the unorganized. His own literature is silent on these questions except to propose that we vote on the No Strike Deal.

His wavering on issues is not completely due to personal indecision. Rather, he believes that you tell people what they are ready to hear, and he believes that the steelworkers are more conservative than he is. (i.e. he supports the IS mass work line) He's a hell of a nice guy, and a committed left wing bureaucrat who sees himself to the left of the rank and file. And as the labor movement surfaces again, he's a type we'll be seeing a lot more of.

He's a bureaucrat not just because of his occupation, but because of his strategy. He believes that the union can be fundamentally changed and made more democratic by changing the person at the top. And if existing motion in the rank and file

has to be subordinated to the needs of the election, he is fully prepared to do so.

We should support him because he represents a challenge to Business Unionism (not simply because he is, as his p.r. points out, a MAN vs. Machine). We should support him because there is some healthy motion around his candidacy. And we should support him because we can USE his campaign to both meet those militants already convinced of the need to take on Business Unionism at the shop floor level; and to try to convince others of this.

We are critical precisely because he and his supporters are dead wrong to think you can change a union from the top down. His electoral campaign will not work.

Our criticism should not be over campaign tactics. Even his vehemence on the issues is of secondary concern. We are critical because, even if Eddie were in the IS, he wouldn't be able to change the union by getting himself elected. There is plenty of good, hard evidence that the electoral approach to union reform doesn't work. The mineworkers, with a much stronger movement (district-wide strikes, strong rank and file safety organizations like Black Lung Association), put the force of that movement behind an election campaign to elect not an ex-staffman, but Patrick, a wildcat strike leader, and Miller, a miner with black lung. When the election was won, the miners thought they had it made. Now they have to fight Miller to get the "right" to strike. And here they elected Miller as a means of insuring that "right" in the first place.

We can look at the steelworkers union and Ed Sadlowski to see why the electoral approach is extremely limited. People supported Sadlowski during his campaign for District 31 Director because he stood for union reform. However after his election, his support decreased as he failed to live up to the expectations of his ranks.

Sadlowski in Office

What went wrong? The conventional explanation for Eddie's inactivity as District Director was that Abel tied his hands. And Abel certainly tried. Sadlowski moved into an office stripped of all files and information. Abel refused to approve any staff appointments for Sadlowski - in a District where the 65 odd staff representatives were solidly against him (with one lone exception).

Faced with this mess, there was no way he could do the usual tasks of a District Director. So he had to make a decision. He could either sit tight until the presidential campaign (and use his press connections and Fight Back to explain why he couldn't function), or he could go directly to the membership and organize them to change the union.

Sadlowski chose to sit tight. And he began to be known as a whiner, and he began to move to the right.

When militants were fired, and the staffmen deliberately fucked up their grievances, Sadlowski advised them to get a lawyer, or to go to the solidly pro Abel Civil Rights Department of District 31, where they were shafted. He said, "My hands are tied."

When a strike in a huge fabricating plant dragged on for 13 weeks with occasional eruptions of violence and sabotage, Sadlowski did not even visit the picketline. This in spite of constant appeals from the strike leaders who were Fight Back members. The right wing of the plant took advantage of this and organized a picket outside Ed's office, asking "Where's Eddie." The strike was defeated when the strikers finally gave in to a court injunction against mass pickets. Eddie was too busy. Eddie's hands were tied.

During his campaign, Sadlowski had promised a district-wide newsletter to not only let people know exactly what was going on at a district level, but to be used as an information exchange at a local level. We won back pay by doing this; we lost our strike because of this, etc. The newsletter never came out. And Fight Back members were angry about this. "I need something to show the guys in my plant that we're not alone and that Ed means business." I'm tired of reading about Eddie in the Sun Times. What has he got to say to us?"

When the newsletter came up (erupted) at a District-wide Fight Back meeting, Sadlowski was quite honest about it. He couldn't put out a newsletter that talked about local issues because some of his supporters would disagree with the positions taken by the newsletter. For example, he said, "Some of you in this very room will run against each other for local office. If I support one of you, I lose the support of the other."

While in office, Eddie did no organizing not directly linked to his future presidential campaign. The one apparent exception was no exception. He used Fight Back money to send people outside the district with leaflets calling for a special convention on officers' salaries and dues. Fight Back members saw this and applauded this as a great way to build national support for a presidential campaign. And it was an excellent idea. If only he had been willing to use similar tactics in District 31 to fight the stranglehold of I.W. Abel.

But this is the key. When Abel prevented business (unionism) as usual in District 31, it was a golden opportunity for Ed Sadlowski to take a lead in organizing the alternative to business unionism. Ignoring rank and file organizing played into the hands of the cynics, and the right wing.

As the presidential campaign develops, Sadlowski is maintaining his shift to the right while losing past supporters. McBride has actually won nominations in locals that not only were solid for Sadlowski, but that elected militants on a Sadlowski endorsed slate for local union office. Eddie's own literature is weaker

than the leaflets he passed out when he ran for District Director. Even his slogan is changed from "The time to fight is now" to "Tough enough to make a difference."

And there is no getting around the fact that his choice of running mates stinks. Aside from the fact that he hand picked them, the slate includes such turkeys as Kmec, who organized a staffer's union openly as a means of buying staff support for McDonald (Mr. Tuxedo Unionism himself) against that rabble rouser, I.W. Abel. This is the slate we support "unconditionally"?

Is the Sadlowski campaign a movement? No. Where are the job actions, slowdowns, walkouts that accompany every workers movement? Where are the strikes and rank and file organizations that provided Miners for Democracy with a basis to run Miller for President?

A handful of election rallies, a heavy leafleting schedule, and a few fist fights do not equal a movement. What the Sadlowski campaign does add up to is an interesting, at times exciting, election campaign involving issues crucial to the movement yet to come, and involving steelworkers we want to work with.

Is Steel Workers Fight Back a rank and file opposition group? No. It is an election campaign organization with oppositionists (among others) active in it.

WHAT IS STEEL WORKERS FIGHT BACK

Introduction

Steel workers Fight Back is the new name for Steelworkers for Sadlowski, the campaign organization for Eddie when he was running for District 31 Director in 1974. A loose-knit coalition of opposition groups within the locals in the district form the backbone of District 31 Fight Back. The left is strong in Fight Back, although as the presidential campaign draws near, some left groups have dropped out, and more and more bureaucrats and business unionists have come around the Sadlowski organization. There has been rank and file participation in Fight Back in the past and there still is. Fight Back is not a membership organization, participants come and go, while a small group of people, generally bureaucrats and leftists make up the hard core. However particularly in the Gary-Chicago area the changing nature of Fight Back has become increasingly evident.

