

the rank and file in action

Labor Today

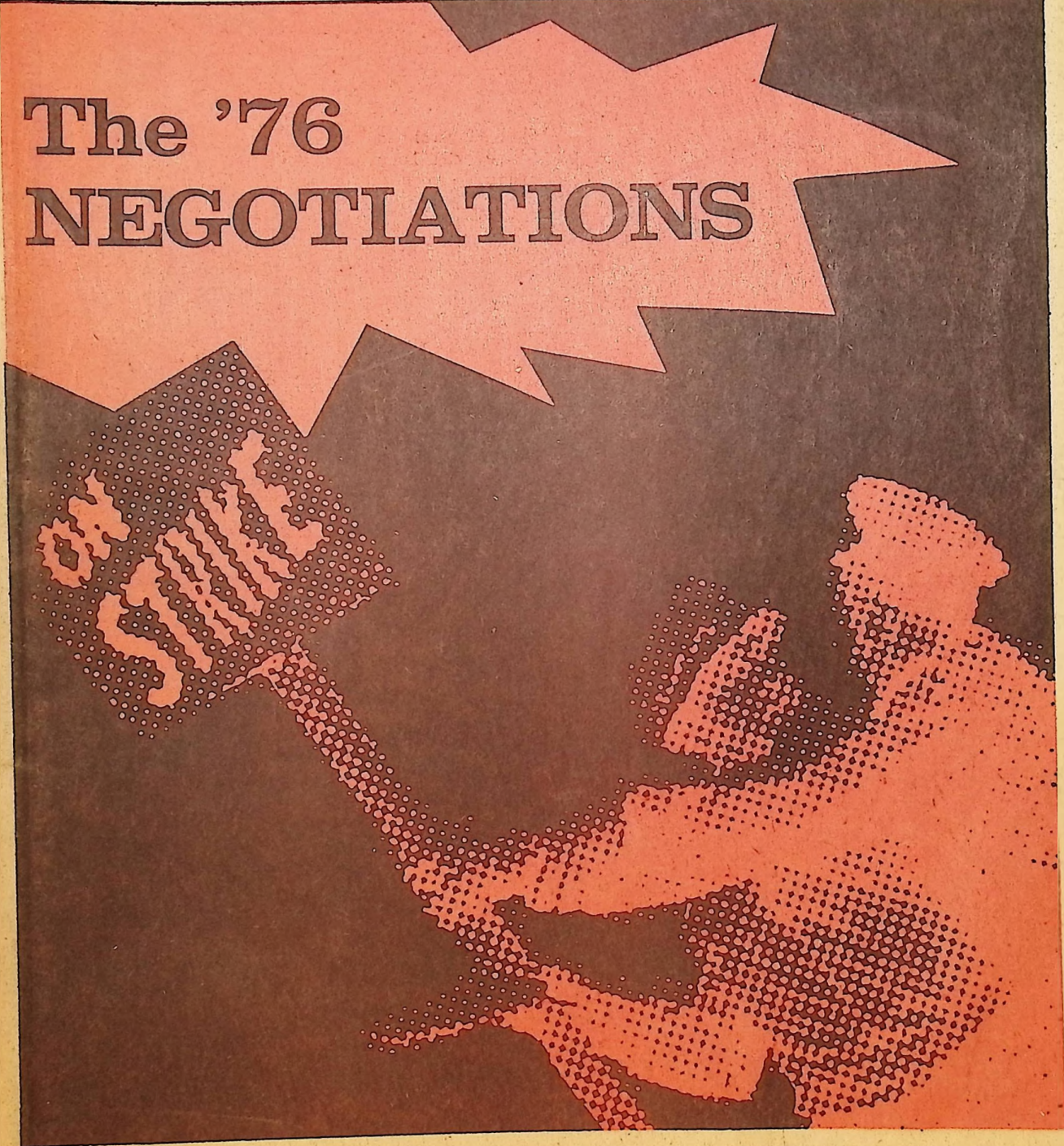
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Volume 15, No. 12

439

December 1976

The '76 NEGOTIATIONS



FIGHTING DESTABILIZATION

R & F miners face tough problems

by JIM WILLIAMS and
JOE NORRICK

CINCINNATI--The recent convention of the United Mine Workers here posed many sharp problems for the rank and file movement. The big question is, can the rank and file forge a unity that can regain the union's momentum, solve a crisis in leadership and drive a hard bargain in the 1977 negotiations?

