

Workers Answer Reagan



Chrysler workers after strike against racist discrimination

By MARGARET GUTTSALL

Nearly 2000 workers walked off the job in opposition to management's racist attacks on Black workers at the Chrysler truck plant in Detroit, Michigan on Tuesday, January 15, one day after Martin Luther King's birthday.

Perry Johnson, UAW regional director, said a plant official was "checking with each foreman as to who was Black and who was white, of the people who were off" on King's birthday. "That just ignited the whole thing. People thought it was racist and decided, what the hell, we're not going to work."

And, according to Johnson, it was not just Black workers who were angry. The whole shift decided to walk off the job during the dinner break in opposition to pleas from both management and the union president, Gil Wojcik.

As a result of this struggle, Chrysler was forced to back off. Robert Heath, Chrysler spokesman, said that "a lot of things happened yesterday on the basis of rumors, unsubstantiated rumors," that no one was going to be disciplined or fired for taking Martin Luther King's birthday off (*Detroit Free Press*, January 16, 1985).

Class Solidarity

This strike is part of a wave of strikes that has developed since Reagan was re-elected, including Chrysler Jefferson Avenue plant workers and Farmer Jack butchers in Detroit, GM workers in Flint, teachers and International Harvester workers in Chicago and a near general strike in San Francisco. It shows the way forward for women, Blacks and all working class people: *class solidarity against the racist Reagan regime and the racist system he represents!*

This solidarity must be extended and developed in all struggles facing the working class — from the struggle against racist discrimination against Blacks, to the struggle to get back concessions beginning with the coming Chrysler contract, to the struggle against US imperialism in Nicaragua and South Africa and the struggle for women's rights.

And in order to build this solidarity, the working class needs a working class party, a mass Labor Party based on the unions to lead this struggle.

The working class cannot continue to support the Democratic Party or abstain from open political struggle against it — as unions, Black organizations and working class parties did in the last elections — *because the Democratic Party does not stand for class solidarity. It stands for this racist, anti-worker, bourgeois system.*

Democrats

The Democratic Party has not supported a single strike that has taken place since Reagan was re-elected. And this is not simply true of the white or the right-wing of the Democratic Party. It is also true of the Black Democrats and the so-called "left-wing." Coleman Young, Black Democratic Party Mayor of Detroit, intervened in the butchers' strike — after the butchers had surrounded Farmer Jack's and begun to stop trucks — in an effort to get the butchers to come to terms with Farmer Jack's and keep the strike from getting out of hand. Jesse Jackson and his wife opposed the teachers' strike in Chicago in the interests of "community control of the schools."

Reagan called in his inaugural address for: "... a new American emancipation... a great national drive to tear down economic barriers

Workers Must Prevail in Detroit

By BARBARA PUTNAM

Our evaluation of Mayor Coleman Young's administration in Detroit is calculated by the degree of misery of Black workers, the status of their organizations, and the conditions of life facing their youth. It is true that Reaganites use the same facts to advocate conservative solutions — crushing the workers, destroying their unions, complete oppression of women, Blacks, youth.

But as the saying goes, "facts are stubborn things" — Detroit is dying! This is a fact, a fact that is directly the responsibility of the Democratic Party, and Coleman Young, the leading Black Democrat in the country. Either the conservative's cravings will be realized (with the help of the Democratic Party) or the Black workers will succeed in building a working class party to stop this process. Being partisans of the working class, we now begin such a fight to prepare the working class for the Mayoral elections set for next fall.

Black But Bourgeois

Mayor Young, is busily lining up his ducks for the Mayoral elections. As the leading Democrat, he has his work cut out for him — unifying his staff and cronies around the objective of surrendering up the unions and all gains of Black workers to industrialists, businessmen and the banks.