Joliet Fight Back, 1975

The previous experience of the IS with Fight Back provides an example of the best form of that organization, and of what building a political pole of attraction looks like in practice. Our intervention then (if such casual, erratic work can be called intervention) consisted of attending no more than 7 or 8 meetings

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on an irregular basis in Joliet, Illinois. Three IS members were involved: one a member of the union with 2 months seniority (and the only woman at these meetings), one an electronics technician, and one in IBT.

We were unusually lucky because the Joliet Fight Back chapter was largely rank and file. We raised any points we wanted to, and while some disagreed with us, no one thought we were looney or sectarian. In fact, the only people turned off by our participation were Ed Sadlowski and Clem Balanoff, his campaign manager. When Clem tried to get us uninvited to the meetings, the Fight Back members called him looney and sectarian.

What was our intervention in this group? We convinced two members of a negotiating committee in a small plant to drop both binding arbitration and the standard no strike-no lockout during the term of the contract clauses from their contract proposals. We also convinced the chapter to take on Sadlowski on getting financial aid to organizing drives in fabricating plants. Our chapter went to the District Fight Back meeting and raised hell about Sadlowski's reluctance to put out a district-wide newspaper, and then the chapter began to organize a paper of its own.

The biggest block to action in the Joliet Fight Back was the "Wait for Eddie" syndrome. One member suggested a picket at the USWA PAC (steelworkers COPE), while another argued that it might cause trouble for Eddie. When something came up, the response was: "What does Eddie say about this?" or, "Tell Eddie about that."

A black steelworker was framed and fired for his activity in Fight Back. The staff man shitcanned the grievance, and Fight Back was paralyzed waiting for Eddie. People started asking why Eddie hadn't done anything for this man as the weeks went by. We had picketing and mass leafleting plans in support of the fired worker that were called off after Eddie convinced him that the leaflets might "adversely affect his legal case."

By deliberately looking for the troublemakers in the Joliet chapter; and by working with them (often against the majority) at the meetings, we had an impact far greater than our size in steel. The high point of our work was when 3 steelworkers sat us down and asked to be a part of 'this Workers Power movement thing.'

With the current 'tightening up' of Fight Back, we can not expect gains to be so easily won. However, the basic approach, far from being sectarian and abstract, is the approach we should be using now.

Fight Back Transformation

The Joliet Fight Back was an open situation where the chapter was developing a program for rank and file struggle in the steelworkers union. However Joliet was far away from the control of the Sadlowski center in Chicago, and was much freer than other

Fight Back organizations of that time. In Joliet it was easier for the IS to be political and to influence rank and filers.

A transformation took place in the Steel Workers Fight Back organization as it geared up for the presidential campaign. It changed from a situation where in some areas the rank and file was organized and was demanding a district-wide newsletter and assistance for local organizing to a situation where the organization became dominated by bureaucrats and members of left groups. Gone was the initiative of the ranks such as Joliet in 1975 coming to Fight Back meetings with questions, problems, and suggestions from their local struggles; replaced by the initiative of the bureaucrats and aspiring bureaucrats, in all the places we are working, looking to increase their power through their support of Sadlowski.

Fight Back During Presidential Campaign

The amount of openness within the Fight Back organization has varied from city to city, and the closer we get to February 8, the less flexible it will be. The following information was taken from the December, 1976 Steel Fraction Bulletin.

CLEVELAND. There are three distinct kinds of people who are active in Fight Back in Cleveland. There are the leftists, including the RCP, CLP, SWP, and 2 ISers. There are the older union politicians, usually union officers and their cronies, who are generally anti-red. And there are independent rank and file people, mostly militant or anti-establishment types. Most of these people are from basic steel, very few are black. The Fight Back climate is such that no one has been very open about their politics because of "the question of feeling uptight with the older union politicians, who do not seem to realize that 75 per cent of the meeting's attendance is from leftwingers." When the Cleveland Fight Back was formed, the Chicago Sadlowski office intervened and "they made it clear that it was this group (the older union politicians) who should be given the authority."

PITTSBURGH. The Clairton Fight Back Steering Committee consists of 1 SWP; 1 or 2 CP, 2 RCP, 2 IS, our contacts and some unaligned rank and filers. Homestead is also "a stronghold for the Sadlowski campaign." Two key rank and filers "came out strongly in support of our (IS) initiative and have privately admitted their disgust at Coyne and the Fight Back's unwillingness to organize the rank and file." The second issue of SSU (Steelworkers Stand UP), written and published by the IS, "is the most visible and creditable source of any information on the Sadlowski campaign and local issues in the Pittsburgh area." SSU was described in this same Pittsburgh report as "bordering on uncritical support" for Sadlowski at the present time. (This quote was edited out of the report printed in the December Steel Fraction Bulletin, leaving a blank space in the Pittsburgh Report, pg. 2, sec. 4, par. 1.)

GARY. At U.S. Steel the Sadlowski campaign is "a swamp of forces: Fight Back people from Chicago, Indiana Steelworkers Caucus (generally opportunist leadership group associated with the '74 campaign), 1014 United Rank and File Club (a mainly electoral coalition between some black union activists and a half dozen white CPers, old and young)," and our 5 comrades. At Inland "the dominant force in the local is the Rank and File Club. Almost all local officials and grievors are part of this club. It is led by the president of the local, Jim Balanoff, a onetime CP'er." Balanoff is running for District 31 Director, Sadlowski's present position. We have 3 industrialized members at Inland.

Summary

In many ways Steel Workers Fight Back is like the situation the IS faced in CLUW. At the CLUW founding convention there was tremendous rank and file participation as well as participation of union bureaucrats and leftists. However CLUW was transformed into an organization primarily of bureaucrats and leftists, with few rank and file participants remaining. As with Fight Back now, few new people come to CLUW meetings, and if they do, very few rank and filers come back to become active participants in the organization.

As in CLUW, the IS should be participating in Fight Back wherever possible, working to (1) establish contact with rank and filers involved in the campaign by providing a political pole of attraction; (2) agitate for the need to have an independent rank and file movement to change the union ; and (3) operate consistently as the people with the correct analyses and suggestions for developing the class struggle in the steelworkers union.

IS STEEL PERSPECTIVES

The following discussion deals with the political basis of what we are doing in steel. It draws heavily on several documents which comrades should have. Two of them, IS in the Sadlowski Campaign and Critical Support For Sadlowski were recently reprinted in an internal bulletin. A third is the fall NC document, Mass Work, Politics, Building the Party. We recommend that comrades reread these documents.