We feel that it can be done. But the error of dissolving the Miners for Democracy back in 1972 must be overcome. To meet these new challenges, the rank and file must have an effective organization.

The United Mine Workers are beset by big problems. From the day the rank and file administration took office in 1972, the coal operators have been moving heaven and earth to destabilize the honest, militant, but inexperienced leadership of the UMWA.

The 1973 convention rewrote the constitution to provide mineworkers with one of the most democratic, rank and file controlled unions in the nation. But while democracy brought a new day for the rank and file, it failed to solve the problems created by a determined band of Boyle hangovers, bent on destroying the rank and file.

The 1972 elections that threw out the Boyle gang were not decisive in the sense that 45 percent of those voting voted for Tony Boyle. A majority of the International Executive Board remained in the hands of Boyle loyalists.



Every step forward taken by the rank and file has met opposition from the coal operators and their friends in the Boyle camp. In the coal fields this process was accelerated when the coal companies began to hire phoney ultra-leftists whose main task was to "get Miller."

THE RANK & FILE HOLDS IT GROUND

At the 1976 UMWA convention, this combination of forces was emboldened by dissatisfaction in the mine fields where the operators have tried to blame Miller for the disruption they themselves have caused. The operators have been further emboldened by the defection of UMWA Vice President Mike Trbovich, a vain, embittered individual who has now cast his lot with the Boyle forces, and IEB member Karl Kafton.

Given this gang-up of forces, it was little wonder that the UMWA convention was thrown into disruption and confusion at the beginning. It took days before the rank and file could rally and restore order and direction.

Despite the infighting that took place during the first few days, when it looked touch and go, Arnold Miller held his ground backed by rank and file. In the opinion of most, he came out of the convention ahead. Miller's opponents, especially Trbovich, were humbled, as the rank and file regrouped and rejected the attempts at disruption and the extreme red-baiting attacks of Trbovich and LeRoy Patterson's followers. Patterson, a Boyle hold-over on the IEB, is an announced candidate for President of the UMWA.

Because 1977 is the year for major coal negotiations, the delegates moved to advance the scheduled elections for officers to June, 1977. The delegates wanted the coal operators to know that their President will have a clear mandate in negotiations. Miller has said that he will run again for election, but there are some strong pressures on UMWA Secretary-Treasurer Harry Patrick by some sections of the rank and file to run for President also. Many view Patrick as a stabilizing force who could hold the union together.

However, the threat of a three-way race between Miller, Patrick and Patterson could allow the Boyle forces to re-take the union

(continued on page 2)

A DIFFERENT KIND OF UNION

UE convention: 'a breath of air'

Over the years, LABOR TODAY has had many opportunities to work with members and officers of the United Electrical Workers. They've written articles for LABOR TODAY, attended our workshops and, when asked, have been generous with advice and encouragement. In the course of it all, we've come to recognize that UE--the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE)--is a different kind of a union. But it took a visit to UE's 41st Convention in Cleveland to understand what it is--and is not--that makes UE different.

Beginning with the UAW Economic Convention in March, members of LABOR TODAY's staff have attended eight union conventions this year and none had prepared us for the UE convention.

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE

By most standards, UE, with its 160,000 members, is a small union, and a UE convention is a small convention. Delegates to a UE convention look like delegates at any other convention. They're younger and older;

men and women; black, Brown and white. But there's a difference: Some 95 percent of the delegates in Cleveland came directly from the shop and factory floor. There were staffers at the convention but they were not wearing delegate badges. None of them sat at the delegate's tables as enforcers for the Administration.

In many ways, all conventions are the same: There's a State of the Union Address--and President Fitzgerald made one to the UE convention. There are resolutions and constitutional amendments--and there were resolutions and constitutional amendments at the UE convention. There is a convention banquet, a tour of a factory and maybe a ballgame--and the UE convention was no different. (For whatever it's worth to our readers, LABOR TODAY left the convention convinced that Albert Fitzgerald is an un-reconstructed Yankee fan.)

