

INTERNAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

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CORRECTION

On page 21 of Internal Information Bulletin #1 in 1971 on the charts of Financial Functioning of Branch Departments—1970 a number of figures were incorrect due to a transposition in the order of listing of one of the party branches.

The following is the corrected information for the branches involved:

<i>Branch</i>	<i>Branch Debt to Pathfinder</i>	<i>Branch Total Debts</i>
New York	875	5036
Oakland-Berkeley	1498	3767
Philadelphia	407	558
Portland	119	67
San Diego	290	334
San Francisco	7	3399
Seattle	1018	2048
Twin Cities	65	1510

TRADE UNION PANEL

1971 SWP Convention

Frank Lovell:

This panel tonight is a continuation of our discussion and reports on trade union work begun at our 1969 convention two years ago and resumed here at Oberlin at the Activists Conference last year. Some of the work, some of the ideas, the manner in which it has developed, the ideas that were expressed at those previous gatherings, are reviewed briefly for you by a contribution, which appears in the Internal Bulletin, vol. 29, no. 20, by Comrades George Basley and Jeff Powers from Boston. As you know we had more to report last year, here at Oberlin, than at the time of our '69 convention. And there is considerably more to report now than was the case when we met here last summer. All branch organizers, National Committee members and other comrades who have been actively involved in trade union work and in correspondence with the national office, were notified in the circular letter of July 26 that this panel would be held to hear reports from those areas where we have been able to operate within the unions and through the unions to accomplish specific goals. We will hear some of those reports tonight.

There are some basic considerations which have served as guidelines for all our work in the unions during the past period, which I will submit to you briefly before we will proceed to the reports.

During the past two years, there have been many important changes in the unions, changes in the composition of the membership and in the mood of the workers. But as yet, there is no evidence of a qualitative change which would indicate any basic change in our trade union policy memorandum adopted at the May 1968 plenum. Here is what the party said at that time. I want to read to you from that memorandum, because this really provides the guidelines for our trade union work. It was published in an Internal Information Bulletin, June 1968. I won't read the entire memorandum, but the concluding section is valid today and it is what we use as a guide for our work in the unions. So I'll read that last section, and pay close attention to it, because you may be involved in some trade union situation, and if you are, this is what we want you to do. It says: "Although objective conditions are improving, our prospects in the trade unions at present remain modest. The key task is still one of propaganda and education aimed toward formation of left wing forces around a class struggle program. Since the workers are not yet ready for a general showdown with the bureaucrats, it is necessary to steer clear of premature power struggles in the unions. Critical support to an oppositional ticket may be in order here and there as a step toward loosening up bureaucratic control over the ranks. Concerning our comrades participating in power caucuses and running for union posts, the question must always be put, will it help or will it cut across left wing forces around a class struggle program? On this point, delicate matters of timing may sometimes arise. In such cases, appropriate tactics should be worked out in consultation with the party. In addition, wherever comrades are involved in trade union situations, the party should be kept informed of significant developments as an aid to the assessment of general trade union trends." That

was adopted in 1968 and we don't see any reason, as I said, to change it.

There is another memorandum that was adopted subsequently that has to do with Black caucuses in the trade unions. This was published in Internal Bulletin, vol. 27, no. 11, August 1969. I won't read anything from that. However, this Political Committee memorandum took note of the formations at that time of Black caucuses within some unions, notably the UAW, and we endorsed those caucuses, and we encouraged the formation of such caucuses in other unions, and in this respect our position has not changed.

One of the big changes however, since this was written, was the deepening of the economic crisis, and this has affected the trade union movement. The big worry today is the combination of unemployment and inflation, a worry that is likely to continue. This affects both the ranks and the leadership.

The Public Works Appropriation Bill demanded by the AFL-CIO leadership was vetoed by Nixon six weeks ago and the Nixon administration and Congress have been jockeying since then over some kind of legislation to relieve unemployment without spending money, except to bail out bankrupts like Lockheed to the tune of \$250 million, but no money for the unemployed, only for the unemployed employers.

On July 14 and 15, the AFL-CIO held a top level conference of 600 union presidents in Washington to figure out how to cope with this problem of unemployment and with Nixon. As it turned out this was nothing more than part of their preparation for the 1972 election campaign, getting ready to support liberal Democrats again. This is all the union leadership is doing at this time to solve the problem of unemployment. They are doing absolutely nothing.

What are the ranks doing? Many presently unemployed, those who have some form of union protection, still receive benefits, unemployment compensation and supplementary unemployment benefits redounding to them from the provisions of the union contract. The present rate of unemployment, you heard the statistics today about the present rate of unemployment among youth, and Black people, but the present overall rate of unemployment is officially reported at approximately 6 percent.

In some high unemployment areas, such as Michigan, unemployment is officially recorded at above 8 percent. But this rate of unemployment has not yet cut deeply enough to produce a mass protest movement of the unemployed . . . at least if it has, we haven't become aware of it and our comrades have paid quite close attention to this, because this is important in relation to what happens in the unions.

Present official statistics of 8 percent in such areas as Michigan now compare, for example, to unemployment in 1958 which reached 15.3%, and in 1961 it was 14.4%. In those years there was a visible and vocal movement of the unemployed in Detroit, and our branch was an active participant in the unemployed movement at that time.

As of now, the Stalinists, who today pay very close attention and have put quite a bit of money in the efforts

to build the unemployed movement, have not been able to call any such movement into being.

The lines of the unemployed are growing, however, and I understand that some branches are beginning *Militant* sales and literature distributions at the employment offices.

This growing unemployment has an effect not only on the workers and trade union members and on the working class, it also has an effect upon the employing class and it influences *their* attitudes.

This growing unemployment has also caused a considerable change in the mood of the workers. And there's no doubt about that, especially among those who have been thrown off the job, and the young, who are unable to find a job.

The attitude of the employers is different. That's reflected in the length of strikes which are now extending over longer periods of time. In some instances, they are getting much longer . . . as long as six months, and the settlements in all cases are getting shorter, that is, the workers are getting less money. A Borg Warner plant in Cleveland, under contract to the UAW, was out for six months.

During that period of time, the corporation made a show of operating with supervisory personnel and later during the course of the strike advertised for scabs. The UAW leadership forced the strikers back to work under a new contract far below the standard UAW contract in the auto industry.

The West Coast longshoremen are now out on strike. And this decision on the part of the longshoremen to go out on strike was made by a referendum vote of the membership, but before they made their decision, the waterfront employers made *their* decision, namely that there would be a strike. And this is the first time that there has been a strike of the longshoremen on the West Coast in twenty-four years. They're making no revolutionary demands, and don't let anybody tell you that that's a revolutionary union because the Stalinists have for a long time had a finger in it. Nothing beyond what the longshoremen in the port of New York already have in the way of a guaranteed annual wage is being asked, and the \$500-a-month retirement fund that they are asking for after thirty years is what the United Auto Workers got in their 1970 contract.

The Postal Workers, another important sector of the working class, got a settlement from the new postal service which didn't make the letter carriers and clerks very happy in New York. But the newly elected militant leaders of the letter carriers branch 36 in New York, are not prepared to strike for more. They called their membership together and told them that after the strike settlement was handed down to them.

Beirne, the president of the Communications Workers, settled with the telephone company for what the company offered, a very minimal increase that the New York Communication Workers are refusing to accept.

The steel workers settlement with the can industry last May for what they said was a 30 percent increase in wages over three years amounted only to \$1 an hour increase over the \$3.50 on an average that they were getting, which doesn't bring their wages up to the wage level of the auto workers and others among those who are more highly paid. It did not bring the can workers' wage level up to what these other workers were getting prior to the 1970 strikes.

And then Abel, president of the steel workers union, went right ahead and made the same settlement in the

aluminum industry. And when he met the copper bosses in the West, he settled for less, 92 cents an hour over three years.

Then, when he came to basic steel, he reduced the demand still further, and the steel workers now have a contract which is one of the poorest in all of basic industry.

The railroad workers likewise settled their wages dispute *within* the guidelines set down by the government last winter, that is, a 42 percent wage increase over 42 months, which is something over \$1 an hour wage increase, but the railroad workers were far behind, behind even the steel workers. And they are still, with their wage increase, below the national average. In addition, they retreated on the work rules question, which has yet to be resolved, but they retreated very far on it, that is, the officials did.

The teachers strikes have been broken in some cities; St. Louis last year was a notable example. And in Newark, the wage increases of the teachers have been impounded by the courts to pay for fines levied during the strike, against the strikers.

This is what is happening in some of the basic industries and also among these more recently organized workers, such as teachers, social workers and so on.

In the building trades, the unions have capitulated and are complying with the terms laid down by the administration under this new setup they have of the union/industry arbitration boards. In some instances the wage stabilization boards are cutting back on wage settlements already previously agreed upon.

Now we've listed several union situations that have just developed this summer. This does not add up to a major strike wave. On the contrary.

This was widely hailed at the beginning of this year by some radical trade union strategists, but the strike wave did not materialize. What we are seeing is a *retreat* by the unions on the industrial front. It is not a rout, it is an orderly retreat on the wage front, and there is no sign of any preparation for a new offensive.

There is a significant fact in all these settlements I have listed. In no instance has the union membership been able to reverse the course agreed upon by the leadership, and in most instances the union membership has *not* been consulted about the settlements. They are simply told to go back to work or to continue working. The workers find out what the new scale is some time in the future when it shows up in their pay checks, the pay checks that every week buy less than they bought the week before. The workers learn about changes in the work rules when the layoff slips are passed out.

I referred, after reviewing the list of union settlements we've witnessed this summer, to the left wing strategists who were looking for and predicting and preparing for what they said would be a big strike offensive, a strike wave, the 1971 strike wave.

I picked up, quite by accident, when I was in New York one such publication. It is put out by a group calling themselves revolutionists, and they go by the name International Socialists. They are especially interested in trade union problems, and they put out a paper, in addition to their other publications, on the workers, telling what's happening in the unions, and they call it *Workers Power*. It's published in the industrial center, in Detroit. They put it out every two weeks. You see their headlines, "Summer Labor Offensive." What they are talking about is

what I just reported to you. That's the offensive that didn't materialize, that didn't come off.

Of course this came out after many of these settlements had already been made, so the paper's full of all kinds of sellouts: CWA Communication Workers sold out by the leadership—the strike is continuing in New York as I mentioned.

But they have one section on the railroad workers, and here they see the greatest opportunity of the American working class.

Here they have a whole page on the railroad union, the United Transportation Union. It says "Railroad ranks organized" and it's quite authentic material that they publish. It's taken out of a union publication called "Progress Report," which is issued by the Right to Vote Committee.

We prefer the men in the union who have experience on the job and who are organizing this important movement—you'll have some reports here tonight about it—right from the point of production, not second-hand details that are put out in papers of this kind.

The Stalinists also pay a good deal of attention to what is happening in the unions. They have more members than I.S. and more money and more experience, and besides which they know more. They are interested in trying to take advantage of some openings in the union movement to promote their political program. And they have organized on a national scale what they call the national rank-and-file caucus. They have not yet been able to get very far.

I will conclude simply by stating what *our* purpose is (I'm going to contrast it with the Stalinists and others). We must be absolutely clear when we go away from this convention what our purpose is in the union movement; so I'll restate the position that I read to you at the outset, and I want to explain it briefly. In our work in the unions, we seek to mobilize the vast army of organized workers in this country behind major political issues today, to bring together and train a general staff within the union movement that can lead this army and to fuse it with the broad anticapitalist protest movement that is beginning to challenge many of the values of this society and will in the end challenge the government that is responsible for maintaining this society and its ills. *That's our purpose.* That's what we want to do in the unions, that is, we want to mobilize the vast army of organized workers in this country. This is our basic strategy. This strategy is what distinguishes us in the unions and divides us from our critics among the radicals. Our strategical line employs all variety of tactics in the union depending upon the circumstance. Where we have an opportunity, we promote broad movements to democratize the union. That is what the Right to Vote Committee in the United Transportation Union is, that's what it is all about. And that was our idea.

When a genuine power struggle in the union develops, we are not indifferent to that either. We seek to support in our own way the lesser evil in order to promote a greater degree of democracy and mobilize the full weight of the union behind a genuine class struggle program. We have some instances of this.

In the steel workers union very recently, we were quite deeply interested in the big struggle that was going on in District 38 out there, and our comrades who have long experience in the union participated actively in one of the major caucuses in that campaign. I hope we'll have an opportunity to hear about this.

We seek always in all our work to recruit members in the unions for broad protest movements outside the union structure, such as women's liberation movements, movements for Black control of the Black community, the antiwar movement. The reports you are going to hear will explain how our comrades in different areas have participated in the unions to achieve these goals and what measure of success they have had. I can tell you in advance of the reports that we have had a rather modest success, more than I think the party is generally aware of. We have been recruiting, in some instances we have colonized, and the reports will tell you about these in their detail.

Carla Hoag

Comrades, I'll be very brief, I'll be speaking about the unemployed committee in Boston. There is no Boston branch comrade actively intervening in this movement. I am just an observer in this movement. Early in the spring, heavy leafleting of the unemployment centers in Boston began by about ten people, a self-appointed "Unemployed Committee."

After them came others who put out a leaflet and began talking to people about such demands as faster service and more personnel in the centers, very minimal sort of things. And later on they expanded to other demands such as thirty for forty, fifty-two weeks unemployment, guaranteed income. I'll read briefly from their last, and I think final, leaflet, I think it's from June 15.

This is their introduction: "The Boston Unemployed Committee is an independent organization fighting for better treatment at the unemployment centers, better benefits and decent jobs. Through leaflets, petitions, meetings, rallies, lobbying, letters and the media we do our best to show what the conditions are for the unemployed and what should be done to eliminate unemployment. The BUC also helps individuals get the benefits they are due under the current laws, helps make appeals and fights for free, legal, day-care and medical facilities. The Boston Unemployed Committee will start to unite with the national allies of the unemployed who share our desire to rebuild America and make true the dream of equality and justice for all. Our slogan: peace, jobs and justice."

That should give you an idea of who *they* are. They then go on with a ten-point program which includes some of the demands I just mentioned along with some ambitious demands such as an immediate end to racism. On the other side, they just deal in know your rights, how to fight for your rights and rebuild America. The present leaders of the Boston Unemployed Committee made themselves seem like well-scrubbed, newly radicalized youth who had just discovered there was unemployment and inflation and were grappling with it.

What is actually the case is that they are the CP and/or their periphery. And what is really interesting is the tactic they took: the Stalinist leadership has taken an attitude of super-friendliness to the YSA and SWP. They feigned total innocence or ignorance about what a Trotskyist is, everything between that and what's the difference between PCPJ and NPAC. In fact, two of the main leaders of the group of ten people spent most of their time in the spring in our headquarters running off leaflets; we made them pay, but they used our headquarters for running off leaflets.

Their proposed initial action to build the movement

of the unemployed was a demonstration that was to be held May 20. This was to be a teach-in and then a picket line in front of the State House. They ran off 8000 leaflets and distributed them; they talked to hundreds of unemployed people and the net result of that was that 50 showed up. There were approximately 10 PLers, 15 CPers and their periphery, 5 YAWF, 2 Spartacists, 6 Socialist Labor Committee, 3 general ultralefts, 5 from the SWP and approximately 3 or 4 unemployed people. May 20 wasn't pulled out of a hat either, it was used on purpose to help build the conference on unemployment which was sponsored by various CP front groups and was held in Washington D. C. the following weekend. However, the singular lack of success of the Boston Unemployed Committee's demonstration in mobilizing the masses of the unemployed couldn't do much to build the hearing. What has happened with the Boston Unemployed Committee which began as a group of ten is that it shrunk to nine. The mood of the unemployed is that they are receptive to new ideas; they are not in motion. It's a good place to work. We've started leafleting with campaign literature, a position paper on unemployment and inflation. We haven't met any hostility; it's like passive receptivity at this point. *Militant* sales have been all right, not fantastic, but no hostility. Antiwar literature has been the best received.