Contradictions and Confusion

The major thrust of the new IS line calls for an IS campaign around the Sadlowski campaign. The focus of our intervention will be to strengthen and broaden the Sadlowski campaign. Toward this end and to lay the basis for later raising our politics, we are to

be the best builders of the campaign. Within this outline, how are we to raise our politics in Fight Back?

The document, IS in the Sadlowski Campaign is the operational guide to action in the Sadlowski campaign. In nine points it spells out the implementation of the political line of critical support for Sadlowski (see point 1) As a whole the document is rife with contradictions. The good political points are subverted by suggestions which prevent their implementation. Some examples.

"In the immediate future, there is no possibility of a mass rank and file movement--independent of the bureaucracy--sweeping him (Sادلowski) or anyone to national power in the union. Whatever private opinions Sadlowski may hold, ... Sadlowski's behavior as a union president will be severely limited by the collaborationist limits and bureaucratic methods that will be imposed on him." (point 9)

Yes, but unfortunately, we state as well, "To most workers today, our long term assessment of Sadlowski's limits will be just an abstraction." (point 9)

Well, apparently we think that steelworkers are incapable of thought and can only learn the hard way. The reality is that the general cynicism of steelworkers leads many to wonder if Sadlowski will be any different than other politicians once he gets in office.

So how can we try to raise our views of the campaign? A method is suggested in point 7: "We want to fight for our direction mainly through action and example." Which actions? Which examples? Examples from other unions and times are ruled out as "just talk." That leaves us with the long shot that our own work may be strong enough to be a convincing example. But there's a catch. "In each mill it should be our perspective to fold our existing work into the Fight Back movement." To fold existing shop floor work into Fight Back means simply to stop doing shop floor work. That is why we are opposed to dissolving our work. Not because our work was so terrific and strong, but because shop floor work is so important that it should not wait until after Eddie's election.

Without "forcing confrontations" or organizing disputes, what is left for us to do inside Fight Back? We will argue for "participation of workers," but then even the most reactionary bureaucrat never won a referendum without it. We will raise "calling rallies and mass meetings," we will propose leaflets on the issues which compare Sadlowski to McBride. Unfortunately both candidates already call rallies and have leaflets on the issues, in spite of their political differences with us. The heat of our fire will be spent on questions like whether a regional fund raising dance is better than a local one. And it is on these side issues that the IS wages a fight.

After a McBride leaflet attacked Eddie for supporting gun control, the Pittsburgh Fight Back wouldn't put out a counter

leaflet, so we did. We considered it a major victory to put out a leaflet saying that McBride and Sadlowski had the same position on gun control.

Further, by trying to start a dialogue with a paper "average steelworker" (mass steelworker?), whose only suspicions of Sadlowski are that he is too radical, we say nothing to steelworkers who suspect Sadlowski of being a McBride in militant's clothing.

The new IS line does claim to lay out a plan for turning Fight Back chapters into "groups that are more than merely electoral campaign organizations" by becoming "involved in the day to day issues of their mill and their locals, and to deal with the broader issues facing the union in a political way." (point 3) But there are two things that prevent us from trying to do that. First is the problem already discussed: that Fight Backs are now more than ever simply election organizations, with a membership under the gun to get out the vote next month. Second, the IS line prevents us from trying to change Fight Back.

In dealing with the political content of local Fight Back newsletters, point 7 tells us we are not to "force a confrontation" unless we will win. Further, "Our main intervention is not to organize in Fight Back polemics and disputes over the politics and direction of the overall campaign." How are we to change the primarily electoral activity of a campaign organization without many "confrontations" and "disputes"?

Fight Back is a campaign organization. A solid majority of its members view it's job as getting out the vote. Changing the character of the Fight Backs means a big fight, not only with the bureaucrats but with the rank and filers who are convinced that electing Sadlowski is the first step to changing the union. IS in the Sadlowski Campaign forbids us to fight big fights, or to raise issues that we will lose on.

Critical Support

We should be critical of Sadlowski not because we think that he does not know how to run a campaign, or even that he is mushy on some key issues facing steelworkers. We are critical of Sadlowski because of his relationship to the rank and file. He does not believe that steelworkers should run their own union--but that he should. Sadlowski represents a strategy which is fundamentally opposed to ours. What we agree about is the need to change the union. Our difference comes down to this--we think that to change the USW a rank and file movement which finds the source of its power on the shop floor must be built. Sadlowski thinks that he is "tough enough to make the difference."

Revolutionaries are not abstentionist. We do not sit idle on the sidelines when a struggle which will contribute to shaping the movement we seek to build is waged, however much we disagree with the antagonists. Rather we recognize that we must always

establish ways of working in formations of the class which are both broader and more conservative than we are. The revolutionary socialist movement has evolved methods for operating in broader formations. Important among them is the tactic of critical support.

Critical support is not, as noted in IS in the Sadlowski Campaign, "embarrassed support," "unenthusiastic support," "unenthusiastic support," "hesitant and vacillating support" etc.' Nor is it embarrassed, unenthusiastic, hesitant or vacillating criticism. Critical support recognizes that the formation we wish to be part of is making a mistake but that it is vital that we approach these workers from the political position of support for their goals and disagreement with their means. It means that we have an alternative to offer even though there is no prospect of it's immediate implementation.

In the USW today Sadlowski poses himself as the agent for changing the union. In general terms, he offers to steelworkers the prospect of a more democratic, fighting union. We are for a more democratic, fighting union. We know, however, that no one person is tough enough to make the difference. We know that the only agent of significant change in the USW is the rank and file. We also know that Sadlowski will rally steelworkers to his program for change who we could not now reach through our own efforts. Our task is to reach these workers and win them to our method of struggle.

The "critical" part of critical support does not mean that we are the people who spend their time badmouthing what others are attempting to do. We are critical because we have an alternative to offer. Not an alternative candidate for the USW presidency, but an alternative to the electoral method of change--the construction of a shop floor based rank and file movement.

The key to implementing a position of critical support is the notion of building an opposite political pole of attraction. To do so, we must be prepared to dispute "the politics and direction of the overall campaign." In a situation where "there is no possibility of a mass rank and file movement" we must not shrink from becoming the propagandists of that movement. And yes, we must "force confrontations" even if we lose them. We do not always fight the popular fight and there is no way for politics to change without disputes.

In practice, building a political pole of attraction resolves into the problems of finding effective ways to present our alternative. This is not primarily a question of legitimacy. It is the question of finding the way to say what we have to say that is relevant to the living issues. When we criticize Sadlowski for the way he organizes or for fudging issues, we do it to communicate our understanding that he does this for political reasons, not because he is "sloppy" or "half hearted." What is "legitimate" varies from place to place, time to time, person to person. Yes, we are more than verbal supporters. We do "shit work". But we

do "shitwork" not to win the accolade as the "best builders" and to become legitimate, but with a political orientation to working with those we can move to our alternative.