But, from the opening gavel one felt the difference. No delegate was "put down" from the podium. There were no calls for the pre-

(continued on page 3)

R & F miners (continued from page 1)

and set back the clock. The rank and file must demand that its leaders unite around a common program.

HARD-HITTING RESOLUTIONS

The 1977 negotiations were in the forefront of the delegates' concern at the convention. They passed a hard-hitting set of resolutions aimed at curbing the power of the coal operators. Among these were:

Direct participation of rank and file miners in the actual coal negotiations. No other national bargaining has this feature.

The endorsement of the six-hour day, five-day week, with no cut in pay.

Providing the right to strike over unsettled grievances, and reforming the cumbersome grievance procedure that has led to long rank and file strikes in the last two years.

This cumbersome procedure was complicated by foot-dragging by the coal companies and backed up by wholesale injunctions by coal field judges who are in the pockets of the coal bosses. Given those circumstances, the miners refused to work under unsafe and intolerable conditions and struck to protest conditions and the use of injunctions to enforce the operators' will.

The coal operators, who were forced to yield substantial economic gains in the last contract, are bound and determined to prevent gains in 1977. That is why they have been trying to wreck the union from right and "left" (U.S. Steel, particularly, has been hiring "radicals" from Berkeley to



Arnold Miller
President, UMWA

spout anti-Miller doctrines in the mine fields. They want to force an ENA-type settlement in their mines.)

Part of the mine owners' strategy may be to try and splinter the centralized bargaining structure that grew up under John L. Lewis. Lewis forced the scattered coal companies to join the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA) and negotiate one con-

Left, Lou Antal
President,
Dist. 5, UMWA



Harry Patrick
Sec-Treas, UMWA



Dan Burlison

tract covering all miners. Recently, some coal companies, like AMAX and North American Coal, have left the BCOA. Others may follow.

This could force the union into the difficult situation of negotiating several contracts simultaneously. A union that is weakened by dissention and limited staff would face a hard road in bargaining. This is the central danger in 1977.

WESTERN COAL MUST BE UMWA COAL!

The mine bosses also want to scuttle union attempts to organize in the growing western coal fields. Although the Appalachian coal fields are the main center of coal production, the trend is clearly toward the western coal fields. Wyoming, for example, has grown from 3 million tons a year in 1965 to 25 million tons in 1975! The UMWA's bargaining power can only be maintained if western coal is UMWA coal.

Thus, the major defeat suffered at the convention was the rejection of a proposal to launch a major organizing drive with 100 new organizers at about \$3 million. Opposition by the Boyle forces, confusion and the failure of the Miller leadership to adequately explain and fight for the proposal led to its defeat.

THE OLD RED HERRING

The main tool used by the coal operators and the Boyle forces in causing dissention in the Mine Workers is red-baiting. Trbovich, in his speech to the delegates, charged that the union was being run by "socialistic, communistic and revolutionary elements." He set off a highly charged period of anti-communist hysteria that damn near wrecked the convention, caused the expulsion of some reporters and a witch-hunt among the delegates for "communists."

Red-baiting and anti-communism will certainly be a major campaign tool of LeRoy Patterson and Mike Trbovich, who has said he would run for Vice President on Patterson's slate. Not only will they attack Miller and his staff, they will attack every genuine rank and filer. The phoney ultra-lefts in the coal fields will perform their function as grist for this mill.

The experience of the UMWA provides many lessons for rank and filers. By dissolving the rank and file organization, Miners for Democracy, after the 1972 election, the leadership lost an important mechanism for



"Fellow Delegates..."

rank and file input into the administration. An active rank and file leadership organization could have provided necessary support in the coal fields during the strikes, easing some of the pressures upon the administration.

It is one thing for the rank and file to win an election. The hard job of actually running the union requires even more organization and leadership if the goals of the rank and file are to be won in practice.