Visitor

In a few minutes I'll try to give you some impressions of the situation north of the border. In many ways the trade union situation in Canada bears considerable resemblance to the situation that Frank described here. We have the increasing restlessness of sections of the labor force that previously had not been unionized even, or if they were unionized they were very dormant. For example, the Postal Workers. Even in Ontario, the most industrialized province, the civil servants, who have been unusually quiet, have made threatening noises and indicated discontent with the present working conditions and wage standards among civil servants.

Now in Canada, we have a situation which is very different too, and I suppose one could say qualitatively different, which is now beginning to have a bearing, beginning to change the situation in the union movement . . . that is the existence of a labor party, the New Democratic Party. Most of the large unions are affiliated to the party, but this affiliation has not had any really qualitative effect until recently because of the fact that the affiliations are undemocratic and bureaucratic and often the affiliations were made with very small membership meetings, and then the affiliations continue on.

You're probably aware of the changed situation in the very recent past. This flows from the peculiar, specific situation that exists in the Canadian economy. Over the past year and a half there have been a very large number of closures. This flows from the particular subservient relationship of the Canadian economy to the American economy. It flows from the fact that the vast majority of industrial production is in the hands of branch plants of international corporations, the majority of which are based in the United States. As the world rationalization of production goes on, plants get shifted to various parts of the world, as a result of this there have been closures of a number of quite large plants and many smaller plants. This has brought tremendous uneasiness in the

ranks of the working class, and it is felt, first and foremost, within the party (N. D. P.) itself.

Despite the situation in the economy generally, there had been as yet no left wing development either in the unions or in the party. This is now being rectified. The direct result of this is the formation of a Waffle Labor Committee within southern Ontario, which is really the industrial heartland of the country. They've held about three meetings, and it looks like a very promising development. I believe that this will form the basis for the radicals to come together; already the meetings they've held indicate that there's an acceptance of all radicals including the revolutionaries. The situation is such that we will have a much broader forum to talk to in terms of labor radicalization. And the radicalization of the labor movement will probably have a much more political form from now on, especially with the radicalization that will develop in the near future in the United States.

Don Paul

I hope to give you a feel of what has happened and maybe even more what has not happened in our work. On the bureaucracy: I'm going to quote from an article in the April issue of *American Labor*, which is pretty much the magazine of American labor in the United States. It's a slick one, as you can see, which featured an article on Charles Luna, the head of the United Transportation Union, often fondly referred to as Charlie Tuna. He is asked a question by *American Labor* magazine, "How did you get to be president?" He said, "Let's say I got into the kind of work that made it possible for me to become president." Luna was enjoying the moment. "I was helping an old man on the lead up there by the name of Harry Sheshire back in 1928. It was one of those hot August days, and it gets hot down here you know, and I see this man get off the street car up on First Avenue. It was during the days of street cars, and he's wearing a seersucker suit and a sailor hat, and every time he'd meet one of the boys coming over from the yard, he'd get over in the shade and shake hands with him and pat him on the back. Well, I kept watching him, and one day I asked the foreman 'Who is that man?' And he said 'He's our general chairman.' And I said, 'What does he do?' And he said 'He represents us to the union.' And I said, 'Does he work on the railroad?' And he said, 'No, he holds seniority, but he's got an office and a secretary.' And I said, 'Who pays him?' and he said, 'We do.' So I asked him, 'How do you get one of those jobs?' And the foreman said, 'There's not but one of them, and he's got it.' And I asked, 'How do you get fat jobs?' And he answered, 'The first thing I suggest is to be elected local chairman.' And I asked 'How do I go about doing that?' And he said, 'When you get the people to vote for you.' And I said, 'When's the next election?' And he said, 'Not till next year.' And ever since," gooded Luna, "I've been shaking hands and patting people on the back, and I haven't lost an election since." I think that is the most honest and forthright statement by a labor bureaucrat you'll ever encounter anywhere.

At the educational conference last year, some of the work that had been done with the Right to Vote Committee was explained, and some of the work that was projected for the year was laid out. One of the main tasks that the Right to Vote Committee took upon itself at the

beginning or at the latter portion of last year in the fall was to become a national force. Its initial birth took place within the Chicago terminal among UTU members within one local where the demand and idea of the right to vote was raised. It was spread around the Chicago terminal. Certain people were brought to it. I'd like to go into that a little later on. But the next task before us was to get the thing national, to get it national before the bureaucracy could really become frightened of it and try and isolate it and stop it. In a sense they may have moved too slowly. They may have underestimated the thing, their intelligence may have been lacking, because we were able to become national through an initial mailing which was made in October of last year. The mailing went out around the country, and it was not mailed to rank and filers. It was a mailing to the complete directory of the UTU local officers, local chairmen, local members of the committee of adjustment, which are like grievance committees, including secretary-treasurer, people of that sort, and general chairmen.

A progress report had been put out, which is the progress report of the Right to Vote Committee in June. That had an initial mailing and met with a good deal of success and got mail, which is a pretty good indication of what kind of effect you are having when you are reaching people. Dated September 28, 1970, was the national mailing that was sent during the end of September and into October. Two mailings were done, one in English and one in French to the French-speaking members of the United Transportation Union in Canada, in Quebec. The mailing consisted of four pages. This one is the French version, large, bold print, easy to read. It said, "Do you want your right to vote on contracts? Do you want control over the politics and officers of the union?" And then it gave motivational material for about three pages, requesting that they send in their name if they're interested, as well as an endorsement card, which was enclosed with the mailing, and also that they send money to enable the committee to continue functioning. That mailing met with a pretty good success, and we were able over a period of time during the next several months to build up a fairly good mailing list of activists within the UTU who supported the right to vote on contracts and the Right to Vote Committee.

Now it wasn't just within a vacuum that the Right to Vote Committee was formed. There was a history within the unions which came to form the United Transportation Union, a certain effort on the part of certain rank and file members to form industrial unions and also a democratic industrial union. And it was on this base that the Right to Vote Committee was able to build. These people had originally been in URAC or within SUNA (Switchmen's Union of North America), which had had the right to vote on its contract. Switchmen and brakemen had originally been in three different unions within the one craft, craft issues, of course, being very strong.

That is some of the general feel of the Right to Vote Committee's advances and growth. The primary thing about this organizational advance in the fall of last year was that it became established on the map and a known element to most of the activists in the union. And it grew, it acquired the *sine qua non* for the establishment of any committee anywhere, a mailing list. And it acquired some people who were willing to put a buck, five bucks, in the mail. Also part of the mailing was a petition which was used mainly to ask people who supported the committee

to go out and get other people to sign up, send it in. We wanted to have a whole bunch of these petitions to take down to the convention.

There were a series of strikes within the railroad industry, beginning with the December 11 strike and then the sixty-day suspension; the February 10 strike that was lead by C. L. Dennis and the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks of the UTU and the BLE supported that strike and respected their picketlines.

Then from May 17 to May 19 the signalmen went out and again we respected their picket lines and closed down rail operations in the United States.

And then, beginning in July, the most recently ended strike, the UTU itself went out and the nation went through eighteen days of a selective railroad strike.

So over a period of practically seven months, there were four strike-type actions.

Within this development the Right to Vote Committee operated not always in the same form. The Right to Vote Committee in and of itself is a very flexible form. The main thrust of the entire demand is to democratize the union and to involve the rank and file. At the time of both the December strike and the February strike, we organized right to strike meetings, but not in the name of the Right to Vote Committee. Of course, we were able to reach out to that level of people who had been involved and activated by the Right to Vote Committee, among whom we had established some contacts. We had hoped to make them very large meetings. That did not prove to be the case. But I think that *we* raised the general level of understanding.

What slogans did we try to put out, what lessons did we try to teach? The leaflet was simple enough. "Attention railroaders: mass meeting. All railroad union workers regardless of craft, defend your right to strike. Saturday, February 13, 1971, 4 p.m., Grand Ballroom, Midland Hotel. Speakers from railway unions and other labor unions who support our right to strike. President Nixon and other politicians are being invited to the meeting to explain their strikebreaking action."

The purpose of this meeting was to protest any government interference denying our right to strike come March 1. The initial meeting in December attracted about 125 people and frightened the bureaucracy enough so that they had to send down one of their vice-presidents, Q. C. Gabriel. He at that time came out as a supporter of the Right to Vote Committee.

The February 13 meeting was a little bit larger.

We attracted about 300 people.

Those who came to these meetings are not young, mainly they are not Black, mainly what they are is an older layer of trade unionists who have been active in the trade union movement within the UTU who had some experience in fights within the union in attempting to democratize the union, in attempting to industrialize the union around URAC, that kind of thing.

Though the young workers, the Black workers, the rank and filers by and large support wholeheartedly what the committee is trying to do, they are not at this point willing to make an organizational commitment either in terms of time, effort and/or money.

Another thing we have learned is that they do not feel as yet acutely the presence and interference of the government in every one of the strike situations, nor do they take seriously the trade union as a form through which to struggle. They strike when they are told to strike, they

respect the picket lines when they are told to respect the picket lines, but by and large they do not come to local meetings, by and large they do not come to the mass meetings. They haven't quite as yet begun to make the connection, although this began to occur in the last strike when we worked to rule, because that was something that went on at the work place day after day.

At this point I think it is safe to say that *we are* a serious factor in the internal life of the UTU.

We were able to achieve a certain relationship with the Canadian autonomy movement, a movement which has grown up within Canada for autonomy, not independence, within the UTU for Canadians.

At a meeting in Canada in June of the western provinces of the UTU, the third western Canada UTU meeting, which was in Conora, Ed Heisler went up there representing the Right to Vote Committee and was able to speak. At that meeting, the western Canadian provinces voted to support the right to vote at the UTU convention.

I'm not going to go into the details of the contract or anything of the sort. The main thing is the mood among the most important section of the membership, the young and the Black. They haven't begun to make the connection, except in the last strike when all the locals, all the unions, all the railroads that were not on strike chose to work to rule, which meant in effect a slowdown. And one of the most interesting aspects of that was that some of the worst people, some of the greediest people, some of the most easily duped by the carriers into doing charity work, began to slow down when the things they normally get paid for were not reflected in their pay check, and they began to get cut slips from the carrier indicating that they were not going to get paid for any of the things they had done which they normally got paid for, what we call arbitrary. At that time, when we went out, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers had already signed their agreement. It was as big a sellout as ours was to be, maybe even more so. But within the locomotive engineers, the paper of the BLE, which was sent out to the membership at the time we were working to rule, attacked our brothers who were out on strike on the other line. The BLE sent out their paper saying about the work rules controversy: "BLE members caution to avoid unwise deeds." They went further, "there have also been reports that some locomotive engineers and firemen covered by the BLE agreements are being urged to engage in slowdowns, excessive laying off and other activities designed to hamper the operations of the railroads. The BLE [mind you, this is a trade union now] reminds every member that he has a moral obligation to comply with the provisions of our contract. To do otherwise could result in legal action against individual members and/or the BLE itself. Locomotive engineers and firemen who yield to the urging of other operating employees to participate in such activity should realize that not only are they failing to fulfill their moral obligation to their employer but they are also putting their own jobs in jeopardy. In any case where an engineer or fireman willfully absents himself from service in support of those operating employees who are subject to the carriers promulgated work rules, he is helping to aggravate the already severe shortage of qualified engine service employees and opening the door to the filling of those jobs from the ranks of other crafts. It is also worth noting, [and here is where they use their own president against us], that UTU President Charles Luna in a July 17 issue of his organization's

official newspaper cautioned UTU members on all railroads except those selected for strikes to continue working even if the railroads change conditions as threatened. In as much as UTU members themselves have been advised to carry on their work in the face of promulgated work rules, no BLE members could be expected to do less, even though motivated by the desire to show sympathy for his fellow employees."

When we say, and when we said in the pages of *The Militant* that the strike and the actions in support of it were organized almost spontaneously on the part of the rank and file, without even support from the UTU bureaucracy, it goes double for the members of the other crafts, in the engine crafts. The engineers, the firemen, etc., were represented by the BLE. The most amazing thing about that whole action, that whole twenty-two days, was not what we ended up with, because we all knew that was coming, or not that Luna tried to pull his selected strikes, because we all knew that Congress was going to adjourn on the sixth, and that the UTU convention started on the eighth, and it was obvious that an agreement would have to be reached that week, but it was what the rank and file did. Maybe in a sense what happened was better than if we had had a national close down and just would have gone through the normal routine of walking the line, because something happened, and it really hasn't subsided yet, the effects of it, on the job, people took an action and a sense of strike began to appear among the membership, a sense of their own importance, a sense of how they could affect the operation of that railroad and really straighten things out.

The first night that it began and I went into the yard, and I am sure the other comrades who are here from the railroad can back this up, to see those engines moving as slowly down the lead as they were and to see the kind of spirit that developed over a period of time among the men, particularly in this instance among the young men and the Black switchmen of the property where we work, is something that bodes ill for the carriers in the future, and it is something I am sure they are very much aware of.

At this moment we are at the UTU convention. We are a serious factor in this union. I think the way this will become known to the comrades, to our opponents and to the bureaucracy and the carriers themselves is by the number of votes the Right to Vote Committee proposal will receive at the convention. At the moment we don't have the hard, concrete facts on that. But I think I can assure the comrades here that the kind of thing which is beginning to assemble in a very loose way, the old militants of the union and some of the young, is going to have an impact at this UTU convention.

John Peters

I'm from Minneapolis. I was asked by some of the other comrades on the railroad fraction to complement our discussion on our work in the UTU with a description of how I personally became acquainted with the politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

A couple of questions have come up in the preconvention discussion: How can we get our program to the workers themselves, and will workers respond to the mass movements that are gaining momentum and are challenging the capitalist system on a very high political level? I'm going to respond to these two questions within a certain

perspective of my own experience as a railway brakeman about a year and a half ago.

On the first question, how can we get our program to the workers, how can we reach them with our political program? My particular situation, and the situation of the UTU is a very difficult problem, because of the backwardness of the United Transportation Union, which most comrades are probably familiar with or have heard reports about. It's almost an unbelievable situation, in fact, if you were to describe it to someone else in any other union, they wouldn't believe it, that you don't have any vote on your leadership, you have no vote on your contracts, you have absolutely no influence at all in the union. They are notorious for their sellouts in the last ten, twenty years, of raises that have not kept up with the cost of living, of trading away an escalator clause for a nickel-an-hour raise a few years ago and things like this that create a certain amount of cynicism towards the union among workers, which is something that you come across after about the first two weeks on the job. That's one of the favorite topics of discussion, how rotten the UTU is, at least it was at this time. That was before the Right to Vote Committee was gaining any kind of recognition.