The rudiments of critical support were mapped out at the steel fraction meeting during our last convention. Kim M.'s proposed document, Draft Steel Perspective, states:

"A positive approach to the situation requires that we give critical support to the Sadlowski campaign. We want to see Sadlowski win, because we want to see the old machine decisively defeated. And because we want the political life of the union opened up . . ."

"At the same time, we in no way give up our criticisms of and opposition to the crass opportunism of Sadlowski and the methods of Trade Union reformism. Through both propaganda and whatever agitation we can effectively lead or participate in, we will seek to expose the bankruptcy of his method."

What caused the change in our steel perspective between the adoption of critical support at the convention and the adoption of the implementation document IS in the Sadlowski Campaign at the Toledo steel meeting? It was the carrying out of the "Mass Work" line.

Mass Work

Defining "mass work" is a peculiar task. The NC "mass work" document says some of what "mass work" might be, some of what it isn't, and not very much of what it is. Some things we are told. For instance that it is "a major political shift by the IS away from previous views" (EC document, Clearing Up the Opposition's Muddle, p. 2). Our previous view we called class struggle unionism.

Class struggle unionism drew on the historical experience of the Minority Movement in Britain of the 1920's and the similar American Trade Union Education League of the same period. The position, class struggle unionism, attempted to define the politics with which we operated in broader, more conservative formations. It contained the ideas out of which we construct our pole of attraction. The position expressed the need to build a rank and file movement, based on the shop floor, independent of the state and bureaucracy, which would transform class collaborationist unions into weapons of the class struggle and move the class significantly toward revolution. "Mass work" is indeed "a major political shift" from this view.

"Mass work", we are told, does not necessarily have anything to do with masses. The document Mass Work, Politics, Building the Party spends much of its time explaining the need to work in formations which are broader than ourselves. It does not define a political basis for that work. The document presents "mass work" as a method, and is politically vague.

In spite of the document, supporters of the "mass work" line boil the position down to a formula. It runs -- mass work is our effort to organize all those who are prepared to fight, on whatever basis they are prepared to fight on.

Well, what about that "whatever"? Workers do struggle, sometimes they are led by rank and filers or revolutionaries, sometimes by bureaucrats or even fascists. If "whatever" is the basis of struggle, then how do we orient to workers led by bureaucrats, racists, or fascists. "Mass work" tells us that we should organize and fight, but nothing about the political direction of the fight.

It is argued that politics are supplied by the general politics of the organization or by the fact that we are, ourselves, socialists. But how can this be when we are informed:

"The essence of this position is that we aim to limit and focus our demands as much as we can while still remaining effective." (EC Convention Document, "Clearing Up the Opposition's Muddle," p. 2)

"Mass work" reduces to organizing "whatever", the bigger the better, around more and more limited and focused demands. Political ideas are communicated to workers by rubbing elbows with socialists in a common struggle. And we can all hope that the necessary lessons are vividly shown in the course of the struggle, for it is evidently not our place to draw them in advance.

"Our main intervention is not to organize in Fight Back polemics and disputes over the politics and direction of the overall campaign -- or to be the people mainly known for asking the embarrassing questions." (IS in the Sadlowski Campaign, point 7)

This is the heart of the question. Dropping the abrasive terms "polemics" and "disputes," it must be asked, why aren't we to attempt to organize in Fight Back a discussion of the overall politics and direction of the campaign? It is not that we are uncertain about Sadlowski. Our document "Critical Support for Sadlowski" says quite clearly that Sadlowski is a trade union reformist, already showing signs of becoming a "run of the mill bureaucrat," who will not take on the companies. So the reason the IS refuses to raise criticisms is not because we want to give Sadlowski the benefit of the doubt, it is that the IS has a different method of raising politics.

"We want to fight for our direction mainly through action and example. To do this will require tactical flexibility and maneuvering. Our influence among Fight Back activists will be predicated on our establishing a reputation as practical, hard working campaign workers." . . . "Though we have criticisms, we want to be active, enthusiastic, proud members of Fight Back -- and its best builders." (IS in the Sadlowski Campaign, point 7)

This is the "method" of "mass work". Do not make unpleasant political statements at meetings, and pass yourself off as a practical, hard working campaigner -- even as the campaign's "best builder." It is only by placing ourselves in the leadership of Fight Back, or at least by working hard for Sadlowski's election, the IS line maintains, that we will get a hearing for our broader views. Since the vast majority of "best builders" of the campaign are all members of other left groups or bureaucrats, this method of "gaining credibility" leads us to spend much of our time in meetings and negotiations, with leftists and bureaucrats rather than with rank and file militants

To the IS press is left the job of supplying the rank and file with our analysis of Sadlowski and our perspectives on building a rank and file movement. The hope is that the people we work with in the Fight Back will be interested in reading the literature of a group which distinguishes itself for being the people who always volunteer for committees and who are always willing to pass out leaflets when no one else wants to. But even here isn't there a contradiction? Might not our members have to defend the ideas of their paper in the Fight Backs -- have "polemics" and "disputes." So isn't it tempting to airbrush the criticisms from the pages of Workers Power, and to print the praise in boldface.

At stake in steel is the question of our political orientation. The document, Mass work, Politics, Building the Party states, "However small the number of workers actually involved, we appeal to them on the basis of class, of shared material interests, and not primarily on the basis of politics." Sadlowski has politics, the politics of a reform bureaucrat, who more than anything else wants to get elected. The "mass work" theory directs us to become the "best builders" of the Sadlowski campaign. And to the extent to which we become that and fail to systematically pose our own alternative -- a bottom up rank and file movement, then we become the "best builders" of Sadlowski's politics and not our own.

Our line in steel is confused and contradictory. The "mass work" method eats away at our position of critical support. Contradictions have a way of resolving themselves. Critical support becomes, in practice, merely support. In steel, comrades, we are traveling to the right.

IS PRACTICE IN STEEL

Out of the ambiguous and contradictory nature of the "mass work" theory and the subsequent Steel Perspective, a clear understanding of the implication of these ideas can be found in their implementation. Because our intervention in the Sadlowski campaign is not yet completed, the evidence is not complete; but based on what we do know, a serious rightward trend is indicated in IS politics.

The key to understanding this trend in practice is an examination of Workers Power coverage of steel. As our primary tool for

political intervention in the campaign, Workers Power stands above the individual shortcomings of our cadre to express our political line. Our analysis of the steel coverage documents shows this rightward degeneration of our politics. There is further evidence that in practice our perspective has led us in an even more rightward direction than indicated in theory.