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TURN CLOCK BACK AFFIRMATIVE ON ACTION

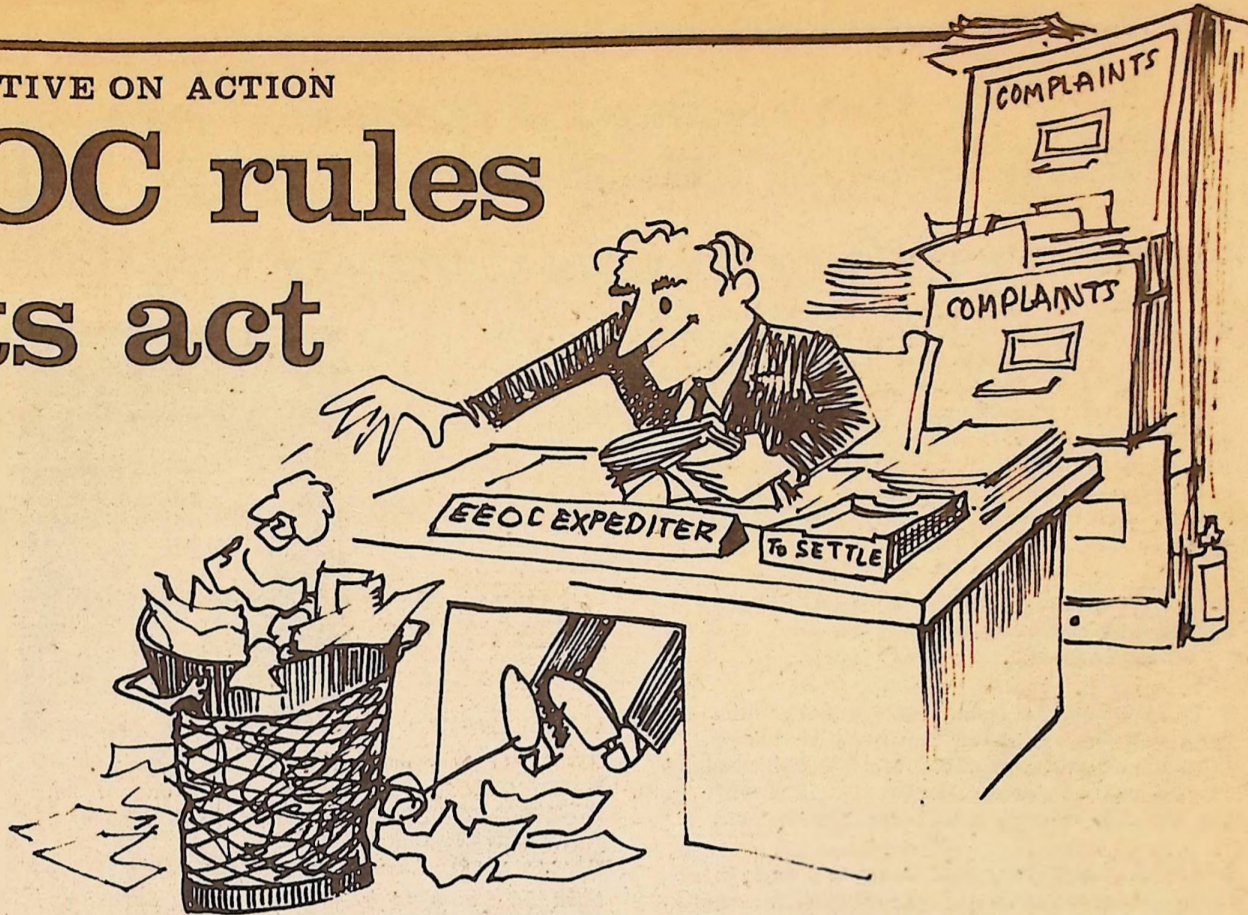
New EEOC rules gut rights act

Mass protest by trade unions, women's and civil rights organizations have temporarily blocked a plan by the U.S. Labor Department to gut affirmative action programs. Last month, LABOR TODAY reported that the Office of Federal Contract Compliance had proposed new regulations that would weaken and destroy programs that forced contractors doing business with the federal government to hire and up-grade women and minorities. Roughly one-third of the working population are covered by these programs.

Following mass protests, OFCC spokesmen now say the proposed changes will NOT go into effect November 17, but will await the outcome of public hearings to be held in a number of cities. Groups wishing to participate or to send their view should contact the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C.

But a new move by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission threatens to wreck the remaining government effort to enforce fair hiring practices.