Hiz'oner has been Mayor 11 years, a long time by any standards, and he wants to keep it that way. He has gained world recognition and prestige as a Robin Hood in reverse — taking from the poor to give to the rich. He has been a key figure in what Lee Iacocca, head of the Chrysler empire, has called "the reindustrialization of the American automobile industry" (union concessions and crooked financial maneuvering) and is valued by the ruling class for his anti-Black, anti-working class inclinations.

Young's credentials as a former civil rights activist, union organizer, and being Black have been real bargaining chips in his stack of chips. One reason he keeps getting re-elected is due to his ability to hide behind the color of his skin or behind his "impeccable credentials" (as NAACP leaders are fond of saying). If this does not work out, then he points to blood-thirsty, racist conservatives chomping at the bit as the only possible alternative to his leadership. Even Jackson's mild criticisms of the Democratic Party, (and thus of hiz'oner, a big-league Democrat), set Young off in a rage and he denounced Jackson as Reagan's tool during the presidential elections.

Pro-Industry, Anti-Working Class

Coleman Young was elected in 1974 following a wave of wildcat strikes in the Chrysler plants led by Black workers. From that day forward his role has been to beat down Blacks on behalf of the bosses.

Fed up with the draconian cost-cutting measures of the Chrysler bosses, who were trying to keep the troubled corporation afloat at their expense, Chrysler workers spread wildcats from one end of the city to the other, including the famous Mack Avenue sit-down strike in 1973. It was broken up by a 1500-man goon

and liberate the spirit of enterprise in the most distressed areas of our country," a program that will only enrich a handful of people at the expense of the intensification of the exploitation of the masses of Blacks. But the Democratic Party has not said a word against it. Its program for Blacks is essentially the same. And, again, this is not simply true of the whites or the right-wing. Coleman Young has directed his entire administration toward improving the climate for "business" in Detroit while Black workers and their families starve and freeze. Jesse Jackson put forward Black-owned business as a major element of his program and his organization PUSH is directed almost exclusively toward getting grants for Black-owned businesses. Now this might help a small number of Black businessmen, but what has it done

for the masses of Blacks or poor whites?

At the same time, the Democratic Party has launched a propaganda campaign against Blacks who did not vote for Mondale as "lazy" and against whites who did not as "racist."

Continued support for the Democratic Party or abstaining from open struggle against it can only *undermine* the struggle for class solidarity against the racist Reagan regime and the system he represents. A fight for a working class alliance for a Labor Party however, will strengthen and extend the struggle for class solidarity on every front. It will assure victory over Reagan and the system. This is where the Trotskyist Organization stands. Join us!

Class Solidarity Against the Racist Reagan Regime Like the Chrysler Workers!

Alliance for a Labor Party Now!

squad sent out by Douglas Fraser, then head of the Chrysler Department and chief strike-breaker of the UAW.

Fraser, who ingratiated himself with the Chrysler executives to the extent of being the first labor leader to sit on their pay board, Lee "miracle man" Iacocca, and Coleman Young were the trilogy who badgered a reluctant President Carter into announcing the Chrysler bailout plan. The heart and soul of the plan was *concessions* from autoworkers, thousands of layoffs and the closing of Dodge Main. Young and Fraser paraded in their K-cars behind Lee Iacocca under the banner of the "Save Chrysler" campaign — "We can do it!" And they did it to the autoworkers.

At the end of 1980 Young announced that the city workers "would live to regret" their strike. They struck for a 7% wage increase and cost of living. Young railroaded AFSCME leaders into accepting a stinking compromise. They agreed to limit picketing if Young would not get an injunction out on the strike. But as soon as they agreed to this, Young went ahead with the injunction and brought in scabs to boot!

For all his criticisms of Reagan, Young broke his neck in defending Reagan's attack on PATCO in 1981, another landmark in the White House's quest to destroy the unions that began under Carter. "On this one I think he's right," said Young. "If he's right, he's right." (*Detroit Free Press*, August 16, 1981)

The Gutting of Detroit

Under the Young administration, the working class has suffered immeasurably. Rather than raising the standard of living in this old union town, Coleman Young's clique has decimated Detroit: tore up an entire working class neighborhood, Poletown, to give GM a break. Now they are sealing a deal with business interests on the riverfront whereby "help" (money stolen from the working class) to invest in this real estate will roll in many tax-free bucks.