Not only was it difficult to get younger workers to union meetings, it was difficult to get older workers to union meetings, in fact some union meetings the only person to show up would be the local secretary. The local chairman wouldn't even show up. And they would just come to the meeting and go home. There wasn't too much struggle going on in any way, shape or form. There wasn't very much a comrade could do at that particular time within that local. The Right to Vote Committee, which has been described, has qualitatively changed that now, especially in Chicago where they are beginning to mobilize the membership into doing something about their union to turn it into a combat union, something that is going to be able to win certain gains. In the relationship of the strike situation, and the Right to Vote Committee, because of the harassment of the employers because of some of their work rules changes, it has really given a big boost to the Right to Vote Committee, it has really shown that most everyone has the need for it, and it is becoming one of the main topics of the discussion.

Another sidelight to the character of the union leadership and the attitude of the men, we had a union meeting in Minneapolis which turned out to be quite large because we did some extra publicity for it. There was a vice-president of the union there who, on one side, would blame the problems of the UTU on the rank and file because the rank and file is the UTU so whatever problems there are with the union is obviously the rank and file's fault. But, on the other hand, when certain members of the organization would get up on the floor and speak about the selective strike strategy and the necessity for a work slowdown or to work according to rule this vice-president was very uptight about any initiative from the rank and file. It became pretty clear to everyone there exactly the role that the union leadership was playing in this whole thing.

Stepping back a bit, I was working for the railroad for about a year. I hadn't gone to a union meeting since I started working, and there was absolutely no reason for me to do that. I became interested in the fall 1969 antiwar offensive, mobilization, and I wandered over to the university because it seemed to me that that was where things were going on. I was interested in some of the

political struggles going on in the world around me. I happened to come across a YSA literature table and picked up a forum leaflet for a women's liberation forum which I went to. And not too long after that I joined the YSA. I began to get an understanding of the relationship between capitalism and the working class in the struggle and went back to my union, went back to work in the Right to Vote Committee, to build it, to participate in raising different points concerning the relationship of war to inflation, wages, etc.

As a side note, I found this out tonight, that at the time when I was working on the railroad, before I'd joined the YSA there was a comrade in my local, in my union. But no way for me to ever know that. So I became active in my union, became politicized through the mass movements that existed in my so-called outside world. I think both questions about how to reach the workers and really be affected and moved by the mass movements are answered by my particular situation, and it seems to me something can be learned from that.

In conclusion I would just say that it is a credit to the party and their confidence in the working class that it formulates a program that looks to the future when masses of workers are mobilized around the transitional demands, as they are now and as they will be additionally formulated, and will take power under the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party.

Charles Sherman

Comrades Don and John have covered a number of the points I wanted to cover so I'll not hurt this press for time any. One of the things we noticed at this particular meeting in Minneapolis, where we were trying to pep up this business of organizing a slowdown on the part of the rank and file in support of those railroads that were already out on strike, was mentioned by Don. You could just see this vice-president shrink from taking any responsibility, and particularly the idea of mobilizing the rank and file. Through all kinds of indirect formulations, the bureaucrats tried to get it across to the men that they would appreciate it if they would work slowly. But you come to organize it, oh, no, we can't do that. But the men on the job, to varying degrees, but to a very good degree in most places that I could see really slowed the operation of those railroads. So what the carriers took away from us in the way of arbitraries and changing our rules around didn't save them any money. It cost them money; they were slowed down all down the line. They had one hell of a time. The comment about the officials was: "So and so is really developing a case of ulcers."

Don mentioned this phenomenon that those taking an active role in the unions are the older guys, but we also have a much younger work force. The age of the work force on the railroads changed radically over the past period. So you have within this younger work force men who are going back and forth between the university and the job, and inevitably this is changing the thinking of the men on the job. The first long-haired kids that come on the job created quite a scene.

Now it's a matter of course. But it isn't just the long hair. It is a whole series of new ideas that are being accepted. But it's just the beginning; it doesn't represent a political radicalization yet. The young men now and then get up to meetings, over some of their very legitimate grievances, and they feel like they're confronted, and they are, with an incredible bureaucratic machine.

Our problem is to organize this kind of left wing, where we can get some confidence so that the younger men don't just get discouraged, quit coming up entirely. This is one thing that the Right to Vote Committee has served as a nucleus, a way of talking to some of the younger men and putting a little faith and hope in them, and try to bring out their charity as well.

We've seen in this strike—in the period leading up to it, in the situation we've got today—a very defiant, combative work force. Traditionally the yardmen, switchmen, have been anarchistic not only in their work but in their self-confidence, their way of work affected their organization, and there was always a lot of self-confidence. This self-confidence, this defiance and combativeness, has extended now to the road service employees, it's spread out all over the railroads, even the office workers were on strike this year.

There's also this other contrast, you'll see one of the most militant men who took a hand in organizing the slowdown, doing a good job as the local grievance committee man, who will get up and ask everybody to contribute to TPEL, the bureaucrats' political fund. Outside of the comrades, there has been nobody taking a position, nobody pushed for anything beyond this reformist political bag that the men are in. This is the thing we've got to break out of. When we start breaking out of that, then you can figure we've gone beyond defiance and combativeness, then you can figure that the political radicalization has started to take hold. And it will, I am sure of that.

Rachel Towne

I'm from the Upper West Side branch in Manhattan and trade union coordinator for the NY Peace Action Coalition. I wrote a short piece in the discussion bulletin on the work we did in organizing in the unions for April 24. I wanted to take up one aspect of that work in connection with rank and file union groups. Most of our work in New York in this area was around the United Federation of Teachers. The president, Albert Shanker, has a very ambiguous position on the war, has never taken a position against the war, and there are a large number of rank and file groups within that union. Some of them are to the right of Shanker, and some of them are to the left. Over the years a number of these rank and file caucuses have appeared and disappeared, have periods of greater or lesser activity. On the question of the war, there are three that took positions against the war that we had contact with and worked with. Two of them contacted us directly, and another we met in the antiwar movement and was willing to work with us. All of these groups sent members to Washington on April 24. The first group is the group around two members of the executive board, who are actually school teachers but are on the very large executive board of the UFT, and recently ran against Shanker for election for union leadership. This group approached us and asked us to send out a mailing to their mailing list and also to organize a press conference for them to publicize their position on the question of the war, which we did, which was not very well attended. Only the radical press came to it. At any rate, this gave them more confidence in our interest in working with them and I think led to further cooperation.

They have a position for immediate withdrawal in the war and they also have a position in favor of community

control. They are prominent oppositionists, well organized.

The next jamor group is the Teachers' Action Committee, a group the Stalinists are active in. There are also a large number of other people that are in the Stalinist milieu or liberals that are involved in the TAC, Teachers' Action Committee. They have a position of immediate withdrawal. They favor community control. This seems to be the best established of the antiwar opposition groups in the UFT. Even though they are influenced by Stalinists, they were quite cooperative in working with us for the 24th. They sent out copies of our literature to their mailing list, they sent delegates to the NPAC convention in New York in July. I think there are quite a few young teachers around this grouping. These two groups I've mentioned got a combined vote of about 15 percent against Shanker for president of UFT.

There is another large group against the war that we don't know that much about, largely because we didn't have enough people to take advantage of all the opportunities.

There are a couple things I wanted to point out generally about working with rank and file caucuses. We are in contact with various rank and file committees in the Social Service Employees Union and the Communications Workers of America and the Postal Workers. But these in our experience tend to be pretty small and relatively unstable groups. With the exception of the New York Teachers Union, it's still the official union leadership that really has the ability to mobilize large numbers of workers on the question of the war at this time.

I think in the antiwar movement we should make every effort to work with rank and file groups to the extent that they are healthy and that they will work with us, more or less, on our terms. But we have to keep in mind that it is the bureaucrats who still are definitely in control of these unions. None of these groups have very much authority with the rank and file. But they can help us get out our literature.

We should make every effort to encourage them to work with the local Peace Action Coalition and the trade union task forces and set up programs and outlines for getting them to involve their members. The things we encourage these groups to do in New York is to distribute leaflets to their memberships, to have NYPAC speakers come to union meetings, get their unions or their groups to endorse the coming action, to pass resolutions on it and to work with individuals within the union and get them to participate on an individual basis. They can also charter their own buses. Some of the teachers groups chartered their own buses completely independently of the union, or they can try to put pressure on the union to do that for them and maybe underwrite some of the expenses.

On the question of working with the trade union bureaucrats, which I think in this period we really have to do, it's best to remember—I'm speaking as an antiwar activist now who is working in the area of the labor movement—that we should stick to the question of the war and not try to take on the whole union. If we do that, the bureaucrats will really resent our interfering in what they regard as their own private business, and they will not work with us at all on the question of the war or any other question. It's really essential with the bureaucrats that are opposed to the war, where there is any hope at all of working with them in the antiwar movement, to be very clear that when we approach them as representa-

tives of the antiwar movement, that's what we want to discuss, that's what we want to deal with. We aren't interested in and we aren't going to interfere in these other issues. If we do, it will create problems not only with the people we are actually talking to, but we'll get a reputation within the labor movement as double-dealers, and it will make it much harder for us to involve unions in antiwar work. I think there is tremendous potential for involving union members in the antiwar movement, but we have to be very conscious how we go about this and know where we are and who we are dealing with.

Ray Martin

I'm a member of the Upper West Side in New York City, I'm chairman of the political action committee of my local and I'm a delegate to District Council 37, which is affiliated with AFSCME. I'd like to talk about some of the problems, experiences, that I ran into in New York City around the war. My local was an original sponsor of NYPAC, and in fact I was recruited out of the antiwar work and my relationship with NYPAC. We passed a resolution calling for immediate withdrawal, and then we passed a resolution supporting NYPAC and giving money. What we asked then was, what could we do to broaden this out, how could we reach the other locals and individuals within the District Council 37, which represents 82,000 workers within New York City. What we did was write up a resolution which I was going to present to the delegate assembly of District Council 37. I then went to the Social Service Employees Union, which has a membership of about 10,000 or 11,000. They referred me to the person who is in charge of handling antiwar work who was a member of the national steering committee of PCPJ. I asked him to endorse this resolution, which was calling for endorsement of April 24. At this time PCPJ had not dropped their May 1 or May 2 date, and he said to me, no, I can't do that. I said to him, what are you going to do, are you going to put a resolution on the floor? He said, yes, I'm going to put a resolution on the floor for PCPJ, and I told him that if he put a resolution on the floor, then I was going to get up and say that he was leading the District Council into a bloodbath, that he was hooking up with all these ultralefts. And he said, well, now that you mention it, I think maybe we'll endorse your resolution. So that was our conflict with the Stalinists.

Now came the conflict with the Social Democrats. The resolution was introduced, but before I introduced the resolution, the president of the Social Service Employees Union called Victor Gotbaum, who is the executive director, and told him what we were going to do. Then I called him up later and also told him that that night we were going to introduce a resolution. As soon as he got me on the phone, he said, no, I'm against it, I'm going to kill it. And he did. But that has not helped him.

The other thing I would like to mention is that District Council 37 had a demonstration in Albany, and about 10,000 workers showed up. The workers that showed up were about 60 or 70 percent female, and about 80 or 90 percent Third World. Before we got a chance to speak, there was a speaker on the platform from the Right to Live Committee and this person was going on, saying that they should repeal the recently passed new abortion law in New York State. All of a sudden the people who got off the bus from our local began crowding up to the steps and the people who were crowding up to the steps

were all women, and it was the Third World women. First they started shouting, and this guy was speaking into a mike, he just spoke louder, so they didn't know what to do. How were they going to get this guy off? They didn't agree, they were just screaming at him, so what they did was they took out their box lunches which the District Council had passed out and they started throwing oranges. He got the message and finished in about a minute and a half. In New York we know that these women are going to move on this abortion question. I am quite sure that they'll probably move within the union. Now when they move, what's the vehicle that they are going to use? They are going to use the women's national abortion action coalition and the offices in New York, and we know who's in that office. Once they get into that office, we are going to have direct contact with them. And we're going to have it not because we colonized anywhere, but because our politics are right, our politics are right on the war and they are right on this question. And we're going to get recruits. There's no doubt about it. Anybody who thinks that you just have to send people into the unions in some sort of artificial way, forget about the program because usually they don't talk about the program, they just talk about sending people into the union, and that's the answer, purge your soul or something like that. We are going to recruit, and we're going to recruit on the program, and we're going to recruit on our efforts in these other movements. And the time will come when we will more forcefully enter. But that will be a situation that comes then. As it is, our program is going to recruit in New York City now.

Mike Lind

I'm from the Oakland-Berkeley branch, and I've been working in the post office and have been a member of the National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees for about two years. I gave a report here last year. This year I want to deal with some of the concrete work we've been doing in the postal unions in both the Bay Area and nationally in collaboration with the branch leadership and the national office. First I want to share with comrades some of the objective experiences we have gained working within the post office, but most of all to give comrades a feel for the mood and militancy within the postal workers and outline some of the opportunities that I think we have in the coming period.

The mood and militancy of the postal workers is a very uneven thing. I think it is due a lot to the fact that the craft union setup is very divisive that way, and also something Don mentioned about the workers, they do not view the union as their vehicle for political action at this time. This uneven mood can be seen in the recent settlement in the postal situation, where there was a \$300 bonus that was meted out to pacify the workers. And it worked, in Berkeley there was a lot of grumbling, but that \$300 looked very good. I understand in New York they were throwing chairs around. This has a lot to do with the divisions within the craft, divisions within the union. Nixon's attempt to make the workers pay for the war has taken a particularly overt form with relation to 700,000 postal workers. The postal reorganization and postal reform is a vicious attack on the living standards of all postal workers and a very real threat to all of our workers. It has eliminated the civil service protection of jobs, and there's no security regardless of your seniority in the post office. This attack has made the main weak-

nesses of the postal employees, namely the divisive character of craft unionism, more evident to all in the post office. Craft unionism plus the overt sellout of Rademaker and the bureaucratic craft union machine has laid out plainly what the tasks of the postal workers are in the future. They are beginning to take steps of a potentially explosive nature. This was chronicled in *The Militant* quite well with what has been happening in New York City with Branch 36 of the NPU there.

The union I work in is the Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees. It's an industrial union, has about 40,000 in it nationally. It is predominantly Black and Third World. It was formed in 1913 when the unions were still segregated and they had no choice. It is nationalist in character, and it serves somewhat as a national Black caucus in the post office, although it is open to anyone regardless of race or craft. The most powerful and strategic union in the post office is the letter carriers, the National Association of Letter Carriers. It is also the most conservative since many of the members of the carriers joined the post office right out of the service in World War II and the Korean War. So there's a whole layer of conservative people in these unions, and most of them are in the Letter Carriers.

There has been a recent development among some of the craft unions. There has been a merger between four of the smaller craft unions of the NPU into another. It's potentially very powerful, called the American Postal Workers Union. In this context there are a number of issues which we can anticipate will serve as a focal point for struggle in the coming period among the postal employees. First, the basic fight for better wages and job security against layoffs which the postal reform presents. Here we have the opportunity to push for the inclusion of escalator clauses and also to propagandize around 30 for 40. The next important thing is the necessity to smash craft unionism and to form an industrial union in the post office. This is very key and the recent events in the post office have borne this out. Also the right to vote on our contracts. We don't have that right and we are going to be pushing for rank and file control of these unions as a natural outflow.

These future tasks are linked with the present motion in my union against the war and on a number of other levels. The present work around the war, the national struggles and the abortion law repeal struggles are preparing the way for postal workers for later struggles. What they learn now through these struggles is going to make that much of a difference when other struggles come up.