The EEOC is the main government agency enforcing Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination in employment. Understaffed and underfunded from its beginning, it now has a total case backlog of about 120,000 cases. Presently, the EEOC is working on cases filed in 1974.



One way to handle the situation would be to hire more staff to handle the work.

Instead, the EEOC proposes to cut the backlog by cutting down the number of complaints it must handle by making it more difficult to file charges against an unfair employer.

By making it more difficult to file charges, the EEOC feels that it will cut down on new cases by causing aggrieved persons to "drop out of line." People who file charges will be contacted by letter, after they fill out a questionnaire. If they fail to respond, the charge will be automatically dropped. The EEOC privately figures this procedure,

combined with poor mail service, will lop off at least twenty-five percent of the complaints.

A new "rapid process" complaint system proposes that EEOC make not effort to determine the facts in the case beyond the employee's statement and the company's response, if the company chooses to respond. An EEOC official has stated: "We just can't do Sherlock Holmes investigations of all these charges and its time we said so."

Other features of the proposals include stepped up conciliation procedures. If the employer is not willing to conciliate, or has made a "reasonable offer," the EEOC investigator is authorized to make a "final offer to conciliate" or accept the company's offer. The matter is to be dropped if not settled immediately.

The new procedures also place the burden of proof upon the charging party. When the aggrieved employee cannot obtain it, the investigator will drop the case.

The EEOC will also cut back on "class action charges" brought by organizations and unions on behalf of individuals, by giving this power to EEOC district directors, who are unlikely to act.

The EEOC will also cut back its pre-charge counseling program, in which aggrieved persons are interviewed and then assisted in making out charges.

The EEOC is also beginning an administrative review of its backlog of 120,000 cases--to be closed administratively where possible, to be made on minimum evidence, and to avoid actual field investigations.

The new actions by the EEOC have brought an angry response from civil rights organizations. The National Organization for Women has brought suit to block the new regulations and to force EEOC to conduct adequate investigations of charges.

The EEOC move also came under fire from the National Coordinating Committee for Trade Union Action and Democracy and Women for Racial and Economic Equality (WREE).

"It's no accident that this move by the EEOC is taking place at the same time that the Labor Department's Office of Federal Contract Compliance is seeking to gut affirmative action programs," said TUAD's National Field Organizer Fred Gaboury. "The big corporations are doing everything in their power to turn the clock back on affirmative action so that they can continue to rake in super profits based on discrimination."

UE convention (continued from page 1)



UE'S
Fitzgerald

vious question, no disruption, no "quick gavels," no attempt to stampede the convention. Completely absent was the tension, that feeling of a void between leadership and membership, that is so obvious in most conventions.

The General Officers sat in on convention committees and visited and talked to delegates in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect--and why not? UE conventions are annual events. Members of convention committees are selected at the convention, from the convention, and by the convention. UE officers stand for election each year. (The delegates, with the support of UE's three top officers, rejected an amendment to the constitution that would have made the term of office two years.) And, at salaries of about \$17,500 a year, everyone recognized that UE officers earn their money.

Most conventions have a jillion guest speakers who drone on and on to an empty house. But at UE it's different: Three speakers, that's all. A speaker from UE of Canada; Prexy Nesbitt, an expert on African affairs

who spoke on recent and future developments in southern Africa; and Seymour Melman, well known authority on disarmament and peace. Not a single candidate for office, no representative of the Carter-Mondale ticket (and no endorsement, either), no Democratic party hack with promises of instant salvation.

THE CENTRAL THEME

The convention hall was decked with two banners--ORGANIZE THE UNORGANIZED and UNITE OUR INDUSTRY. Together they underscored the central theme of the convention. And well they should. GE, the industry giant and 9th largest U.S. corporation, now has some 70 unorganized plants across the country. The heavy turbine industry has begun moving into the open-shop havens of the south. Electrical manufacturers are in the van of the union busting offensive that is directed against all workers everywhere. As UE's Director of Organization put it to the delegates, "Labor is in a race against time. Either we organize or the corporations and the politicians will drag us down."