There have been vast numbers of other scams, too long to list here — the Ren-Cen rip-off, the Grand Prix, and the People Mover fiasco just to name a few. The People Mover Project is presently embroiled in a financial debacle but will undoubtedly start up with all the precision of a Swiss timepiece just as mass transit comes to a screeching halt! It is designed to haul businessmen around downtown Detroit so they won't get their throats cut on their lunch hour.

Take from the workers, the small minority businesses, the poor and give to the wealthy and powerful — this is why Money magazine has named Detroit "one of the most attractive urban investment outlets in the country."

A drive through the neighborhoods says it all. Boarded up buildings, a look and feel of utter desolation. Closed schools, hospitals and factories — skeletons on the landscape of what is becoming a cemetery for the working class.

A quick look at the status of youth, always a clear indication of where a society is really at,

tells volumes about Detroit. On the eastside, the infant mortality rate is equivalent to that of Honduras, a poor, backward country: only 1/3 of students who enter the ninth grade ever graduate, youth unemployment is over 75% for Black youth, 217 youth were shot last year — the list could go on and on.

Coleman Young is living proof that one does not have to be white to be racist. To satisfy conservatives and business interests Young is creating a climate of repression preceding the elections: a veritable campaign against Blacks. Witness the bizarre Karen Norman trial in December where a young Black mother faced Coleman Young's buddies, Magistrate Marion Moore and Assistant Chief Prosecutor, Elliott Hall, over a charge of first degree murder for defending herself against a rape. Or the "anti-crime" campaign. Young's answer to the problems in Detroit created by him and the Democratic Party is more prisons, police searches in the schools, and re-hiring more cops. (The

State Senate just passed a tax hike for working people so they can have the privilege of paying for 734 cops). There has to be a working class solution.

Fight For a Working Class Party

In 1981 Coleman Young looked around and noted he had no serious opposition in the elections, but he was looking in the wrong quarters. Sooner or later it had to happen. The working class had to find a way to take on the Democratic Party and the subservience of the unions to it. That year we began a struggle in the workers movement and in the unions for a Workers Candidate to oppose Coleman Young, a candidate who stood for a working class party, a fight against concessions in the unions and a General Strike. Our candidate got 1,300 votes — not bad since Young himself said nobody else would even *approach* 2,500 votes. A much larger and stronger mobilization this year, a common struggle in the unions and working class parties for a *slate* of working class candidates is on the order of the day.

1975 — 1985 Ten Years of Struggle to Build a Working Class Party!

A meeting for our readers and all young working class students, workers and militants on the lessons of our struggle and the tasks today, sponsored by the Trotskyist Organization.

Speakers
David Mark, National Secretary of the Trotskyist Organization, Working Class Candidate for Detroit Mayor in 1981
— "The Lessons of Our Struggle"
Rich Tetrault, Chicago Organizer for the Trotskyist Organization, — "What You Can Do to Build a Working Class Party"
Open Debate and Discussion: Greetings from the Fourth International's Executive Committee and its Sections in the Americas and Europe. Complete Collections of Truth and The Fourth International on sale. Refreshments.

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One Dollar Donation • For Further Information Call 522-9812 • Applicants: Youth for a Labor Party



FOR AN OPEN TROTSKYIST CONGRESS TO REBUILD THE US SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

A significant number of young people have begun to turn to Trotskyism as the only tendency capable of guiding the working and oppressed masses.

Yet there are several organizations that claim to be Trotskyist. Each has its own policy that it calls Trotskyist. And the largest of these, the Socialist Workers Party, appears to be the farthest from basic Trotskyist principles.