Concretely, what has happened in the Bay Area: in Berkeley in the Alliance, I reported last year at Oberlin, that we were preparing to go down to the national convention of the Alliance with the resolution for immediate withdrawal, endorsement, financial support and public encouragement for the postal workers to go march on October 31 and April 24. A close friend of mine was sent as an official delegate from my local to that convention to argue for passage of the resolution. At the convention, which conveniently took place the day after the Oberlin conference, the resolution passed overwhelmingly. There was \$500 sent to NPAC, and we also got money from the local. Also the national leadership of the union sent a letter to all of its locals encouraging them to participate actively in the 24th. I was also sent to New

York City as an official delegate from Berkeley to the NPAC convention last month. This is out of a local of 200.

Through this activity and a number of other possibilities we have engaged in, a number of possibilities are open, very small ones, things we'll have to decide on a local level to be determined by the local and branch priorities. One of the things is the editorship of the local newspaper which has a circulation of about 500, with the perspectives of increasing that circulation and making it Bay Area wide.

Another thing that happened which is very interesting in the context of today is that there was a struggle going on in Sacramento around some reactionary laws that were being presented on the abortion question. The women in the post office wanted to organize. They came to the union and the union organized carloads of people to go up in conjunction with one of the campus women's liberation groups. They made up a leaflet and distributed it, and the union also sent telegrams to some legislators up there. These are the kinds of things that I think we can expect to see, and I think they have to be judged within the context of the priorities of the branch at the time.

I'd like to take just one last second here to outline what are the tasks. We have found that these are the best propaganda and agitational tasks around which we can educate and recruit. There are four of them: first, *Militant* and *ISR* sales. This is fundamental and key, and we can never overlook it. Also the postal union should be approached to endorse and financially support and organize active participation in the November 6 antiwar actions. This is absolutely key. November 6 is going to see something like we have never seen before as far as the trade unions are concerned. We should have that perspective immediately. It should be requested to elect delegates to local Peace Action Coalitions. The sentiment is there. It just takes a little audacity for us to approach them. Thirdly, the contacts we make through our mass work should be brought around to the forum that the branches put on. You'll find out that the people who work in the post office are young, that they're Black and there are a lot of women. They are interested in our ideas. Last, and I think this is most important, our presidential campaign should be visible to postal workers everywhere. The types of buildings that we work in, these big, pompous, library-type buildings are ideal for a little bit of glue and a Jenness-Pulley poster, and we should take advantage of that.

Tom DeSilva

I'm from Chicago and I'm also with the Right to Vote Committee. I am not in the UTU, I cannot directly participate in the work of the fraction. I am a machinist and I belong to the International Association of Machinists. I do have an awful lot of contact with the main people in the Right to Vote Committee and the UTU, that is, the engineers, the switchmen, the firemen, and some of the other crafts that are on the road and in the yard. One of the things that I try to do as far as the committee is concerned is to get this issue out about the Right to Vote Committee, put out the leaflets on the committee, get out the stickers (especially stickers on the engines), put out the leaflets for the right to strike meetings.

As for my own union, most of the workers are young and Black and Chicanos. It's a very changing union

right now. But most of the people who are contacts are coming around on the basis of the Right to Vote Committee.

Now my union is probably one of the oldest. It was founded in 1899. As far as the roundhouse is concerned, there are four or five different crafts there. They are electricians, pipefitters, machinists, and carmen. These have always been throughout labor history a conservative, exclusive industry, that is, you had either to know somebody or be related to somebody to get into the railway union craft. That is one of the reasons that many of the people in those crafts are old now. You can see that among the engineers too where they have a kind of aloofness from the people like the switchmen and carmen, who are considered a little below them.

Like Don Paul pointed out, the engineers are now coming out and helping the switchmen, and they work to rule; they are also feeling the brunt of the attack of the government. Our union has been negotiating the contract, which ended December 31, 1970, and we have been negotiating ever since then, that's eight months.

Something very funny came up about April. We have a committeeman, a very, very young militant—you can just tell by his past history, his father fought with the IRA and his grandfather fought with the Western Federation of Miners—who still has an awful lot of fantastic hangups. He wanted to be Mayor Daley's precinct captain, or something like that, and I finally talked him out of it. It was only through a process of two or three months of contact work with the guy that now he's reading *The Militant* and *Day Coach*, which is progressive. By April he was trying to get together a boycott, or actually a wildcat strike.

We had a meeting at the end of April and decided that the best thing to do was not to go on strike but to have a couple of educational talks within the local and write a letter to the union headquarters and try to get an article in the newspaper about it. Eventually we had to come out in the sense of supporting the union.

One thing that's got to be seen throughout this whole thing is the fact that the rail industry is undoubtedly coming up. One indication of this is the fact that in the last seven to ten years, they have been hiring people like crazy. Just since I've been there last August, which makes about a year now, over ten or fifteen different guys have retired, and all the guys that replace them are young, Black and Chicano. The thing I'm doing the most of right now as far as political union work is trying to get out *The Militant* and the ideas of the Right to Vote.

Debby Leonard

I just want to talk briefly about something that has been alluded to and try to bring together some ideas on the effectiveness and importance of using many of the aspects of our transitional program and demands in terms of intervening and working in a union situation. It's unusual that we have the opportunity to do this. I found myself in that unusual position. I was in the AFSCME union in Seattle. It was very small, there was no enthusiastic participation, we couldn't get people to come to meetings, etc. So we organized a caucus which did two things: it built the union and organized the union itself into a viable organization which ended up with collective bargaining rights for the first time in its history. We also built the union on the basis of making it a union that would be relevant to workers on the job and would take

cognizance of and make demands in the areas that we were all interested in. So we built our caucus that turned the whole local union around at the same time that we built the union itself. For example, we were able to build union meetings that had been nine or ten old people sitting around having tea into meetings that had attendance of well over 100 on a regular basis with very lively discussion. Out of this formation I was elected as a union delegate to the King County Labor Council. And this came on the heels of our municipal election campaign in Seattle where our full program was in full view of the public and where we and our ideas were supported by this union. In other words, it was the most militant representation that they could choose. Once we got on the labor council, one of the things that came up right away was the actions of the Black construction workers in closing down the construction sites. Immediately we intervened with resolutions adopted by our local fully supporting these Black workers and making some concrete demands of the labor council in terms of its support to them.

Very quickly we polarized all the building trades bureaucrats; we split the labor council. We did not, of course, win the vote. We got a small section of the labor council behind us and in so doing were able to organize a sort of informal caucus in the labor council itself, which then served as the backbone for introducing antiwar resolutions and other things. Also we got a tremendous amount of publicity.

These kinds of questions had never before been raised in the labor council. They had an "open mike" in the labor council; so we had to organize to learn how to take over that mike before the question was called, and we were able to deal with the whole question of democracy on the labor council and have it covered in the daily press, since the reporters were there, and it was reported that these things were coming up.

Also we brought up the question of the antiwar movement and antiwar resolutions. Meanwhile, our local had gone on record for immediate withdrawal. We had chartered a bus to San Francisco for the demonstration there, had also put out a leaflet for a demonstration in Seattle.

In the same way we organized for the 1970 AFSCME International Convention in Denver. Most of the comrades are familiar with the outcome of that. The convention coincided with the May uprisings on the campuses, and a strong antiwar resolution was adopted. But this came primarily out of our small local in Seattle that had a garage sale to raise money to send its three antiwar delegates, organized a caucus at the convention, and joined with other locals to make sure this antiwar resolution was passed. The convention had a large number of Black, Third World, Puerto Rican and Chicano and women delegates, and the antiwar issue got great attention. When Jerry Wurf, finally, after trying to blockade it from the floor until the very last day when there would not be a quorum, passed us a resolution saying that he would accept "rapid withdrawal," we had a quick caucus meeting, crossed out "rapid," sent it back as "immediate," and that is how the international AFSCME convention came out for immediate withdrawal.

The other resolutions passed by that convention were resolutions concerning the women's demands for child-care on the job and for paid maternity leaves, and those were endorsed as legitimate bargaining aspects for future bargaining contracts.

I want to talk very briefly, because I think other comrades will talk about it more, on the present situation in Houston only to make the point that we are running an election campaign, and our campaign has proved the most viable means for us as an organization at this point to reach into the union movement. And at this point we are in the process of expanding our antiwar activity, developing this through antiwar committees which should be able to connect with the unions even more directly.

In Houston only 15 percent of the working class is in unions, so it is a very different situation than you have up North, and I don't need to describe to you the conditions, the fact that the Klan, the night riders, shot up the steelworkers Chicano picketline last summer and broke the strike by shooting the pickets, which is one effective way of breaking a strike. This is what we have.

Our stand against this terrorism and our demands for democracy have won some respect for us. For example, when we appeared at a city council meeting and spoke, there were two hundred firemen there demanding collective bargaining rights with the city, which they do not have. We endorsed their fight and as a result were called into the union hall by the firemen who were trying to organize. They asked for some advice and collaboration, and whatever help we could give them. When unions see what we stand for, see that we are serious, they are very clear in differentiating their interest in us from that of the ultra-lefts, and because of this we are beginning to make some ties and contacts in the union movement.

There are an increasing number of possibilities. I would like to urge this panel and this convention not only to welcome this, obviously, but also for all of us to be more aware in terms of keeping ourselves in touch with these developments, following through on them, taking advantage of them. We have the program, we have the ideas, and I think we should get ourselves together in a very serious way to take advantage of the radicalization in the unions.

Jim Cummings

I'm with the Atlanta Federation of Teachers. Our local union takes on more of the character of an organizing committee than an established union. It's in the process of building and this leads to the problem that a lot of comrades may have in a similar situation. What the union needs most of all is volunteer organizers to go from school to school and recruit new members, in other words, basic union organizing. But I've been actually avoiding that particular kind of activity. In my opinion it would be a mistake for comrades to decrease their activity in the antiwar movement and in general party work in order to do simple trade union work such as organizing of trade unions. I have an alternative in that I am able to serve as a building representative in my school, and this gives me a chance to do union work at the school during time which I couldn't use for any other political work without getting fired.

Recently I had an opportunity to introduce some broader political questions into the local union by running for delegate to the national convention, which is going to be held in San Francisco next week. I ran on the basis of a three point program: 1) community control of schools in the Third World communities, Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican; 2) *out now* in Southeast Asia; and 3) repeal of all abortion laws. Now I might discuss these for a minute.

I don't think I have to discuss the *out now* demand because it's the same kind of work that a number of comrades have discussed here tonight, the same kind of work in the unions.

But the community control demand is a little trickier. You have to be careful with it because you can't really call for the American Federation of Teachers to mount a big crusade for community control of schools. It's not the place for the teachers union to lead that struggle or to impose that demand upon the Black community from the outside; but it should be prepared to support any concrete manifestations, any struggles that are taking place and initiated by the Black community.

While discussing this part of my platform, I was able to bring up the criticism of the AFT role in the 1968 strike in New York City and the Oceanhill-Brownsville community control experiment, and also the Newark strike which was fresh in people's minds. At this meeting there happened to be a national staff organizer present, just by coincidence, and he took the floor and spoke against me for fifteen minutes defending the union line on the Oceanhill-Brownsville strike and Newark, which, of course, is the Social Democratic line since the leaders of the union are in the Socialist Party.

Some thought he was butting in and meddling in our local union discussions. And they voted to continue education discussion on questions like these in the fall.

On the question of legalizing abortions, I brought this up primarily because there is a new women's rights commission which has been set up by the national AFT leadership, and they have a whole long program of demands for the women's movement, but they totally ignore the issue of abortion. They bring up child care, equal pay for equal work, equal job and educational opportunities for women, but not a word about abortion in any form or demand. And I don't think that's accidental. If you think about it, the abortion demand is the only one that can't be approached in an economist fashion. All the other demands can be pursued by confronting individual employers, like child care on the job or equal pay for equal work, by confronting individual employers through the courts. But the abortion demand can't be granted by individual employers. It can only be approached through confronting the government. And, of course, the union leaders on a national scale would rather avoid any kind of confrontation with the government. So they leave that totally out of their program for women's rights, and that's why I think it is important for comrades to mount campaigns around the abortion issue in the unions. I don't think we'll find it coming out any other way.

I was elected first alternate to the convention and later one of the full delegates got sick so he couldn't go; so I'm going to be joining other comrades in actively participating in this convention at San Francisco. Jeff is more active as a convention delegate so I'll let him cover what we are going to be doing there.

Jeff Maxton

Comrades, I spent the last four years in New York in an opposition caucus in the United Federation of Teachers, a 70,000 man local, the largest trade union in America, in fact in the world, and I recently transferred to California and I looked for the AFT, where I am a teacher. When I was in New York, we ran an opposition caucus against Shanker, which was the first opposition in the

history of that union. We ran 78 candidates, and we ran election campaigns for approximately three years and initiated the first referendum on the war question for immediate withdrawal.

My first day of school in California I looked around for an AFT button and out of 1,000 teachers I finally found one. They were having a union meeting so I went. The meetings started out with twelve teachers, built up to about thirty. There was a controversial point on the agenda, and I don't know what prompted me to do it, but I spoke on it. The next item that came up on the agenda was that the vice-president of the union had transferred. A hand went up and nominated me for vice-president, second, call the question, vote, and I was a district vice-president of the Federation of Teachers.

I was subsequently elected statewide representative to NPAC, and I attended the NPAC national conference and through that we participated in the labor support committee. Since I represented 20,000 workers, as opposed to the longshoremens, who only represented 10,000, I participated in the NPAC labor support committee in San Francisco, and I'd like to tell you a couple of things about that. First in San Francisco Labor Council, which is essentially a rank and file type body, with secondary and tertiary leadership, they overruled the leadership of the Labor Council and endorsed April 24 by a vote of 60 to 30. The motion was made by a member of our statewide union. In the Alameda Labor Council, after a one-hour heated battle on April 24, against the bureaucracy, we lost the endorsement by two votes. The motion was made again by the president of the Oakland local this time, and a member of the AFT. In Santa Clara, in Contra Costa, the labor council had endorsed April 24, the proposal was made by AFTers. AFT played a key role in organizing buses, finances, etc. They not only made their \$500 commitment, but they gave an additional \$500 which they weren't required to. And they participated in press conferences and so on.

One of the most exciting developments recently was, by the way, my local a little more than tripled in size. We're pushing 100 now. And I was elected delegate to the upcoming national convention.

AFT nationally represents 250,000 teachers. So we decided we'd initiate a little antiwar project. We drafted a resolution, called it the "California resolution," and asked all 200 AFT locals in the state for endorsement. So far we have 150 delegates from California, and we are pushing for 200 by August 15.

In addition, the three locals in California which have submitted antiwar resolutions have withdrawn them in favor of ours. There were ten resolutions from AFT locals across the country on the war, including the Washington local which is supporting this California resolution. The New Jersey state executive is supporting the California resolution, and so on. So it appears that this resolution stands a good chance of passing. We are organizing quite a serious fight. We hope to have buttons printed up for the California resolution. We have 4000 printed leaflets that have been laid out and printed free.

There are tremendous possibilities in the AFT throughout the country, and I hope some of the comrades who have done fantastic work in the AFT will speak on it. For example, one of the more conservative unions, the Chicago Federation voted (this is a 25,000 member union in Chicago) on the question of immediate withdrawal,

and the vote was something like 9800 to 3300 for immediate withdrawal. That's in the union which I understand about a year and a half ago voted to take no position, and the union was extremely conservative in national politics. The same situation holds for a number of AFT locals throughout the country on the war question and the whole host of other issues. There's a lot to be done, and you'll begin to see some of the results of this in the AFT after this convention. Various state federations and AFT locals around the country are going to be taking up the war question.