WORKERS POWER

Introduction

The Workers Power coverage of the Sadlowski campaign and the steelworkers union is a reflection of a strong conservative trend that is developing in IS politics. In steel, the strategy of "Mass work" has meant that our coverage has been directed at steelworkers as a whole, and to a lesser extent, people around the Sadlowski campaign. This strategy flowed from our analysis of the campaign as being on a relatively high plane politically, based on Sadlowski's politics and his "fine stands."

For the first time Workers Power has been used as a tool of "direct intervention" in an IS campaign. (In the past we have set up an intermediary class struggle unionist paper such as Network in auto.) This was necessitated by our perspective of being the "best builders" of the Sadlowski campaign machine and not being known as the people raising "embarrassing questions," i.e. a class struggle unionist perspective within Steel Workers Fight Back.

In theory then we were to raise both a class struggle unionist and a revolutionary socialist perspective in our steel coverage. In reality we consistently failed to do both. We have spent much of our recent coverage trying to tutor Eddie and members of his campaign machine on how to organize a "rank and file campaign." There hasn't been a full discussion of Sadlowski as a trade union reformist and McBride as a total class collaborationist, nor of the issues involved. We have ignored the history of the organization of the steelworkers union and the reform struggles that followed. No analysis of the employers offensive in steel and the rank and file and USWA bureaucracy's response to it has been presented. A class analysis which provides us with a tool for explaining these things and a handle for introducing socialist politics at every opportunity has been shelved.

But Workers Power coverage of steel, in accordance with the steel perspectives, has done one thing consistently, criticized Sadlowski for not organizing a "rank and file campaign." We believed that Sadlowski could not win unless a rank and file movement was built around Eddie. By the end of the nominating period, Sadlowski proved that significant support could be won without this motion, thus undercutting our original basis of criticism. In the last issue of Workers Power (Dec. 20) our changing emphasis is in the right direction but continues to float in the same confused political vacuum of the entire WP steel coverage.

Initial Critical Support for Sadlowski

Prior to the industrialization of most comrades in steel, the strengthening of a national steel fraction and an official line in steel, the meager WP coverage of steel took a highly critical attitude toward Sadlowski, stressing the importance of building an independent rank and file movement based on the shop floor to break the no strike deal (ENA) and win the right to ratify contracts. After mentioning the issues of the ENA, productivity committees, local ratification, minority representation, voluntary overtime, and 32 for 40, a 1975 article on the USWA District 31 Conference states:

Sadlowski supporters expected far stronger opposition (sic.). But with Sam Evett, the former district director absent, Abel supporters were disorganized. In addition, Sadlowski put up little for the bureaucrats to fight about. (emphasis added)

What was missing was a discussion of what steelworkers can do on the job to win the demands listed in the resolution they voted for. Without that, all of Sadlowski's resolutions are so much talk. (emphasis added) "Largest Steel District Votes No on 'No Strike'" WP, July 24-Aug. 6, 1975.

This emphasis on building an independent rank and file movement and addressing specific demands continued as more comrades industrialized and we attempted to build and transform the Rank and File Team (RAFT) into a class struggle unionist organization. This effort failed, making a new perspective necessary as the 1976 IS convention approached.

Two documents came out of the convention, "Draft Steel Perspective" and "Critical Support for Sadlowski." The first proposed a CGC type coalition between RAFT, National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee (CP controlled) and whatever local caucuses we could pick up. It would be independent of the Sadlowski campaign and would have raised the demands of "Break the ENA"; "No Lame Duck Bargaining" and "Membership Ratification of Contract." The second document established the line of "unconditional, critical support" for Sadlowski.

Building a Left Bureaucrats Campaign

After the convention, the idea of a coalition was scrapped because we realized we did not have the forces to pull it off. WP continued to maintain a critical stance toward Sadlowski, both on his position on the issues and his relationship to rank and file organizing. On August 3, 1976, an article on a Sadlowski campaign meeting stated:

Another question (by a rank and filer?) was, "What is your strategy for smashing the ENA and winning the right to strike?" Sadlowski replied, "Legally speaking, under Section 7A of the NLRB, you're stuck with it until the agreement runs out." That means he's a politician without a serious strategy for turning the union around.

But this article concluded:

Sadlowski can not come into office unless it's on the back of a rank and file movement. That movement is now beginning to form. A victory against the Abel machine will give that movement more clout and confidence and will open things up in the union for the ranks to organize.

Here, a confusion develops in which the construction of a left bureaucrat's electoral machine is seen as the beginning of a rank and file movement. The call for the immediate need for independent rank and file organizing raised in 1975 is scrapped, never to be raised again in our coverage of steel.

This development corresponded with our new perspective of "folding our existing work into the fightback movement" (IS in the Sadlowski Campaign, Jack W., p. 2) Thus we now come to the point of abandoning both independent work around the national contract, and local and shop floor issues. The stage for struggle had shifted from the shop floor to the Fight Back offices. An emphasis on independent activity would have to wait until after Feb. 8.

Split in the Bureaucracy, the Rank and File Rebellion, and Eddie

The watershed in WP coverage came with the series of articles on the steelworkers' convention. A pre-convention story emphasized the possibility of the beginning of a rank and file rebellion and of a continuing split in the bureaucracy over succession. We did not directly criticize Sadlowski, but called on his supporters to pressure him to fight on the issues at the convention.

The next article started with the headline of Sept. 6, 1976, COMING APART AT THE TOP. Most of the three column article was spent totally contradicting the headline. In fact, the USWA bureaucracy had just united behind McBride. As in Auto, we mistakenly believed that there would be a prolonged split over succession.

This headline not only epitomizes our clinging to an incorrect analysis of the USWA bureaucracy, but of the nature of the Sadlowski campaign. All through our coverage of steel, we state that a "rank and file rebellion" is brewing and that a "rank and file movement" is building around Sadlowski. These statements ignore the fact that Eddie's campaign machine is and has been composed primarily of local officials, friends of bureaucrats, lefties, and some independent rank and filers. Underlying this incorrect analysis is a refusal to examine the objective conditions in steel and therefore the level of class consciousness of steelworkers and the possibility of a genuine rank and file movement.

Without this analysis, our WP coverage is relegated to superficial comments on the anger of Fight Back members at Sadlowski's refusal to wage a fight around the issues at the convention and a

call for "militants behind Sadlowski" to organize so that McBride wouldn't retain the initiative in the campaign. Not only that, but all through the coverage we imply the existence of a rank and file movement around Sadlowski.