The Trotskyist Organization of the USA, Section

(Sympathizing) of the Fourth International, was founded in 1975 to overcome this problem; to lead a struggle to clearly differentiate Trotskyism from various centrist or intermediary tendencies that masquerade under its name; to train a new generation of revolutionaries capable of guiding the American working class in the foundation of its own party and the fight for power; in other words, to rebuild the US Section of the Fourth International.

We call on youth turning toward Trotskyism, as well as youth and workers fighting for a Labor Party, to join us in this struggle, in particular, in preparing and building an open Trotskyist Congress to bring the struggle to a successful conclusion. This page is especially dedicated to this struggle. It is open to any militant or tendency that wants to contribute to it.

Labor Party: An Active Struggle

By DAVID MARK

The 1984 election split the working class parties into two camps — for and against support to the Democratic Party. Of the three working class parties which appeared on state ballots, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Communist Party (CP), and Workers World Party (WWP), two of them — the CP and WWP — supported candidates of the capitalist Democratic Party. The Trotskyist Organization of the USA fought for a Labor Party Coalition and supported a vote for the candidates of the SWP. The SWP was basically the only working class party on the ballot that did not support the Democratic Party.

While the CP has crossed the class line before, this was the first time for the WWP. An important independent radical newsweekly, *The Guardian*, also supported Mondale, a switch from past elections where *The Guardian* favored independent candidates. WWP supported Jesse Jackson early on in the primaries and then ran its own candidates after Mondale's nomination.

While the one camp has nothing to show for its class collaboration, at least we can point to some small but significant victories — such as 10,207 votes for Kathleen Denny, SWP candidate for the first Congressional District in Cincinnati, 4.6% of the vote cast! We stand now, and stood in the elections, with the camp that refused to cave in to the capitalist Democratic Party. While the SWP never agreed to form a united front for labor candidates with the Trotskyist Organization, and, as we shall see, ran an extremely low-profile campaign, the vote for Denny, an exception to the overall low results of the SWP's campaign, show the validity of our support for them on a class basis.

On the other hand, the parties that supported the Democrats, and a few other parties who didn't, are profoundly demoralized by Reagan's re-election. *The Guardian* went so far as to run Reagan's election eve admonition "you ain't seen nothing yet" as their headline (this is of course exactly what Reagan wanted). They also drew the conclusion that the election of Reagan was the result of a "racist" vote.

But the fact is, racism didn't just arrive yesterday, and this analysis by *The Guardian* conveniently covers up their own complicity in contributing to Reagan's election (and his racism) by crossing the class line and voting for the Democrats. As *The Guardian* itself pointed out, Reagan did not achieve much of a mandate. If one counts the total number of eligible voters, he won with only 30% of the voters. More importantly, as Frank Lovell points out in *The Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, all statistics taken into account, Reagan can at best claim to have received about 8% more of the popular vote this year than he did in 1980 — significant but not a mandate of the proportions claimed by the capitalists. Mostly, the hype over Reagan's re-election is designed to

further intimidate the workers and oppressed and rally the forces of reaction that Reagan represents.

If Reagan won because of a "racist" vote, then what happened to the millions of new Black voters registered by the Democratic Party in the South? The abstention rate in these elections changed very little, showing that many Blacks were disillusioned with Mondale after the primaries and that this is at least partially responsible for Reagan's 8% increase in popular vote. Has *The Guardian* forgotten about the treatment of the Jackson campaign within the Democratic Party?

The fact is, not only did the Mondale and Jackson campaign not succeed in developing any enthusiasm for the working class, but even a large section of the workers movement itself failed to put forward any independent road for the working class against the Democratic Party.

The failure, however, of the second camp to agree on a common electoral alliance represents a real hesitation in front of the attacks of the Reagan administration and the central task facing American workers — building their own party.

First it is worth noting that it is not accidental that the parties who were formally calling for a Labor Party trace their roots (if not their branches) to Trotskyism, and that those in the first camp are either Stalinist or pro-Stalinist. It may seem strange to many workers, but the CP has historically been a dependable source of support for the Democrats.