Jeff Maxton (first speaker, 2nd session)

Comrades, I get the feeling I'm going to be booed off the stage here, because for those of you who weren't here the last time, I was the last speaker on the list. And when I got to speak about 11:15 there were just a handful left here, and a number of the comrades have asked that I repeat my remarks.

I just called California today and so far we have 115 delegates to the convention from the state of California who have endorsed and signed the resolution called the "California resolution," this includes the statewide president and three vice-presidents, and roughly sixty local AFT presidents from various local chapters. Ten locals in the United States have submitted resolutions on the war to the convention, and almost every one of them are supporting the "California resolution." The war will be a major issue at the convention. We have a good chance of passing our resolution.

Comrade Jeanne Lawrence will tell you more about the referendum they held in Chicago. In California, I was able to raise the question of the labor party and make some criticisms, in an educational way, of the leadership's reliance on the Democratic Party.

Jeanne Lawrence

My work was in Chicago. Since we are going to submit written reports, I won't be detailed of what I did in Chicago. The most significant thing that I can bring out now is developments. In I don't know how many ways, my development as a Trotskyist, my development in learning how to operate within a union, the development of NPAC that was happening at the same time, and the development of antiwar sentiment as a result of the student uprisings and then the development of NPAC—all these things happened at that time.

I had just begun teaching and had just joined the YSA when it all began. I was a delegate in the union, but that status in the union doesn't give you any power. You're just sort of like an arbitrator of grievances.

I began doing antiwar work because I had just joined the YSA. I started talking to teachers about the war and trying to find out who was active against the war in the teachers union to see what we could do to organize teachers around the antiwar demonstration.

The next year I became a member of the AFT House of Representatives and that gave me the power to make motions in the House. The result of the work we were able to do in the Chicago Teachers Union was a referendum on the war, a very strongly worded referendum. It said "the immediate ceasefire by United States forces and the immediate withdrawal of all United States forces" and money for schools. That was a little thing that was tacked on at the end. This referendum was conducted by the Chicago Federation of Teachers, May 22, at the

same time that people were voting to send delegates to the convention that is going to take place in California. It passed by a two-thirds majority. The Chicago Teachers Union is one of the largest unions in Chicago, and I think it is one of the larger teachers' locals in the country. It's a very reactionary union. So the referendum was a major victory for us. Now I will explain how we structured our work to conduct the referendum. I happened to go to the night meetings that were being held at the University of Illinois during the student uprising. That happened a year prior to this May 22 referendum that was conducted. I and another comrade in this meeting got up and just made an announcement into the microphone that if any teachers happened to be present that they should come down and join us. The impact of that student meeting—it was packed—during the May 1970 student uprising, to go on the campus was the most radicalizing experience that could have happened to anyone.

I hadn't been involved in campus work. I had just been working in the union, and that's a very tough, slow-grinding road. So I went to this thing, and lo and behold some young radical teachers were there—about twelve of them. We were all inspired and said we were going to form a committee and push the teachers. We're going to organize labor.

So we had our first meeting of about twelve, and we decided to call ourselves the Teachers Mobilization Committee. We didn't want to be a caucus. We didn't want to get involved in all those bureaucratic struggles, and we didn't want to even have any bad feelings against us coming in in opposition to what existed in that union. We just wanted to make ourselves known as a group of teachers against the war. We didn't want to put up any barriers. And then we began to decide what we stood for and what we would do about that. We decided we were for immediate withdrawal.

Of course, being a Trotskyist, you know. And calling these various sections of teachers, we had long discussions about immediate withdrawal, set the date, and all various elements came in. I was not diffident about being a Trotskyist; but then I wasn't outward about it at the very beginning either. I began selling *The Militant* and trying to get people to read it and buy things, etc. I learned how to conduct myself in a situation like that.

The development of the union situation was most interesting, the various tactics and maneuvers of a year's work in that AFT House of Representatives. All things imaginable came up that would delay our referendum. A strike happened. A national referendum came out that was a whole bureaucratic plot against the antiwar movement and against anyone who wants to organize politically in the unions. Shanker from New York got involved. Desmond tried to run everything. The details of this are included in my written report. It's complicated, but it's interesting. I was called out of order. We had trouble with prowar people.

The thing that I want to end up with is that the combination of the formation of NPAC, and the significant development of that, and at the same time the ongoing war gave us sentiment and the whole scene completely changed around. The executive committee was very cooperative with me finally, letting me make the motion, not being called out of order anymore and cooperated in letting me sell tickets for April 24, etc.

Allen Harris

I represent a union which is currently on strike on the West Coast, and it is a very important strike for many reasons. One is the importance of the union itself. The transportation industry is different from other industries in many ways. It can be compared to the bloodstream of the body. And when the transportation union goes on strike, it affects the entire community. If you have read *American City* or anything about the teamsters strikes, you know how this operates. As a matter of fact, if there were a national transportation industry strike, including teamsters, longshoremens, ship clerks, and railroad workers, it would virtually tie up the country. If it were under a revolutionary leadership, it would challenge the state power.

We are on strike for the first time in twenty-three years. In 1948 we had a strike which lasted ninety-five days and was very successful. We won all our demands, and threw back the red-baiting attack upon the leadership, Harry Bridges. They refused to deal with him in the beginning of the strike, they said you'll have to change your leadership before we'll deal with you. We threw that back and won that strike, everything, though they tried to bring in the army and scabs, and the whole business. Since that time the union has been pretty much moving forward on the basis of that victory. And, of course, the earlier victory of 1934 was what established the hiring hall.

In 1961 the leadership of Harry Bridges—while we were in a situation where we would have to strike in order to get greater gains—decided instead of striking that they were going to come up with a "share the machine" package. The idea was that they would remove all restrictions on introduction of machinery, on manning scales, on everything which tends to protect the worker on the job, and they would trade these off for money. For a sum of 29 1/2 million dollars they gave up manning scales, work restrictions, and the right of the union to police the job; and they gave up union control of the job bosses, turning them over to the walking bosses. It was a very serious blow to the union, but it was sold on the basis that we are now going to share the machine. The bosses and the workers are going to get together now and share the profits of the machine. We're going to get something out of it, the bosses are going to get something out of it, and everything's going to be beautiful.

Well, it didn't turn out that way. The union got \$29 1/2 million which they used to pension off the older workers, and very substantial pensions, around \$500 to \$600 a month, including the medicalization fund plus the regular pension. But in return for that, what the ship owners got was rather amazing. At the end of the five year contract (it was a long contract), the ship owners, in a rather boastful interview in the *San Francisco Examiner*, said that they had saved \$150 million in removal of the restrictive work practices and manning, they had saved \$50 million in turn-around time, the ships didn't have to stay in the ports so long because they were being worked faster, and in one year alone, in 1965, they made an estimated—and they boasted about it—\$54 million more than they would have made under the old contract—\$54 million. So you see it wasn't a very good deal for longshoremens. And yet the Bridges leadership came back and offered the same contract for the next five years, and this time for \$34 1/2 million to give up what re-

mained of the manning scales and what restrictive work rules that remained and a portion of the union hiring hall. There will be articles in *The Militant* about this so you can get the details.

The present strike is very interesting because of the demands. The demands are \$1 an hour increase in pay for a two-year contract and a guaranteed wage: a 40-hour guaranteed wage for the seniority man, and a 32-hour guaranteed wage for the B men, the ones who are not even members of the union. Now this was forced on the leadership by the ranks who are sick of this contract and want to try to get back some of the things they had. What this amounts to in a very unhistorical way is a sort of application of a sliding scale of wages and hours, because the average A man right now is working four days a week, 24 hours, and he wants a 40-hour guarantee and the average B man is working one to two days a week, and quite often is on unemployment insurance and he is asking for a 32-hour guarantee. What has forced these demands and also the demand to restore the hiring hall and make all work go through the hiring hall is a revolt of the younger leadership. There is only one port on the West Coast at the present time, that's San Pedro, where the leadership is pro-International. There is a struggle going up and down the union on the coast, on the question of the control of the strike, a tight strike. I expect that coming out of this strike there will be a much better leadership and I haven't been able to tell you about the role we're playing there but that can be saved for some other time.

Tom Leonard

Comrades, I am here to report about Houston. I've only been there a short time, but I have already had some experiences. That's the important thing. The party hasn't been in the South in nearly thirty years as an organized entity, and we haven't been in touch with the labor movement in the South or Southwest for something like twenty years. I think our last ties were through the Maritime union.

Some comrades will recall that the trade union bureaucracy, after the AFL-CIO merger in 1955 failed to carry out its Operation Dixie, so there isn't too much of a union situation in the South at this point. In Houston there are only something like 15 percent of the work force in unions, that's in the sixth largest city in the country.

We have tried to understand the new mood of white, Black and Chicano workers in the South, as it relates for example to the pro-Wallace sentiment, the racism that exists in the white working class in the South, some of the organizing campaigns that are going on, predominantly among Black and Chicano workers, led principally by the Teamsters union and the steelworkers union in that area.

First I will mention some of the strikes of nonunion, Black workers in the South. There has been a rash of very small strikes involving anywhere from ten to fifty Black workers who are nonunion, and in some cases they go on strike in the name of shop committees, with endorsement from different union locals. I hope to write about these strikes in greater detail.

There is a similar process that goes on in some of the nonunion white shops in the South, where there is a great deal of antiunion sentiment. But at some point when the attrition begins to hit workers in terms of inflation and so on, there is a tendency to form and they do form

shop committees, to fight for wage increases at the point of production, up to and including going out on strike even if there is no union there.

The party has had a few opportunities to work in the labor movement, although our primary job down there at this time is to establish the party. Nonetheless we have had some union work imposed upon us, in a certain sense. We had one comrade, for example, who was in town for only a month in the bakery workers union and was instrumental in getting involved almost from the outset in putting forward a demand for equal pay for equal work for women in the bakery industry, and was instrumental in helping to eliminate the wage differential from something like \$1 an hour to a few cents an hour, in the course of union negotiations there. And as I said he was only in the union situation for a short period of time.

In addition, we had another form of intervention, or I should say that a section of workers and youth intervened in our party. As a result of our defense work down there, we got something of a reputation of being able to stand up to the city council and the mayor. And on the basis of this, we received a call from the firemen's union who asked us for a meeting, and one of our candidates and another comrade met with the firemen. On the basis of our ability to take on the mayor and the city council, they wanted to feel us out about raising their demands for them before the city council because they thought we were pretty effective. We also had another opportunity on the part of the cab drivers, where there was a move on to make them cut their hair. We worked with them to call a press conference, two of our candidates participated in the press conference, and we solidarized with their struggle not to cut their hair, and they won and they are still driving cabs that way.

We also had another modest experience which may be a harbinger of the future. You don't always have to chase after workers; if you are building the right kind of a party sometimes they'll call upon you. We had an experience, for example, of a city worker as a result of our fight with the Klan who called us up. He is in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and he came over to the house, had discussions, took *Socialism on Trial*, read it, and so on.

One of the things that we are doing in Houston to take advantage of the widespread popularity of our campaign at this point is to raise some demands for the labor movement. We think probably the most important one, because of the open shop character of the city and the state, is collective bargaining for public employees. We have decided to make the repeal of the right to work law a focal part of our campaign and take that on in the course of the election. I hope to submit a written report on the results of this campaign later.

Jack Steel

I'm not going to talk so much about union activity as I'm going to talk about the kind of propaganda that I feel might help comrades in doing antiwar work. First of all I'll say that I have tested it out in my own work and in my own plant and in the Los Angeles County Federation, and I find that it is quite effective. To begin with, I think we have to make a little breakdown in terms of what we are dealing with in the union movement. For example, in the civil service unions the war question can be raised much more easily than in the mass production

unions. The reason for this is that the civil service workers get their benefits and wages from the same pot that finances the Vietnam war, and they have a much clearer insight into the negative aspects of this war precisely because they have a material stake in stopping it. But that is not the case in the mass production industries. The problem there is more difficult and not easily reached. One of the campaigns, and I'm sure you're all going to be caught up in this wherever you are in the union movement, that the labor bureaucracy is opening, is the campaign to begin to start picket lines against the importation of foreign goods. As you know, if you examine this demand, to begin to put tariffs and quotas on foreign goods, it is really the opposite side of the AFL-CIO prowar policy coin.

The reality is that thirty-two years of militarism has literally bankrupted the United States. They are now caught in a position where they are completely priced out of the world market. The cause of this being priced out of the world market is nothing more than the inflation that has been induced by the war and the tremendous load of taxation that exists in our wage structure.

Let me give you some of the facts that indicate this type of thing. First, according to the Wall Street reports, German and Japanese workers in the last number of years have saved a far greater percentage of their wages than workers in America. Secondly, it was reported that the average American worker worked to May 11 of this year before he began to make a living, he worked to May 11 just to pay his taxes. Now mind you, that's more than one third of a year before he starts to earn dollar one. Third, Japan is the world's second largest market for the sale of new automobiles. Now we are told that the wages of German and Japanese workers are much lower than our wages, and they *are* in dollars, but I really sincerely doubt that they are lower in terms of their real purchasing power, and that's the kind of propaganda that I use in approaching the war question.

When the bureaucrats in the County Federation raise the question of gathering forces to go picket imported goods as they have been doing now, more and more, I usually use this in the form of giving them *critical support*, and you can believe it's a lot more criticism than it is support, pointing out these kind of economic facts, putting the blame for this situation not upon the Japanese but upon the American ruling class and its thirty-two years of militaristic madness which they have pursued. Now I think we have to watch these bureaucrats with this move, primarily because it is a very nationalistic thing and it is a cover up of the American ruling class.

In my lifetime, I was born in a period when Kaiser Bill was causing all the trouble and after that it was Lenin and Trotsky and Stalin, and Hitler, Tojo, Hirohito, Stalin, Mao, Peron, Guzman down there, and Castro, the ruling class has always pointed to the foreign enemy. In other words, there is nothing wrong in this country, it is always the foreigner that causes our problems, and I submit that coming out of this Vietnam war more Americans than ever before in our history are beginning to recognize that the problems are caused by these guys here at home. And we shouldn't let these bureaucrats use this old argument to help get the ruling class off the hook. That's the kind of propaganda that we've got to think of, and it's very effective, I can assure you, in terms of moving workers in the mass production industries

where we do have a more difficult time in getting support.

I have used this in the shop successfully, where I have also carried on this campaign.

Now I want to conclude on one further note. When the witch-hunt subsided and a shift in attitudes took place in my local union, the first attempt there on the part of the militants and the more active members was to get me to go back into the leadership. And I personally made a choice of not being in the leadership but rather devoting my time to political work. Now I have deliberately built up a rather broad group separate and apart from the union leadership. You know, these union leaders are petty politicians and they say: don't ask me to take a position on the war question because I might not get elected to a union post. So I've built up a separate group, and as the atmosphere changes more in our favor, we have been able now to put the local on record—the same type of political work as the delegate in the County Federation patiently pounding away—and I think in the long haul this is going to pay off for us.

Morris Chertov

Comrades, my purpose in this report is to describe some developments of the strike wave of 1970-71. But first a glimpse into the mechanics may be of some use. I was on strike for five months, from the end of August 1970 until the third week of January 1971. The local was out all by itself. The plant is a turbine plant. It is the most profitable plant for Westinghouse in the 100 plants of the Westinghouse chain. It's a monopoly product sold worldwide.