In reporting the convention, we did not directly criticize Sadlowski for refusing to take a stand on any issues, let alone organizing a fight. Here we missed an opening to expand why Eddie didn't take any stands and just what the inconsistency of a trade union reformist without an independent rank and file movement is all about. Almost our entire focus is on what supporters should do -- put pressure on him. We fail to raise the idea that the best way to put pressure on Eddie is for steelworkers to organize themselves around the issues in the union.

Our final article on the convention criticizes Sadlowski for toning down a meeting with his supporters and for not showing enough "organization and aggressiveness." Hardly substantive criticisms.

Unconditional Critical Support Becomes Increasingly Uncritical

An October 11 article on a campaign rally praised Sadlowski for "taking a harder and clearer stand on some of the issues" and for showing "new aggressiveness" by attacking the ENA as an expression of the philosophy of in his words "cooperation with the bosses." Later in the same article, we call for "local organization of rank and filers dedicated to both electing Sadlowski and changing the union." Another article in the same issue on the ENA ends with the comment, "Unless Sadlowski outlines how he plans to stop lame duck negotiations and smash the ENA in time for 1977 bargaining, all his talk against the no strike deal is little more than empty rhetoric." As if Sadlowski could "smash the ENA." What Eddie lacks is a plan!

In the next issue of WP, we go as far as creating positions on Sadlowski's platform: "Sادلowski's platform calls for the election, rather than appointment of staff representatives." (WP, Oct. 18, 1976) This is not true, although sporadically Sadlowski has hinted at the idea. Later, we state the most important activity for Steelworkers to be involved with: "The campaign has great promise and steelworkers should do everything they can to get Sadlowski elected." (emphasis added) Not a hint of independent rank and file activity in our coverage.

IS and the Sadlowski Campaign

The October 25 issue of WP contained a report on the national steel fraction meeting in Toledo. The article was spent answering the headline question, "Why We're Building Sadlowski Campaign."

The reason for working in the campaign is not that one man (person) can change the union, even given the best of intentions. Rather, the campaign, to succeed, must touch off a mass movement of steelworkers which can do that job.

The Sadlowski campaign should be built in such a way as to build that movement. (emphasis and correction added) . . .

The majority felt that the Sadlowski campaign opened up the opportunity to build the rank and file movement at a much more political level than was previously possible.

. . . The majority therefore argued that virtually all available resources should be thrown into the campaign and that we should urge independent rank and file groups to merge their work into the campaign. (emphasis added)

Here's where we get ourselves in a bind. On the one hand, we say that the campaign should be directed toward building a rank and file movement. On the other, we say that the way to build an independent rank and file movement is simply to build the campaign. That means that in practice we see no difference between an independent rank and file movement and the Sadlowski campaign.

Why? Because we were convinced that Sadlowski's election campaign would of itself spark off a mass movement in steel. Now that might even make some sense if Sadlowski's campaign took place in a context of a real movement on the rise: walk outs, wildcats, and related job actions. But since that isn't happening, we are left with a top down theory of how to build a movement.

And so we end up calling on the few real independent rank and file groups that do exist to merge their work into the campaign.

We assumed that because sufficient sentiment existed in steel for a left liberal to run for office, we were on the verge of a mass movement in steel. So we neglected to explore the difference between a mass movement and a popular election campaign by a union reformer. The rank and file movement is not a permanent fixture of reality. Today within the USWA, there is a small amount of independent rank and file activity, no Movement as such, including Sadlowski's campaign machine. Some motion, but no Movement.

Workers Power Steel Supplement

A second watershed, or rather waterfall, was the WP supplement on steel (Nov. 15). This supplement was the first step in a plan to "use WP to maintain our unique identity rather than use some form of intermediary class struggle publication or organization." (memo to Steel Fraction from Steel Committee, late Nov.) This position was later clarified by members of the Steel Committee. The Sadlowski campaign is to be the "first time we directly intervene in a movement with WP." ISers were asked to distribute thousands of copies of the supplement across the country in any place that had significant numbers of steelworkers.

The supplement was seen by members of the Steel Committee as the "cutting edge" to introducing IS politics to steelworkers. The subsequent series, "Steelyard Blues" was to carry a political analysis of what was happening in the campaign. (comment from a member of the Steel National Committee). What exactly did the supplement have to say to steelworkers? On page one they are informed that class struggle in steel would end if McBride was elected:

There is greater discontent among USWA members now than at any time since the union was built. A McBride victory February 8 would mean no fight against the problems and conditions steelworkers face every day. It would mean no fight to change union policies that have held the membership down. (emphasis added)

A Sadlowski victory would mean that the relationship between the USWA bureaucracy and the rank and file would be instantly transformed; such that the rank and file would control the union. This is the magic movement theory: to make Sadlowski a rank and file candidate, we have only to convince steelworkers to spring up and build a mass movement to adopt Eddie as their leader.

Sadlowski can win February 8 -- but only if union members rise up, organize, and take their union and their futures into their own hands. A rank and file steelworkers movement that succeeds in electing Sadlowski will open up a new era, not just for steelworkers, but for all American labor.

Inside the supplement steelworkers are told:

Getting Ed Sadlowski elected will do more than change the union at the top. It will be the first step in breaking up a machine that for years has cooperated with management to tie the steelworkers membership down.

What is implied in these statements and throughout the supplement is that the election of Eddie in and of itself will mean (1) a fight will be waged against the companies for better working conditions for steelworkers; (2) steelworkers have taken a significant step forward in gaining control of their union; and (3) the process of dismantling the union bureaucracy has begun. Thus the supplement's main message is that the union can significantly be changed from the top down. This idea is directly counterposed to the traditional IS view that organizing the ranks to change the union is a bottom up process. In contradicting this principle, we go as far as stating the mineworkers movement and its victories would not have existed without the campaigns of Yablonski and Miller.

The historical background presented on the USWA in the supplement repeats this top down perspective. It is implied that

some time during the history of the USWA, a "bureaucratic machine" was created "based on privilege and corruption." ("What Victory Can Mean") This statement is historically incorrect. The steel-workers union was organized from the top down from the very beginning. It has always been conservative, first very mildly reformist, later totally class collaborationist. To view "privilege" and "corruption" as the generating forces of the union bureaucracy is ignoring the objective conditions, the basis of a Marxist analysis.

Our top down perspective leads us to distort Sadlowski's stands on the issues. By saying that the Sadlowski machine takes "fine stands," we ignore his inconsistency and real stands on the issues. The ENA, he says, should be voted on by the membership and allowed to continue through until 1980. This will allow plenty of time for the companies to prepare for a strike by stockpiling. On the right to ratify, Sadlowski calls for a special constitutional convention and that he won't sign a contract that

hasn't been ratified by the membership. The stand again postpones the question until 1980, unless Abel lives up to his recent statement that he would turn over negotiations to Sadlowski if McBride loses. These are hardly "fine stands."