While Lovell, in the article mentioned above, talks about the SWP's low key campaign and their phony cry over "electoralism," he fails either to come up with a proposal for what the SWP should have done or to realize the main point: the whole campaign of the SWP was in the framework of its attack on Trotskyism. In the elections this took on two forms.

First, Barnes had to paint an essentially opportunist turn toward Stalinism as a "communist" turn, hence it was not, Barnes said, that the SWP was abandoning Trotskyism, it was merely embracing true Leninism. Thus its ridiculous polemics against "electoralism" in the latter days of the election campaign, which Lovell correctly criticizes, conveniently served the purpose of putting a brake on a mobilization for an independent workers' party against sectors like the Jackson campaign.

And secondly, the election campaign itself had such a passive character, even though the incredible fact is that the SWP was the only real working class alternative on the ballot, in order to avoid a head-on collision with the American CP and its support to the Democratic Party.

Of course this can all be justified after the fact by blaming it on the backwardness of the American working class. (This is a stunning example of circular reasoning, the American

working class is backward because it doesn't have a party, therefore it is too backward to make the fight for this party a central struggle.) *The Militant*, press of the SWP covered reports by Mary Alice Waters and Jack Barnes to the National Committee. The two reports, though one covers the international situation and one covers the US, take basically the same approach. "The US ruling class has dealt the working class and its allies here a series of blows and setbacks, which have had an impact on working people," says Barnes' report. (*The Militant*, December 28, 1984).

But of course this misses the point. The reason for Reagan's election is that the working class had no alternative. Did the SWP really expect that such a sterile campaign would attract millions of workers? The SWP had no policy to orient toward the masses, that is, the fight for a Labor Party, its orientation of "join the SWP" hardly makes the necessary link with millions of Blacks and workers. And while Barnes discovers anew the "labor aristocracy," the SWP in fact had no policy to organize the break of the trade unions from the Democratic Party, that is, the Labor Party based on the trade unions. On this basis they conclude that it is the working class that is in retreat whereas in reality it is they who are in retreat from the struggle to win the workers to build their own party and win their class independence.

On the other hand there were some parties who may have benefited from a critique of the elections, at least we hope so. Socialist Action reporting on its first National Conference states that it sees new importance in the struggle for the Labor Party. We hope that it is a decision to join in an alliance to build the Labor Party and not just more sloganeering. At least with Socialist Action and the Fourth Internationalist Tendency we hope that we can still appeal to them on the basis of the struggle Trotsky waged with the SWP to pursue a central struggle for the Labor Party.

The key question is not one of positions in the formal sense all these parties claim to be for a Labor Party or independent party, but rather one of an active struggle for the workers party. Because none of these parties made such an effort in the elections, advanced workers were deprived of valuable experience in the construction of a revolutionary party, the working class was unable to test out their programs in the living struggle — only reinforcing their isolation. In the process, the struggle to rebuild the Trotskyist party in the US has been slowed. For our part we consider the rebuilding of the Fourth International to represent the maintenance and revolutionary continuity of Trotskyism, not the least of which is taking up the struggle that Trotsky advocated, the fight for the Labor Party, as a line of action and a lever of the rebuilding of the Fourth International in the US.

Socialist Workers Party and the Unions

By FRED MICHAELS

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), a working class political party that has several militants in the United Auto Workers union (UAW), has begun to turn its back on the unionized workers and their struggle.

Jack Barnes, National Secretary of the SWP, spoke at its National Committee meeting in December (*The Militant*, December 28, 1984) raising, in his words, the problem of the "labor aristocracy." This "aristocracy" consists of the better-paid unionized workers in the working class. He claimed that they have been bought off by capitalism by their high wages and were abandoning the interests of Blacks, Latinos, young workers and the unemployed. He described these unionized workers as a "central obstacle" to the struggle of the whole working class and especially its most oppressed layers.