The reason for the strike was the following: we participated in the Westinghouse general negotiations sometime in 1970. We got what GE had got, but in the discussions in the local prior to the negotiations, we had estimated that we were down 50¢ to \$1.50 per hour behind area rates for the same kind of work. This local prior to that time had been the leading militant local in the whole Delaware Valley area. It was customary for us to be out on strike at least four times a year, sometimes for one man, which by this time had appeared to most of the unionists in the area as being the height of lunacy. You pay the man out of the union fund, you don't go out on strike with a whole plant for one man. This is a local—like a handful of locals throughout the country—that is always fighting rearguard battles. While all the unions were retreating, these few locals, one in this international or another, were putting up a fight and slowing down in their own plant the general retreat. But it was a retreat, that is, we fought to slow down the retreat, but the retreat continued nonetheless. It finally caught up with us so that we had lost the cost of living escalator clause somewhere in the 1960s, and here it is 1969, and we had a reactionary leadership come in that represented the conservative members, the increasingly more conservative members of the local, and we looked around and there we were 50¢ to \$1.50 behind area rates for work that we did.

The drift is finally in the opposite direction. The local leadership, among whom there are young militants, finally demanded a supplementary contract. There is a national contract over each plant, and a supplementary contract where we actually apply the wages according to a local wage scale.

We wanted to equalize our rates with the area rates,

in the negotiations for the local supplementary contract. They negotiated and negotiated and nothing came of it and finally at the end of August we went out. We were out for five months during which the local was subject to many tests by management. We won about an average of 16¢ an hour, with no change in conditions.

The government was brought into the picture after the company tried a bribe that failed. The government put pressure upon our leaders, and we were brought to a ratification meeting where we had a split between the national leaders and some of the local leaders who didn't want to accept the contract.

I think if we could have stayed out another month, we could have gotten twice as much, even though we were out already five months. But the thing that made the workers give up at that point was that they saw a split leadership. We saw here the loyalty of the workers to the only thing they had, the union. No matter what they may have felt about the union, no matter how they may have despised certain of their officers or all of their officers, the union was their organization and they stuck to it.

Secondly, as in many other experiences, this led up to the brink of independent political action, seeing the government come in, plus a local Pennsylvania tax that took away whatever we had won in the new wage rate.

When I spoke on the labor party concept in the local union, for the first time I received applause, because of the Pennsylvania tax, a Democrat taking the place of the Republican and the Democrat doing the job which he promised not to do and our local leaders believed that. The Democrat said he wouldn't support the tax, but he did. That made the labor party point very pertinent.

Beyond all this I think what kept the people going was the effect of the radicalization. It was their feeling that big social changes are taking place all around us that kept a strike like this going in the monotonous way these strikes usually go.

Nat Weinstein

What might prove interesting about my report is not so much the union that I'm a member of and active in but how I became involved in the painters union in San Francisco, which has a lot to do with what we have been discussing over the past couple of days. I became a member of the painters union as a result of a colonization by the SWP into the New York painters union. I was one of about a dozen comrades that was colonized into a situation that opened up for the party. There were people inside the New York painters union that wanted to collaborate with the party and asked for the party's help and opened the door for the comrades to go into the union, get jobs, become members of the union, and participate in the struggle that was taking place in those days.

More recently, about five years ago, I was asked to take an assignment in the Seattle branch, and just shortly before I left New York, something very unusual occurred in San Francisco. A business agent in the painters union in San Francisco was shot and killed. The party asked me to stop by San Francisco and find out what the circumstances were, which I did and reported back. While I was there I had some discussions with a number of different painters, some of them comrades, who filled me in as much as possible and introduced me to some paint-

ers. I talked with some of the officials and found that they were very amenable to help from outside, that is, help from myself, knowing that I was a member of the Socialist Workers Party and that I was a painter and had experience in the trade union movement.

Shortly thereafter I went on to Seattle. I lived there for three months and I was asked by the comrades in New York to go to San Francisco to see what I could do or what the party could do to help.

The murder of the painters business agent in San Francisco was the result of his carrying on what amounted to a bitter struggle against the International officers of the painters union, who traditionally throughout the country, and this is typical of the building trades unions generally, were intervening and fronting for the employers. They put pressure on the local officials in every area to play ball with the employers.

I'm oversimplifying the situation, but essentially that is what the case is. The local Bay Area officials led by business agent Dow Wilson, who was killed, were conducting a struggle against the International and against the employers. Now in the course of this struggle, Wilson, who was an ex-member of the CP and a very unusual type person in that he was a maverick, while his general approach was along the lines of what you might expect from somebody who came out of that background, he had certain lines of independence that led him toward following a class struggle policy in the painters union in San Francisco.

When I went there I found the doors wide open, we had three comrades that functioned in the painters union in San Francisco, for a couple of years, as long as the officials there were willing to carry on the fight against the International and against the employers. But those officials wearied of the fight. They capitulated to the employers. The alliance between us and the officials broke up. We carried on a struggle and tried to maintain a fight against the employers and against the International, and we carried on a vigorous fight for a period of about two years lasting up to about six or eight months ago. The struggle in time declined as a result of the general period we are in, which pretty much confirms the fact that we are not in a period of general radicalization of the working class. This was reflected in our situation.

The only new thing that occurred there is that we had a very unusual type of individual who was in the leadership of the union, who was able to mobilize the membership for a time, but when he was put out of the way the struggle declined. The membership wasn't able to continue to fight over a long period of several years without help and encouragement from other sectors of the union movement and from the class.

George Baxter

The remarks I have are of a general nature, and they are not about any particular trade union opportunity since I haven't had any. I have been lucky where I work in the sense that I have been able, as an electrician, to jump from shop to shop, and from company to company in various factories and to have a good cross section look at the general mood which is current now. Specifically, on the character of the spread of the radicalization among different sections of workers today, this radicalization that we have seen on the campuses is just beginning to spread into some sections of the working class, and it is a completely different nature from what

I read of the thirties. It's completely different from the previous period because it involves issues of a much higher political nature, that is, women's liberation, Black liberation, Black power, especially the war, inflation, all these questions, general political questions, seem to interest the workers much more than union problems, shop problems.

In a sense, the spread of our radicalization occurred outside of the union, unlike the thirties. The radicalization we are already familiar with occurred outside the unions, and the younger workers actually looked at this radicalization as something separate from the unions, something totally different from shop politics and events in the shop. It is a fact that right now the factories are really humming with forms of political discussions and arguments during the lunch period. You see a lot of radicals in these discussions, a lot of independent, unconnected working class radical youth, who aren't very consistent but everywhere you go you seem to run into one or two wild, if you will, radical kids, or some not so wild, but the current radicalization is really beginning to spread into various sections of organized workers.

Most of the young workers we recruit reflect the general political character of this radicalization, that is, they usually come to us through forums, through *Militant* sales, through antiwar leaflets, some of them have been GIs and came to us after they came back from Vietnam, they come through the war. In fact I found paradoxically that, as a socialist and being interested in union politics, there is the tendency to ignore the interjection of union politics. Many times in a discussion I have raised questions about my particular union, and I argued about what the union ought to do.

In one particular case I was on a ladder, and one of the other workers, after I'd given him half an hour of discussion on unions, he climbed up on the ladder opposite me, stuck his nose in mine and said, what you said *yesterday* about the Black liberation movement, and he asked me about five questions on that. He completely disregarded everything I'd said on the union question. That's the character of the present radicalization. And that means that our antiwar leafleting at plant gates, *Militant* sales at plant gates and *Militant* articles should be stepped up. Things of a general nature, these should become like a corner in all the various areas we work in, not the major area of our work, but a corner just to see how we can reach in and pick off some of these young radical workers. This raises the question of sales and distribution of literature. Why don't we send comrades into the trade unions, and why does the current strike wave offer only limited and sometimes nonexistent areas for intervention? Workers are really moving in terms of strikes, but they see this job and shop question as being separate from the political question. Nothing on our part, no amount of preaching inside the plants will ignite a different attitude. We cannot bring about a broad politicalization of the workers. For instance, some comrades enter a union situation and soon they become quite influential and tied down in details of union work, and the workers still make no connection between our politics and our very good record as union leaders. It is going to require much greater social trauma to instill that kind of class consciousness in the worker masses. To sum up, the main thing is to remember that I would like to see more of a cornerstone in all the various areas of work, our antiwar work, *Militant* sales, *Militant* stories,

to begin to branch out; for instance, if we had regular sales at various factories over a period time, not just as a hit and run thing, but over a period of time, just to see will we or won't we get a reaction. That was the basis of the remarks which were in bulletin number 20 which some of you may have read.

Howard Williams

I'd like to tell about some of the things we did to build trade union support for April 24, and where we start out on building for the November 6 action as far as trade union support is concerned. We had a very small labor support committee of NPAC, which was chaired by Jeff Mackler. I became staff coordinator of it for NPAC. This labor committee had just a handful of people. Some of them were from minor unions like AFT Teachers Assistants local, a few comrades, a few radicals who we knew in the trade union movement for a long time, who were close to us. It was originally conceived in a fairly modest way, that we would be going uphill and we would probably have a great deal of difficulty getting support. Since the CP was not involved at the outset, and as a matter of fact only in the last couple of weeks did they send people to meetings and really participate in any way, and since the biggest union with the biggest political weight in San Francisco was the ILWU, where they have a base, we started out with a bit of a handicap. Resolutions were passed by the state federation of teachers, thanks to Jeff, and the painters local 4. But these still were not major heavy-weight unions in the Bay Area. So we went directly to the international officers of the ILWU which hasn't been done before, Stalinists usually have not taken it to them, or it has been brought up within locals by people we have relations with, in warehouse and longshoremen's locals. They took it before their international executive board and endorsed April 24, their whole international executive board including delegates from Hawaii and so on.

There was apparently some opposition, and the next day they reversed it, due we think to one individual in the ILWU who was caught up in a factional struggle which is now going on and this sort of got dragged in. We were innocent bystanders in a certain sense.

We went to the regional UAW convention in Sacramento to talk to delegates. We were originally invited by the assistant of Paul Shrade, the western regional director of the UAW, a nine-state region of UAW. They organized all the aerospace workers in California. Their union has been chopped down from something like 100,000 to 60,000 over the past few years due to automation and unemployment in California. So unemployment is near the disaster level in some areas of California.

After considerable discussion, they finally endorsed our antiwar resolution, and you probably saw the quote of Woodcock. His remark on it was: amen. Actually he may have been praying at the time he said amen, because he seemed to oppose it from the outset. He was unenthusiastic, but he saw the delegates there support it, and they called upon him to see if he had anything to say, so he said amen. He wanted to ride with that positive support. These were delegates from several states.

From that point we went through central labor councils, and we were defeated in one central labor council, but it was endorsed in three other central labor councils. The main one, San Francisco, endorsed it. We lined up delegates ahead of time, didn't notify the leadership; where

it was defeated the leadership knew ahead of time. We took it to the delegate bodies, and the officials were overruled.

The endorsement was supported and the leadership overruled in several cases. In the bus drivers in San Francisco, which is a predominantly Black union, the executive board recommended that it be turned down, and the membership reversed the executive board. In the steamship clerk union, the same thing happened. We brought the issue before some thirty locals I'd say in the Bay Area, over a month and a half, which stirred up considerable discussion, rank and file discussion, on the floor. It was a way of raising a political issue, the war, which we could never have raised. None of these contacts in the union could have raised this by saying I want to talk about the war, they would have been ruled out of order. But we had some credentials, after we won over one labor council, we went on to build that up, put the leadership in these unions on the defensive and we were able to have very good discussions. So we start out on a higher plane next time.

Dave Jenkins

What I want to report on is not AFSCME work but about the unemployed situation in Seattle. As you know, the official unemployment rate that is given in Seattle at this point is 17 percent, which is roughly equivalent to the national level during the depression. And according to a poll taken by a Black community newspaper, in the Black community unemployment is 45 percent. Now you could expect what with a high unemployment rate that there would be a lot of motion and activity in this area. And there has been on the left, including our party which conducted a probe, but to this date there has been no broad mass movement, nor any indication of such by the unemployed themselves. In assessing the general mood in Seattle, it can be best summed up by saying that they expect that things will get better.

There is also a great lack of solidarity among the unemployed. At this point they are willing to wage a hold-out battle waiting for things to get better. They are taking stop gap measures. They are selling their excess goods, and eventually leaving town in order to get a job and avoid going on welfare. I think it's clear in looking at the situation in Seattle, the present radicalization is affecting them much in the same way it is affecting the factory trade unionists, that is, they are being radicalized around the general social issues and not as workers or unemployed workers. At the same time that they maintain this belief that things will get better without their intervention, they are also beginning to look for solutions.

A couple of indications of this are the success that we have had in *Militant* sales at the unemployment center and with our city council election campaign. We have at times been able to sell up to 15 *Militants* per hour at the unemployment center, which is a very good sign. While we have just initiated the election campaign prior to going to Oberlin we have made just three brief visits there where we found a good response. Two unemployed have volunteered to work on our campaign. The unemployment center will be a prime area of our campaign when we get back to Seattle.

Although we realize that we would like to have a full agitational orientation toward the unemployment center, it appears now that the situation simply doesn't warrant one. An example of this is the attempt of some groups

in Seattle to start a union of unemployed, as in the thirties. This attracted every group on the left but no unemployed. Among the things that was tried was a march on Boeing demanding that it retool or reconvent in order to provide jobs. They tried to be very practical in the eyes of the unemployed, but in fact the nature of their demands tended to leave Boeing out of its problems, not the unemployed. They raised such "reasonable" demands to cover up the fact that the unemployed weren't ready at this time to struggle. As to how long the unemployed will continue to have this faith that things are going to get better without their actual intervention as unemployed, it is hard to say. We do expect however that something will break before the economic situation in Seattle gets better.

Until that time we will continue to keep in touch with the unemployed through the propaganda methods I mentioned earlier. We will continue to look for indications that the situation is changing and we are prepared to explore any opening that may occur.

In conclusion, I'll say again that at this time the unemployed in Seattle do expect the situation to get better, that this will come about without their active intervention, that a general feeling of solidarity is lacking amongst them, that until this changes we must project our tasks accordingly.

Mary Martin

For the past several months, I have been involved in an attempt to organize 100 female clerical workers into the Office and Professional Employees union. After an initial meeting with the union, we were able to sign up thirty women in the union. We attempted to form an organizing committee in the office so that our fellow workers could see that this was no outside organizing effort and that as many women as possible could get in. We also needed this committee as a base of support in our work with the OPE organizer. The main idea, however, was to ensure the success of the organizing drive. Our strategy to organize the women was to raise the issue that women workers are discriminated against and underpaid because they are unorganized, and the best way to end this inequality and to fight for our rights and equal pay was to organize a union. We also publicized our organizing effort to gain support of the general public and especially the women's liberation movement. This was done by organizing the women's liberation demonstration in front of our office in downtown San Francisco. The demonstration was held on the same day that the National Labor Relations Board hearing was held to establish that our office constituted a legal bargaining unit and also a vote date of August 26 was set.