By stressing one theme, "Steelworkers Organize, Elect Sadlowski" and therefore a top down approach to changing the union, we miss explaining the actual agents of change, the rank and file in motion. One isolated left bureaucrat can make no fundamental changes in the union, but an organized rank and file can. Thus, we abandon the concept of the self activity of the class, by stressing that the leadership of the class is the key generator of change, not the class itself. By stressing the necessity of rank and filers to fold existing organizations into the campaign machine, we have abandoned a fundamental principle of independent rank and file organization - depend on no one but yourselves.

Steelyard Blues

As elaborated earlier, the Steel Supplement was meant to be the cutting edge of introducing our politics to steelworkers. The column "steelyard blues" is meant to be a week by week "political analysis" of the development of the campaign. The "political analysis" was extracted from news reports of the campaign such that WP coverage began to take on a dual nature, one "political," the other simply news.

Thus the Nov. 22 issue contained a five column article entitled, "Ed Sadlowski Nears Spot On Steel Union Ballot," simply giving a detailed tally of the local union nominations Sadlowski received and a short summary of the first Sadlowski-McBride debate without any comment. Inside, the "steelyard blues" column ran an article entitled "What Nominations Mean" which analyzed why Sadlowski was initially doing poorly in getting nominations, and explained how you too can "make Sadlowski a force in the mill." And it explained that a Sadlowski victory depends on "whether or not this campaign unleashes the fighting enthusiasm and energy of the rank and file," i.e. subjective vs. objective conditions. And once again a victory for Eddie implies the "creation of a rank and file controlled union that fights management and defends the membership," not an opening for the ranks to organize independently to take control of their union. So, the first WP issue that kicked off "Steelyard Blues" distorted the importance of the candidacy of a trade union reformist in transforming the union and missed a great opportunity in the first Sadlowski-McBride debate to analyze the difference between the politics of a trade union reformist and a business unionist.

The next edition of "steelyard blues" discussed Sadlowski's declaration that he considered himself a socialist "in the sense of Eugene Debs." Our analysis of the difference between Debs and Sadlowski was based on a conception of a "bold new plan" Debs supposedly had for union organizing. We did not differentiate between Sadlowski as a trade union reformist and Debs as a socialist.

After presenting this false dichotomy, we criticize Sadlowski for lacking "boldness and daring," "over caution" and the use of "personality slogans." Finally, we directly criticize Sadlowski for his ambiguous stand on the ENA and election of staff representatives. This is a step in the right direction, but it gets lost in the subjective analysis and solutions presented. The campaign must "capture the imagination of workers" and Sadlowski should start "acting more like Debs."

The succeeding two-part article in "steelyard blues," raises excellent issues for discussion of the ENA, stockpiling and imports; and the tactical answers, solid picket lines, overtime bans and shorter contracts. The problem is that these issues are raised in a political vacuum. The context within which the struggle over breaking the ENA will occur, the electoral battle between the reformist, Sadlowski, and the collaborationist, McBride is not discussed. Class collaboration is mentioned only in subjective terms, the union bureaucracy and the companies decided to be "reasonable and nice to each other." McBride is presented as a person who believes in being "nice" to the companies. We do not counterpose trade union reformism to class collaboration, Sadlowski vs. McBride. We only mention Sadlowski to praise him for pointing out the importance of merely holding the threat of a strike over the heads of the companies, a very conservative and limited conception of what the right to strike means.

Two recent issues of WP contain no criticism of Sadlowski. This is the rational culmination of a perspective that is based on making no serious effort of explaining and criticizing the limits of trade union reform represented by Sadlowski based on his actions within the union and his stand on the issues of the campaign. We had consciously and consistently only criticized Sadlowski for not organizing a rank and file campaign and therefore not igniting a rank and file movement, as if he could. We believed that this was the only way he could get elected.

At the end of the nominating period, our analysis proved incorrect. Sadlowski was picking up considerable movement without mobilizing the ranks to any significant degree. He was showing a potential to win the election with a machine. Therefore, our basis for criticizing Sadlowski was undercut and we were left simply cheering Eddie on.

After the formation of the Left Faction, which is strong in the steel fraction, the most recent issue of WP (Dec. 20) came out with an article that at least superficially emphasizes the no strike deal over the theme of "Elect Eddie." This twist in the steel coverage is in the right direction, but contains serious weaknesses. In the "steelyard blues" column, "February 8 - Say 'No' to No-Strike," the central theme is that Abel's announcement that he will resign Feb. 8 if McBride loses, means that Sadlowski will be forced to "confront head on" the ENA. In relation to this analysis, it is important to understand that the degree of activity and organization of the rank and file, i.e. the balance of forces,

will determine Sadlowski's position, not what Abel says or does.

The second key point, implied by the title of the article, is that electing Sadlowski is the key to fighting the policy of collaboration of the union bureaucracy. This top down approach explains the central contradiction of this article, why we state that Eddie has "tried to fudge" on the ENA, while at the same time praising his "good stands on the issues." Another important contradiction is our call for Sadlowski to prove "in practice" that he is "tough enough to make a difference." Once again a top down approach to changing the union is implied -- one person can make a difference. However, there is one catch to this:

Steelworkers, however, should not wait for him to do so. Their job is to use the campaign to organize a rank and file movement that puts the heat on Sadlowski to act, and that gives him the muscle to act with.

Finally we are pointing out that the campaign is not a rank and file movement. But notice here that Sadlowski is still the pivotal point. The degree to which the steelworkers union can be transformed depends on two things: (1) how much pressure is put on him by the ranks through organizing his campaign, and (2) whether the ranks provide him with the necessary machine for implementing his "good" (or fudgy?) program.

Thus the election is analyzed solely in terms of the union bureaucracy, not from a class perspective. The ranks pressure the bureaucracy and are manipulated by it. The companies will be out to "discredit" and "teach him proper respect for pro-management policies." These points are, in a sense, true, but isolated from the central criteria for a socialist perspective, a class analysis, they become the basis for a top down bureaucratic conception of changing the union.

Summary of Workers Power Coverage

A fundamental dynamic of "mass work" is expressed in the steel coverage. To interject our politics into the class in such a way that it would be oriented to the class as a whole in a "legitimate" manner, it was necessary to dilute them. That's what the "cutting edge" concept is all about. We dilute our politics and interject them into the class; and then, in theory, we raise them back up to full strength some time on down the road. This was undercut by another principle of "mass work," focusing on gaining leadership positions in the class by being the best organizers of the campaign. When Eddie proved the potential of his machine in the nominating period, the only basis on which we consistently criticized him was eliminated. "Unconditional, critical support" became increasingly uncritical support, and in the process we lost our revolutionary socialist bearings and are now drifting in a political vacuum.