He raises the bugaboo of this "labor aristocracy" at a time when all the acquisitions of

the working class, which are concentrated in the unions — a higher standard of living, the unity of Black and white workers, young and old workers, the struggle for jobs for the unemployed, mass independent political action — are under the sharpest and most severe attack since the birth of the unions! Furthermore, the workers have begun to respond in larger numbers to these attacks! (See last issue of *Truth*.)

He went on to lament the absence of "even the nucleus of a class struggle left wing" in the unions. He uses this "fact" to justify backing out on the struggle for a Labor Party, raised only perfunctorily by the SWP during its election campaign and now dropped completely.

But it is the struggle for the Labor Party, for as united front against concessions, that can bring together a nucleus of class-conscious fighters in the unions. It will not happen by itself.

Dropping the Labor Party slogan is the most

acute expression of the SWP's retreat from an independent working class policy, a capitulation to the Stalinists and their Democratic Party friends, the Black Democrats and union bureaucrats. What this retreat means for the SWP's trade union policy is abandoning the struggle of the ranks to defend the unions and therefore all the gains of the working class, especially those of Black and young workers.

Jack Barnes claimed too that now the battles will be between the workers and the employers. Of course these will grow in number. But any advances and victories here will require the same policy as the fight for the Labor Party — working class initiative, independence and a conscious struggle to develop the leadership of the unionized workers.

The SWP's new trade union policy will lead to neither independent political action nor success in a struggle against the bosses. Only a Trotskyist policy will.

South Africa — Down With Apartheid!



South African workers on strike

By FRED MICHAELS

The struggle of the workers and Black people of South Africa to overthrow the hated apartheid regime has entered a new phase.

The general political strike by the Black workers unions, staged in November for two days, showed the power of these recently legalized unions. This strike showed the potential power of the Black unions to paralyze the country. That power must be used fully in a General Political Strike to Bring Down the Apartheid Regime.

A workers revolution is brewing in South Africa that will reverberate across the globe. It deserves our whole-hearted support.

The entrance of the organized working class onto the political scene is what has qualitatively changed the situation. Workers in the US should develop an independent working class response of class solidarity with South African Blacks and workers. This means a mobilization demanding the release of the imprisoned trade union leaders; a boycott of all goods to the apartheid regime and sympathy strikes when the workers of South Africa strike US corporations.

The apartheid system — segregation of the races and the oppression of the Black majority — officially came into existence in 1947. It was started by the leading political party, then and now, a party openly supportive of the Hitler regime and other fascist governments of the 1940s. The president of the US in 1947, Harry Truman, a Democrat, did nothing. He made no serious moves against the regime nor has any president, Democratic or Republican, since.

The South African regime is critical for maintaining the imperialist oppression of Blacks in the entire South African region. It has been a base of reaction against Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and other ex-colonies. And, along with Israel, it forms a vise of oppression to squeeze the Arab and African peoples of the entire African continent.

The current wave of protests in the US are concentrated on the demand for the release of the imprisoned trade union leaders. Of course every action that might win their release deserves the support of all workers. But it must be said that the Democratic Party leaders participating are doing so because they are afraid of this revolution, not because they support it.

Edward Kennedy, Democratic senator from Massachusetts, went to South Africa to contribute to and develop a dialogue between the reactionary regime and moderate leaders in South Africa also trying to control this revolution. He was met by Black protestors who denounced him as a "capitalist" and told him to "go home."

Furthermore, the Democrats are afraid of the growing workers mobilization here at home. The Democratic Party is in a severe crisis. The Democrats are hoping that such protest activity by them will restore the workers confidence in their party.

Defending the workers mobilization in South Africa is really defending our own interests, the interests of the workers and oppressed in the US. What a blow to Reagan and the Democrats the downfall of the apartheid regime will be!

General Strike to Bring Down the Apartheid Regime!
Free the Imprisoned Trade Union Leaders!

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