Some of the problems that I had in dealing with this organizing effort—the two or three main ones—the first being that the union bureaucracy doesn't in any way want the workers to organize independently of their leadership. This was shown in their attempt to squash the organizing committee. They refused to hold meetings with us to plan strategy and to write leaflets. The union bureaucracy, because it is trying to balance between the workers and the bosses, did not want us to propagandize on political issues even though this union, the OPE, did endorse the April 24 demonstration, the fact that the present inflation was war-caused was edited out of one of our leaflets. They also wanted to prevent us from raising the issue of equal pay for equal work because the union, they said, had no control over such matters. The second problem was

the fact that the women's liberation work in the SWP branch is focused mainly on the campuses and the abortion campaign—this is a very important campaign, but it can lead to some problems, with having that as a central focus. There was a lack of leadership from the branch because there was no trade union fraction to coordinate and keep on top of the union situations.

Some of the conclusions I'd like to draw: the union bureaucracy refuses to organize and encourage independent organization of the rank and file of the working class. On the one hand, the union wants more members to increase its prestige and power nationally, and the union organizers want to make it up into the international. On the other hand, the young members of the union represent a threat to their bureaucratic hold. One of the main tasks of revolutionaries, I think, is to encourage and participate in the independent organization of the rank and file workers.

Secondly, comrades in unions need the leadership and coordination of the branch that would come with a trade union fraction. This fraction would not only coordinate antiwar work but keep on top of all new developments and the changing mood of the working class. Also I think that while the abortion coalition work that we are doing is extremely important, I think the party is missing opportunities to recruit women workers and propagandize on such demands as equal pay for equal work. While it is true that the entire working class is not radicalized, as a whole, there are certain sections that are becoming radical, specifically women and Third World workers, and I think we should take full advantage of these opportunities.

Norman Holdane

I would like to discuss with you my experiences in local 371 Social Service Employees Union and the need for the leadership of the party branches to organize those comrades who are in trade union situations into fractions. In many cases the need for these fractions is to be nationally coordinated. It was out of local 371 in the recent period that the first major united labor antiwar demonstration occurred. I was part of helping to organize this along with other comrades.

The fact that this local has been the first trade union on record opposed to the war helped the situation. For a number of years many comrades have been case workers and have been members of local 371. This union, as I have just described, has played a key role in the antiwar movement. Every tendency on the left today has a caucus or committee in the local, every tendency from the CP through the Spartacists, except the Socialist Workers Party. The party some two years ago quietly, without vote, dissolved its fraction organization in local 371.

The party did nothing even during the recent financial crisis in New York City in which thousands of city workers faced layoffs, hundreds were actually laid off; one of the most militant job actions in recent labor history occurred with the city bridge workers pulled up the draw bridges and left them that way. The city workers in local 371 were also affected. There has been significant layoffs among hospital workers, closing down a whole section of the city hospitals, thousands of mental patients discharged in the streets of New York City and layoffs in the state mental hospitals. Not once during all of this did the party or local leadership—this is last spring—call a single meeting of the many comrades who are

city workers. I even requested such a meeting on the branch floor. Needless to say, no meeting occurred.

But what was counterposed on the branch floor, now we can talk generally, very abstractly about the proletarian orientation, comrades, I think I am speaking not abstractly, not about sending students to colonize trade unions, but very concretely about an actual living trade union situation, if not to reach case workers to utilize our situation in local 371, possibly to reach many Black hospital and other Third World hospital workers. But what was counterposed on the branch floor is that we must wait until the students return, and this is an exact quote, in the fall to find out about what their tuition hikes will be and other school cutbacks and then the students will handle the situation. This is in the face of mass layoffs, closing and cutbacks of most city services, the closing as I mentioned of whole sections of hospitals, and of several thousand city workers demonstrating including Teamsters. The party leadership could at least justify a trade union fraction, if nothing else, to build antiwar committees in city unions.

Pat Olson

I'd like to speak about some of the work that I've been involved in in Madison, noting that, of course, it hasn't been our central arena of work, but primarily an extension of our work in the antiwar movement. First of all, I'm in AFSCME local 1 which represents approximately 400 state employees in the city of Madison. I think it is similar to a lot of AFSCME state employee locals. It's contradictory, you have militants there and at the same time you have a current of apathy that reflects itself in lack of attendance at meetings.

AFSCME local 1 was the first trade union in Wisconsin to pass a resolution calling for immediate withdrawal of troops. Another Madison comrade who was in local 1 raised that resolution on the floor, and it was adopted virtually unanimously with a mandate to take it to the state employees convention, which was held in September of last year. Unfortunately between the time it was passed in local 1 and the time it hit the floor at the state convention, the army Mathematics Research Center was bombed and destroyed in Madison. By the time I took it to the floor, the situation was not favorable. The delegates were virtually in a lynch mood and that left some tactical problems for me to try to work out, to get this thing passed.

At any rate, prior to the introduction of the antiwar resolution calling for immediate withdrawal, which was worded the same as the one adopted at the AFSCME national convention, a question came up on veterans preference. It was raised by males. This is the ten-point veterans preference in civil-service examinations. It occurred to me that this might be a good barometer to test the sentiment. So I was going to speak on this and as I was going to the podium it occurred to me that clearly here is something that objectively discriminated against the women in AFSCME, this veterans preference, simply because women were by and large not allowed or did not serve in the armed services and they were clearly discriminated against in civil service examinations. Most of the males that got up and spoke against these veterans preference covered themselves with all kinds of patriotic coverings—they weren't attacking patriotism or anything like that. I approached it on the women's liberation question and immediately the response was like a thunder-

bolt, heads were turning throughout the audience, and although unfortunately the veterans preference was not rescinded, or at least the union did not go on record to rescind the veterans preference, I think it opened a lot of people's eyes on that.

When the antiwar resolution came up, I approached it primarily from an economic point of view, inflation. It was defeated 77 to 17, quite overwhelmingly. But of those 17, virtually all of them were women and most of them came up to me after and said, you made some pretty good points on that veterans preference there and if you are right on that question, you must have something to say about the war too. I think if the resolution were to be put up again this year, it would be passed overwhelmingly.

The second thing, I think comrades read that in the city of Madison we had a referendum this past April calling for immediate withdrawal of all US troops, which passed by an overwhelming majority of 66 percent. Perhaps you saw the two out of three banner carried in Washington during the demonstration. That was conceived, planned and executed by the YSA, carried out through the antiwar committee, and then carried through the city council, put on the ballot, etc. We organized virtually the entire referendum. We realized from the onset that it was absolutely imperative that we win over not only the rank and file but the union bureaucracy in Madison if we wanted to win that referendum because the union bureaucracy had played a key role in smashing the referendum two years earlier, when it only got 44 percent.

This happened shortly after the Des Moines demonstration, and we knew that the key to the union bureaucracy in Madison was this extremely right-wing president of the building trades council. So we approached him on the question of the Des Moines demonstration. We said, here's workers and students getting together on the question of the war, what do you think of this, can we get something together on this? To our surprise he said yes, and he came out for immediate withdrawal. He endorsed the referendum. He went beyond that and said that we have to have some fundamental changes in this country. Once this individual fell into line, virtually the rest of the building trades fell into line. The rank and file started coming in. We had one electrical worker who came off the street into the referendum headquarters and began to work.

I think the opportunities are there, I think they are there far more than we tend to think. Just one indication, this past June I was nominated for the presidency of the local, I think probably because I am rather well known as an antiwar spokesperson in Madison. Also I ran for the state assembly on the SWP ticket while a state employee, breaking the ban on state employees running for public office. I declined the union post because I plan to move from Madison. But I think the openings are there and I think we should take advantage of them.

Roger Sheppard

Comrades may remember that it was after the May events when the students were occupying the campuses that the term hardhat originated. It was played up in the press to convince the students that the workers weren't supporting them. A lot of people were convinced that the construction workers were the most backward, reactionary, racist, male-chauvinist section of the working class. At the same time, most people recognized that construction has been very hard hit by this inflation and

cost financing.

We came through a very difficult winter and the demand for a shorter work week and fights for pay increases on the order of \$3 an hour, on top of say \$6 an hour, were the norm. The fact is that the construction trades are different than a lot of other sections of the union movement. For one thing, you have a large turnout of the membership at times of contract, at times of election, and generally hangers-on around the union officialdom to get better jobs. So you have a local of 2000, it's not unusual to have an attendance at meetings of 300. The last union meeting I went to of local 134, in Chicago, which is run by Daley's machine with goons in the aisles with guns, had a couple of thousand members. Opposition in local 134 in Chicago raises the demand for an escalator clause, a shorter work week.

In Boston in the contract it says that if we have 10 percent of the local unemployed, we reduce the work week. Most comrades may not know it but there are many electrical unions, construction unions in the country that have a shorter work week now. In New York they have a form of 30 for 40. It goes for a twenty-five hour straight work week and you get time and a half for the next ten. So you work 35 hours and get 40 hours pay.

The suspension of the Davis-Bacon act provisions and the attack on the unions' right to maintain a standard of living on a shrinking job market comes at a time when there are increased demands among Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and Blacks to get into the construction trades.

In Chicago you had the Chicago plan that guaranteed four thousand jobs, produced only 100 jobs. The head of the plan ultimately left town with \$100,000.

I've got a card in the IBEW but I can't work in Chicago. They have 4000 permit men working, that's men that are not in the union but are relatives of union officials, contractors, Daley's machine men go to work and Blacks and Chicanos aren't put to work.

In Chicago, and I saw this also in Boston, there is a very large broad coalition demanding jobs in the construction industry. There's a lot of charlatans in these committees, phony contractors, Black contractors that demand good jobs, but there is tremendously wide public support in the Chicano and Black communities for this demand to get into the construction unions.

At the University of Illinois there was a big fight. You remember, I think it was two summers ago in Pittsburgh and Chicago, the pickets in Pittsburgh and Chicago closed down construction sites.

What I have noticed is not only the increased antiwar sentiment on the job and the ability to get young workers out to mobilizations, but for the first time I began to get some *Militant* subs on the job.

Roland Sheppard

There's one thing that Nat didn't point out about our union. The present leadership is also ex-Stalinist, and as we were in the process of breaking with them and going into opposition, the local business agent figured that we would have the same policies that he had when he was in the CP. In other words, he thought we would trade political stand on his part for no opposition in the trade issues.

At the time we were going into opposition, the student strike was going on at San Francisco State, so he got the brainstorm to call me up and give me the authority to organize pickets to take the graveyard shift out at

San Francisco State, which I did. Then on the Monday meeting that came up, he made a motion on the floor to support the strike, and we amended it one step further, and he was very amenable to go along with the amendment of one step further, and so we supported him on the issue and got the vote on that.

Then the trade issue came up that night, and we gave him a good beating on it and he never recovered from that since.

I think it is an important thing to complete what Howard was saying about the support for April 24. Those bureaucrats that are willing to work with us on a specific issue, we work with them. And those that weren't, we tried to work around them with the memberships.

Although the painters had always supported the antiwar demonstrations in San Francisco since 1966, since we went into opposition the local officials have constantly been trying to bargain less opposition in the union for more support on their part in the antiwar movement. The local B. A. is one of these bureaucrats who has always been on record against the war, signs all petitions, and so forth. On April 24 NPAC sent a letter and gave him a phone call, and he maneuvered around and had everything go to the executive board where he gets it referred where he doesn't come out on record of opposing the motion but he gives the arguments for a person to make the motion to table, and that's what happened.

Just at the time of the Davis-Bacon act suspension last February when Nixon was proposing a wage freeze in the construction industry, we came to the conclusion that we would have to work around him once more. Jeff, a delegate from the teachers union, came to the painters meeting. At first they tried to keep him from speaking, but there is a tradition in the union that we allow everybody to speak.

Since we were in opposition, usually the only motion we had been able to pass was a motion to support, not a motion to give money. But then Jeff gave a good presentation and, because of the hostility to Nixon at the time and the arguments of the war being the cause of the inflation and not the wage increases, Nat made a motion to endorse and give a \$50 contribution which passed unanimously.

It is important in the antiwar movement that everybody in a union try to become an *official* antiwar representative from your union, then you have the basis to set up a speakers bureau from NPAC to go around to the different unions. That's why we got the support of the labor councils in the Bay Area, and that's why we got the support of the different unions we were involved in, because we had a handle to go into the different unions with, we had an official representative, which cuts across a lot of the red tape and so forth when you are going into the union. I am confident we will get the labor councils throughout the whole Bay Area to endorse the November 6 march.

Tom Cagle

I find that many of the discussions here tonight are very informative. One of the suggestions was that we form some sort of a fraction, even a national one, I found to be a very good one. There's a real need to exchange the information that's going on here. It would be nice if we could open *The Militant* up to a little more of these discussions, these events that are happening within some of the trade unions. I would like Comrade Frank Lovell

to seriously take that under advisement, and I would like comrades to think in terms of contributing articles to *The Militant* in order to give it a proletariat balance. Generally, you know, I wrote a document, I'm sure comrades are familiar with the rather sharp criticisms I've raised. I don't want to get into the specifics of my UAW local in Fremont because I covered that already in the document, but I would like to generalize in order to show some of the trends that are beginning to radicalize the workers in this country, especially the auto workers.

This is where I am in conflict with many of the comrades here. Reports have been given that the workers are being radicalized by the social movements, the general middle-class radicalization, that this is penetrating down into the workers, into the shops and factories. To a certain extent this is true. But if you take this into the factories, even where the auto workers are heavily against the war in Vietnam, you will find they don't want to come out and demonstrate against that. They are not moved in that direction. They express hostility. Many of them are returning war veterans. The same thing occurs with the community-action based groups. There tends to be a difference.

The worker acutely feels the impact of conditions within the plant and what is occurring. I would like to basically state and give a very general outline of what I think it is that is beginning to stir and beginning to radicalize the workers in this country today. Generally it is a deepening economic crisis in this country that is beginning to be felt today.

I want to tell you that auto workers acutely feel the thing. It's nothing abstract. It's something that is being taken out of his hide right today. It's something that is beginning to move him.

Generally we have a deepening economic crisis in this country where the capitalist system is caught up in an economic contradiction, they have an economic trade war going on. I picked up the local press here and I'm a little bit surprised to see that some of our predictions are beginning to come true a little rapidly. There is going to be an assault on the American dollar. German mark is unsteady. These things mean that the Common Market currency is very shaky. It means that the capitalist must turn on the worker and turn on him rather viciously. This isn't an abstraction to me. I work on the assembly line.

The auto workers are being fed up, having conditions taken away. Generally we have conditions where all the workers in certain plants in the country are forced out on strike for long periods of time over speed up and worsening shop conditions. We had a strike in Atlantic City for three months. The workers there were pushed back a little. They took away some of the gains they have within the shop. What they do is they route this production out of Atlantic City into other plants. There are fourteen GM plants in this country.

In effect the auto workers really don't know this in other plants but they are scabbing on the auto workers in Atlantic City until they are softened up and they take away a few of their benefits. This occurred in Janestown, Wisconsin, another GM plant.

The crime here is a trade union bureaucracy. I don't give a damn if they are liberal, conservative or who they are, they are betraying the workers and they must be exposed. The auto worker must be given a lead in order to struggle against this bureaucracy that sells them out.

The bureaucrats know that General Motors is routing production to other plants. They know these things. Yet they don't attempt to have the auto workers strike. This is a national problem. It is a problem that GM is allowed to pick on one plant at a time and strangle the workers, force them into a prolonged strike situation where they take things away from them and defeat them. This calls for a national policy. This calls for an intervention. It calls for a political party. It calls for a paper that can go to those workers. This is my criticism.