Our Presence in the Fightbacks

Our work in the Fightbacks is going on today. No discussion of this work can pretend to be complete at this time. In spite of this, there are a number of incidents which illustrate out point- that we are failing to build a consistent, political pole of attraction in the fightbacks.

In Pittsburgh prior to our entry in the Sadlowski Campaign we initiated a rank and file paper, Steelworkers Stand Up. After beginning work in the fightback there, SSU, was folded into the Sadlowski campaign. Today, SSU, to paraphrase the Pittsburgh comrades, is widely perceived as the Sadlowski campaign organ. All to the good, if SSU was carrying a line of critical support. Unfortunately, an examination of the paper shows that it is pretty much what it is perceived to be- a Sadlowski paper. If we were attempting to pose our alternative to Sadlowski, then we would not be using a rank and file paper which we control to turn out campaign flak.

The Gary work is characterized by "interventions" in fund raising dinners and dances. A smorgasbord in honor of Eddie was held in East Chicago. All industrialized members of the IS were expected to attend, and one hour of the branch meeting was used to tell us what we were to do at the party. We were supposed to all sit together and create "the most dynamic table at the smorgasbord." Then we would send people out into the crowd to recruit people to sit at our table. No kidding.

The only explicitly political activity in Gary has been distribution of the WP supplement- that work suffers from the political weakness of the supplement. The Gary women's group was wrecked prior to the campaign by the O.L. When the question of rebuilding the group came up, it was to become a "Sادلowski Women's Committee".

The kickoff event, planned with the Communist Party women in Fight Back, is a luncheon where Jim Balanoff (the Fight Back candidate for District Director) will speak. This is a far cry from the meetings where women got together to bring up their problems and argue over solutions, from raising hell in the union, and distributing a newsletter that sparked interest and controversy throughout the mill. When challenged on the question of keeping the women's group independent, Joe F, national fraction steering committee member replied, "The most important thing any women steel worker could do right now of to spend her time getting Sadlowski elected."

No where, not in our press not in our presence in the campaign do we raise the rank and file alternative to Sadlowski's electoral approach to changing the union. Organizing dances, leafleting and joining committees are not bad things to do but without a political orientation towards doing them, they become a substitute for politics- part of the "mass work" "best builders" syndrome.

This syndrome results in "interventions" like the IS campaign Stickers. We spent \$130.00 on stickers which say "Steelworkers Fight Back, Vote for Sadlowski", has a raised fist and of course are bright red. The official stickers are green and white with Sadlowski's name on them. The impact on rank and filers consisted of them noticing that the official stickers had better stickum. Do we seriously think that red is more political than green, or that a raised fist politically distinguishes us from Sadlowski?

News stories about the Sadlowski campaign must be viewed in the same light. Without a political analysis of Sadlowski carried in the paper, the Sadlowski news becomes our line on Sadlowski.

CONCLUSIONS

There is no mass rank and file movement in steel today. There is no national upsurge in basic steel over the ENA or anything else. Steelworkers are taking a beating from the companies, but the response is slow in coming. On the shop floor steelworkers are deeply divided by the race question -- not just black and white but brown as well. The overwhelming attitude is cynical and apathetic. A mass movement is far from imminent.

Nevertheless, there are many opportunities before us in the mills. The events of recent years, economic crisis and declining standard of living, Viet Nam, Watergate, Black Power and Women's Liberation struggles have and are melting the ice of the conservative past period. Each day the experience of steelworkers comes into conflict with their world view. Steelworkers are open to political discussion. And a small number are prepared to reject capitalism in favor of a systematic alternative -- to become socialists.

There are those who are ready to fight and are looking for a strategy to win. There is motion in steel. It ranges from wash-houses to national union election campaigns. If we are politically firm, we can help construct out of these elements the rank and file movement which we know must be built.

What is needed is no grand scheme. We must break the conservative straight jacket of "mass work" in favor of a many-sided flexible approach to steelworkers that accomplishes both propaganda and intervention. Some specifics.

Our opportunities for intervention are produced by the daily course of the class struggle. For the most part they are small scale struggles which we should attempt to cohere into groups based upon bulletins and newsletters. The rank and filers in these groups we should win to our class struggle unionist approach and recruit to the IS.

It is our current and unrealistic perspective to change Fightback into a national rank and file group. Rather we should find Fight Back members who we can convince of the need to do shop floor work, and work with them.

In general we should recognize that most of the issues of the Sadlowski campaign will remain after the election. Even if Sadlowski wins, the big questions remain -- the relation of the union to the companies, and the relation of the bureaucracy to the rank and file. A series of WP articles and at least one pamphlet should be written addressing these relationships from both a class struggle unionist and socialist view.

One of the victims of the "mass work" approach to the Sadlowski campaign is the development of black work in steel (the "mass work" document is explicit on subordinating black demands). We must prepare ourselves for intervention in the struggles of blacks in the mills by thoroughly understanding the Consent Decree, and the issues of seniority and job discrimination, and by producing articles for our paper and possibly a pamphlet. We must carry the other black work of the organization into the mills as we started to do with Gary Tyler before that effort was halted by the Sadlowski campaign. To start, we should bring southern Africa support work into the mills. To help, we can publish a short pamphlet or WP centerfold on U.S. Steel and southern Africa. Black work, because of the racism in steel and our need to become a multinational tendency, must be a priority.

Work around women's issues has suffered the same fate as black work -- it was subordinated to the "mass work" Sadlowski campaign. The next wave of hiring and recalling from layoffs in the mills will bring with it another influx of women, many of them black. With this influx will come many of the same problems, and from our point of view, opportunities for intervention as in the last wave. We can and should begin to rebuild women's groups in the mills, on the radical approach we had before. The October League set us back, but instead of rebuilding, we decided to let the Sadlowski campaign finish us off.

Many of the things to be done cannot be listed here, because the decisions on what to organize must be guided largely by the local fractions. Today the fight in steel varies widely from city to city, from mill to mill. That is the reality, comrades, and no national grand plan will change it.

There are steelworkers who can be recruited, not necessarily through Sadlowski's campaign. If we start today, we can win the forces we need to fight the bigger fights of tomorrow. With this orientation, we can face the long haul without illusions.

Ben (USWA) Gary
Betsy, Cleveland
Kadi (USWA) Gary
Maggie (USWA) Gary
Patrick (USWA) Gary

Ron, Chicago
Sandy (USWA) Gary
Sharon, Gary
Tom (USWA) Cleveland
Tom (USWA) Gary