I think we ought to be organizing rank and file caucuses. I disagree with the trade union policy of our party which says we are not to get into any premature struggles with the bureaucracy. This is ironic that Paul Shrade keeps popping up in the thing because we have had a layoff of 2000 Chrysler workers in Maywood in Los Angeles, because their jobs were lost because the Japanese workers are going to create this sub-compact automobile. Shrade does nothing about this. We ought to be blasting Shrade, not curling up to him to make a speaker out of him at an antiwar rally. You aren't going to get these auto workers out for Shrade who doesn't fight for his men. He doesn't speak out on these problems. We lost 1600 workers at our plant. Shrade says nothing about that. Those auto workers are laid off. They're very angry about these things. You're not going to move them to protest when they have real acute problems on the job, have to fight against the bureaucracy that trades and sells them out.

I would like to attempt to get some of these working class problems into our press.

Marty Albertson

My situation is quite a bit different than most of the speakers who have been up here tonight. Most others have had many years of experience in organizing trade unions and being members of the party. I've been a member of the YSA for about 2 and a half months. My situation is quite a bit different in that I went into a strike not knowing what I was doing. In fact, I went into the strike still not a member of the YSA. A number of things happened that I think are rather significant, so I wanted to explain them.

About eight months ago the bosses where I work started to figure out that starting out at \$2.15 an hour and going through about three dime raises in the first year and approximately \$.60 for the first eight years, that they were going to have some problems in June when the contract came up. So they started to try to divide people who had started talking about going out, and other various types of things such as destroying the plant. They told different shifts not to speak to each other, made plots about dope rings being operated during lunch hour with a high school in the area, and finally ended up writing a letter to all the employees explaining their great poverty. They said their sewer bill had gone up \$3000, failing to mention that they had a brand new plant that exceeded the production of the other two plants by four times at least. Finally the union meetings came and one of the bosses' sons who is in the union told us that the bosses were digging at the bottom of the barrel trying to find money to pay us.

What I tried to do with the help of a couple of others was to do education around what this guy was doing. I didn't have much experience. The few things I could figure out to do was first of all to pass out information on how

to get public relief. This convinced perhaps four or five people which was the deciding vote to reject the contract, that they could go on strike. One thing that happened at that point which was probably more significant than anything else was that the owner of the company offered to open up his books. This almost never happens. People were quite surprised at that.

The people I was working with immediately decided that some of the information we found out recently had to be gotten out which was first of all this new plant. He had obviously been writing off the overhead, so that his books said he had been taking a loss. We also emphasized the fact that it was pretty much immaterial whether he'd open up his books or not and we were being paid what we were being paid.

Due to rejecting the contract, we went out at lunchtime, one day after unloading the truck at lunchhour. We went out and began picketing. That was approximately a week after I joined the YSA so I decided to push for mass picketing, just perhaps the first hour or two when we were out. I wasn't able to do that, because we were only a few.

The other significant thing that happened during the strike was that the owner of the company brought in scabs from one of the customers for two days running. And those scabs were attacked with sling shots and rocks by both the picketers from our company and from a neighboring company that was out on strike. This seemed really fine at the time until the next union meeting came up when he offered us another dime. I guess the proof of how I felt, that the people I worked with were willing to fight for what they wanted, was in the fact that they were willing to throw rocks at scabs. But when it came time to be offered a dime they accepted. From that I did not think that people in those plants were ready to be organized around these types of issues even though they were being paid so poorly.

Herman Kirkpatrick

I don't think it is necessary to point out to comrades that we took a vote on the political resolution and the minority report today, and there is no need to renew the discussion here. There are plenty of things to talk about in our individual plants so that we can formulate policy for the next two years without going back over that discussion in regard to trade union policy. I will say this though, that I sold more subscriptions on the Ohio State campus in one day than I was able to sell in twenty-two years in the United Auto Workers.

But let me report on the strike you read about in *The Militant*, which was the longest strike in the city of Cleveland, a six-month strike characterized by total lack of leadership. Two weeks ago we were put back to work by the international union which had spent half a million dollars in this strike. This is the strike at the Borg-Warner Corporation which had already concluded fifteen bargaining agreements with local unions in different parts of the country and had isolated this shop in Cleveland that had an aircraft contract.

There were three distinguishing features of this long strike. One, the fact that the membership was going to stay out for a long, long period of time with a high morale. Two, that we initiated—I say "we" because the initial leadership didn't do very much at all except hide, so we formed a solidarity committee, a caucus, to put out our own leaflets which were not printed in the union office. They were printed in the meat cutters union. We

used some methods which are interesting in view of the history of the UAW and our own Trotskyist history.

An injunction was taken out against the union and the only way to get around the injunction to prevent scabs from coming into the plant was to organize women and wives of the pickets, who were not covered by the injunction, and for the first time after five months the scabs were kept out of the plant.

The women were very militant, for the first time they roughed up some of the scabs. They broke a thermos bottle of one of them and from then on these scabs that were hired in, students some of them, were afraid to come back.

This tactic we copied from what happened in the Toledo strike when three Musteites who later joined the party organized women to picket and were very successful in winning that strike in 1934.

The other method that we were beginning to use before we were forced back to work involved student support. When the company put an ad in the paper which was calculated to demoralize the workers, offering to hire students in from all over the city at \$3 an hour, when the average wage is \$4 and \$4.50, the students, there must have been six or seven students who came, volunteered to work on the picket lines. The Student Mobilization Committee figured they would work another way. They would organize meetings on campuses throughout the city. This was agreed to, of course, by the workers who wanted to accept help from anybody in order to defeat the company. As I said before, because of the international union, which didn't like spending all of this money, half a million dollars, and because they didn't want to take on a broader struggle which was in the cards. We were preparing to go to Chicago and close down one of the plants there, which is the home base of Borg-Warner Corp. And I'm sure that the International knew about that, and about our collaboration with the Student Mobilization Committee. The International intervened to call off the strike just when it seemed as if we had a chance to win.

Walter Litton

I'm not an industrial worker although I do work at the point of production. I work at the production and maintenance of human misery since I work at the Los Angeles County Welfare Department. Our union is called Social Services Union 535. It was the first local that struck Los Angeles County back in 1966 and began opening up Los Angeles County unions of professional workers. Over the last couple of years we have had a varying number of comrades in the union.

After that strike in 1966, SSU 535 spread up and down the state and is the principal union organizing welfare workers in the state of California. It is not a member of AFSCME, which is an international on record opposed to the war. It's a member of the Building Service Employees Union International on record in favor of the war. So it's a little more difficult in our international to be an antiwar local union.

Because of the federal tightening up and cutting back on the welfare program which you have read about in all the papers, Nixon's welfare family assistance program (FAP), what Reagan is doing, what Rockefeller has been doing and so forth, the whole welfare industry has been shaken up drastically in the last couple of years. Just one very simple example is that no one has been hired to do any welfare work in two years in the state of Cal-

ifornia. They are trying to eliminate the work staff there by attrition. Since they can't get rid of it by attrition, they are threatening to lay us off by the first of October of this year. However, in light of these drastic cut backs, the reaction of the officials of our union has been to run even more scared and act even more like liberals than they ever did before, which is mostly what they did. For instance, our local has endorsed every single major national and local antiwar action for the last three years. It used to be that we could also get coupled with those endorsements \$50 or \$100 for the Student Mobilization Committee.

All of a sudden we can't do that because the contributions to various Democratic Party campaigns have become much more important. Also the need to provide a dental program for the union bureaucrats, the paid staff, and those kinds of things have gotten in the way. Nevertheless, we are still able to pass antiwar resolutions regularly.

And we can get support on a number of other issues as well. Each time the Los Angeles headquarters of the Socialist Workers Party has been attacked by gusanos, we have been able to get public statements of solidarity from the union. At one point when our headquarters was burned out, we got the use of the union facilities for a meeting and help to publicize the terrorist attack.

Nevertheless the union has continued to run more and more scared, and the workers themselves have become dispirited. They used to come out in large numbers to membership meetings, but people who run the union now call fewer union meetings and don't let anybody speak from the floor anymore as they did a year or two ago. So meetings are dull, and when the rank and file do come out they have virtually no means of expression.

One thing that we had an experience with recently was an attempt to get a caucus formation going within the local to coordinate the activities of the various left wingers. This turned out to be a real dismal failure. A large number of people participated in the first couple of meetings, but the ultralefts drove all others away.

Frank Lovell

You must wonder after listening to this vast variety of reports, how they relate one to the other. How does the party give any directive, or what directive do we have? What guides our work in the trade union field? Last night I made some introductory remarks in which I referred the comrades to certain guidelines that we have, that the party has set down for trade union work. I'm not going to read or repeat again tonight what I read at the trade union panel last night. But comrades have come to me and asked for those specific references. The first is a memorandum on trade union policy adopted at the May 1968 plenum. It is contained in Information Bulletin, June 1968. We also adopted a Political Committee memorandum on April 16, 1969, on Black caucuses in the unions. Comrades will find that in discussion bulletin vol. 27, no. 11, August 1969. I would urge you to read those statements. What they say in essence is that we seek to mobilize the vast army of organized workers in this country behind major political issues today, to bring them together and to train from the ranks of the organized workers a general staff within this movement that can lead this army, and to fuse it with the broad anticapitalist movement that is beginning to challenge many of the values of this society and will in the end challenge the

society itself and all its evils.

This is our overall strategic consideration. What tactics do we use? First, we try to keep track of the trends that are developing in the trade union movement, what new trends appear? How is the mood of the workers changing, how is that recorded? This is what dictates to us our tactics. We can't just sit and dream up something to do from day to day or from one week to the next. We have to know what the workers are thinking about, what they are striving to do, what their level of development is at any particular time. And that is not always generalized. That's very uneven, from one union to another, from one section of the country to another. In 1966, at the end of 1966 and the beginning of 1967, comrade Dobbs wrote a series of articles in *The Militant*. It's called "Recent Trends in the Labor Movement" and was subsequently reprinted under that title. Of course, much has happened in the unions since then, but you can learn a good deal about what is happening now from reading this, because most of the trends that Dobbs describes—those that were beginning to appear in 1966—have developed further now and are much more clearly discernible. There has been no qualitative change that we are aware of, no signs of a movement toward independent political action, no appearance as yet of a broad left wing movement seeking a class struggle program in the trade unions.

The labor force is younger. The average age of the organized worker continues to go down. This young labor force is more unruly, a fact about which the employers and the union bureaucracy complain bitterly, and they are seeking ways to control this unruly labor force. The steelworkers union at its convention last September took note of the fact that 35 percent of the work force in the steel industry is under thirty-five years of age. There is a one-third turnover every two years in this industry. And this is something that worries the bosses, because they want a steady work force. They want a work force that's trained, disciplined, reliable. When they have a one-third turnover every two years, they don't have that kind of work force. They want workers that come to the job five days a week and punch the time clock every morning, about ten or fifteen minutes before it is time to start working, so they get to their machines or their benches and are ready to go when the whistle blows. They don't have that.

In some auto plants they have to hire a special work force on Mondays and Fridays because they have so many workers that don't show up on those days. One of the slick magazines written for the employers took a survey, and they asked an auto worker why is it you only come in four days a week? You know what he told them? Because I can't live on three. I'm sure that's accurate, just what they reported. He gave them a completely honest answer. He didn't see anything wrong with that. He was surprised that they were asking him such a foolish question. He thought anybody should know the answer.

We make surveys too. In a certain sense what you were listening to last night and tonight was a survey of what's happening in the trade union movement. These are first-hand accounts.

You can read all kinds of literature put out by little groups in the radical movement who want to know how to influence the trade union movement. They don't direct their literature very much to the working class. Most of

their literature is directed to the Socialist Workers Party. You can talk to them. They've come to know me, they know that I write articles for *The Militant* about unions and politics so they corner me when they can. What about the steel strike, they say. I told them I have no control over the steel workers. If you tell me to call the steel strike, it is not within my power.

They write the articles mostly about what the Socialist Workers Party ought to do. And if the Socialist Workers Party did everything they told us to do, it wouldn't change a thing in the labor movement. Nothing there would be different. The only thing that would be changed as a result of our taking their advice would be the Socialist Workers Party. That would change. That would dwindle in size and become just as important and just as significant as these smaller groups outside who have tried to tell us what to do. So we don't take their advice, but we try to learn in this manner, by seeking reports from our own members, comrades who are in the unions.

What is the mood of the workers, what is happening in your particular trade, what is happening in your industry? And in this manner we seek to intervene.

Here is what we have noticed. (We get reports in quite regularly, and very accurate ones.) We have noticed that there is still no general or widespread interest in union politics. This I can report about the transportation industry and the railroad industry specifically, where there is one of the most crucial situations today, where the government and employers have combined to change the work rules and to force a very large section of the work force off the job. Wages are restricted. Jobs are dwindling. There is still no great interest in union politics as such. That is what our comrades report. And our comrades in this particular industry are very active and becoming a factor in the unions of this industry. We can make decisions with a certain knowledge that what we decide to do will have some effect on what happens. We don't control any of the unions, we're not in charge by any means, but if we make a decision to do something we know it will have some effect. We hope soon to have similar influence in many unions. We are quite sure that thousands of union members will become interested in union politics in the near future. That is not the case now.

The vast majority of these young workers that I was referring to who have to belong to the union are hardly aware of that fact, but they are interested in other issues and our comrades are finding that they can now sell *The Militant* very successfully at the plant gates. You can talk about specific projects, campaigns, mobilizations in which the Socialist Workers Party is interested or which we are promoting or which we are organizing. And you will get an immediate response. It doesn't have to be done through the union, just on the job, as a result either of literature sales or the distribution of literature at the plant gates.

The same thing applies to the unemployed. Those workers who are unemployed are not at the moment part of the work force but they are very closely related and they want to become more closely related. They are part of the working class and their friends and relatives are either unemployed as they are or working in a plant someplace, so that any literature we distribute at the unemployed lines, any *Militants* that we sell there, any contact that we make there is usually a contact somewhere in the organized sector of the working class. We would like

to pay some closer attention to the unemployed lines today and to the workers who are in the shops, wherever we have anybody employed. This relates especially to the antiwar movement, because through this we can make some of our most effective contacts, in some instances bringing new recruits directly into the party. This has happened in few instances but there have been cases of it. We have made contacts, we have made recruits right out of industry. I am sorry that no such instances were reported here tonight.

At the National Peace Action Coalition Convention on July 2-4 in New York City, there were representatives from the union movement from twenty-seven unions across the country. I think there were other representatives present but in the workshop that was finally organized, the serious workshop, there were twenty-seven *official* representatives of trade unions, and several came at union expense, that is, the membership in the local unions had voted to send them and they received expenses.

This is a sign for us that in these areas of work there are opportunities that we want to pay attention to. Those comrades who are here, especially branch organizers or

comrades who are directly involved in trade union work, should start to think about how to make contacts in the unions. Don't be hesitant. Don't think that there's nothing you can do. Speak up, distribute *The Militant*. Nothing bad will happen to you. Talk about it. Take the pamphlets that we have. You'll be surprised at the response we get. That has been our experience, especially in the railroad industry. We anticipate some recruits of workers, something that hasn't happened for a very long time, and we want to begin to gear the party to the assimilation of young workers that we hope will be coming to us out of industry. These are things for you to think about, and about which we hope to be in contact with you from the national office because we think—this is not just wishful thinking—but we think on the basis of the kind of reports that were given here tonight that there is a shift in the mood of the workers. And we know the age level is dropping. So we must begin now to think seriously about recruiting directly from the working class by those comrades who are already employed in industry.