UE has a small staff, relatively low dues and per capita. It has pledged to "continue to commit the major portion of UE's resources to organizing the unorganized." That's some of what sets UE apart from the rest of the pack and makes a living reality of the credo first adopted in March of 1936:

"We form an organization which unites all workers in our industry on an industrial basis, and rank and file control, regardless of craft, age, sex, nationality, race, creed or political beliefs, and pursue at all times a policy of aggressive struggle to improve our conditions."

We think we have a better understanding of why UE is different. We hope our readers do also.



the rank and file in action

by FRED GABOURY

SOME LESSONS OF THE '76 NEGOTIATIONS

As 1976 began, the official count put the number of unemployed at 7.3 million. Real wages stood at the level of May 1965. And millions of workers were headed for the bargaining table in a confrontation that pitted some of the nation's largest, best organized unions against some of the nation's, richest, and most powerful corporations.

● In March, the Teamster's signed master agreements covering workers in more than 6,000 cartage and trucking firms.

● By late April, things got sticky when the "Big Four" tire makers refused to budge from a gut-robbing offer and 70,000 members of the United Rubber Workers walked off the job in what became a 141-day strike.

● The United Electrical Workers, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the International Union of Electrical Workers got their turn in May when they, together with 10-11 other unions, took on General Electric, Westinghouse and the rest of the electrical manufacturing industry.

● As summer ended, the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen settled their national contracts in the packinghouse industry.

● The 1976 round of collective bargaining ended with negotiations between the United Auto Workers, the auto industry and the agricultural-implement manufacturers where about 200,000 workers struck the Ford Motor Company and the (John) Deere Company.

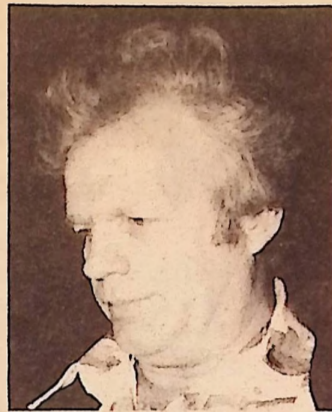
All in all, an impressive year and the time has come to ask: "How did we do? How well did we take care of the problems of unemployment and declining living standards?"

NOTHING BUT CATCH UP

Generally speaking, wage increases negotiated in 1976 will not stop the skid in real wages. Sixty, sixty-five, even eighty-five cents an hour first-year increases look big. But most of these increases went to catch up--nobody got ahead of the game.

The last time these contracts had been negotiated was in 1973 when Phase III wage controls limited increases to 5.5 percent. (UAW contracts were settled under Phase IV and they included a so-called "uncapped" cost of living allowance (COLA) based on a one-cent per hour increase for every three-tenths of one percent rise in the Consumer Price Index. This formula generated about \$1.25 per hour over the three-year term of the contract, but even so, the real wages of UAW production workers slipped between 1973 and 1976.)

In order for real wages to be maintained--to say nothing of raising them--wage increases must keep pace with both rising prices and increases in taxes. By that standard, none of the wage increases and cost of living allowances negotiated this year fill the bill--no contract negotiated in 1976 bettered the 1973 UAW formula. By the time these contracts expire in 1979, the real wages (and, therefore, the standard of living) of the workers covered by them will have declined. Some more, some less--but all will decline. Worse yet, millions of workers were denied the protection that comes with unions strong enough to negotiate national agreements. They were forced to settle for a measly 20-25 cents an hour this year and three-year packages less than half those won in basic industry. These settlements, in industries where wages were already notor-



ously low, guarantee that millions of U.S. workers will be driven into the ranks of the working poor.

When it comes to the question of forcing the corporations to reduce the number of unemployed by providing more jobs, the record is downright dismal. None of the contracts negotiated in 1976 addressed themselves to this question and only UE attempted to give it any priority. Compulsory overtime was not challenged where it existed. Hours of labor were not reduced. Ballyhoo aside, those "additional days off" negotiated by the UAW will not return a single unemployed auto worker to the assembly line.

So, it's not surprising that Corporate American is feeling pretty good. In January they were talking about making 1976 "a year of compromise." By October, they were sitting back, smoking their cigars and saying, in the words of Albert J. Rees, Nixon's former director of the Council on Wage and Price Stability: "It wasn't a bad year. Given the number of major settlements that were up we did pretty well."

IT DIDN'T HAVE TO HAPPEN!

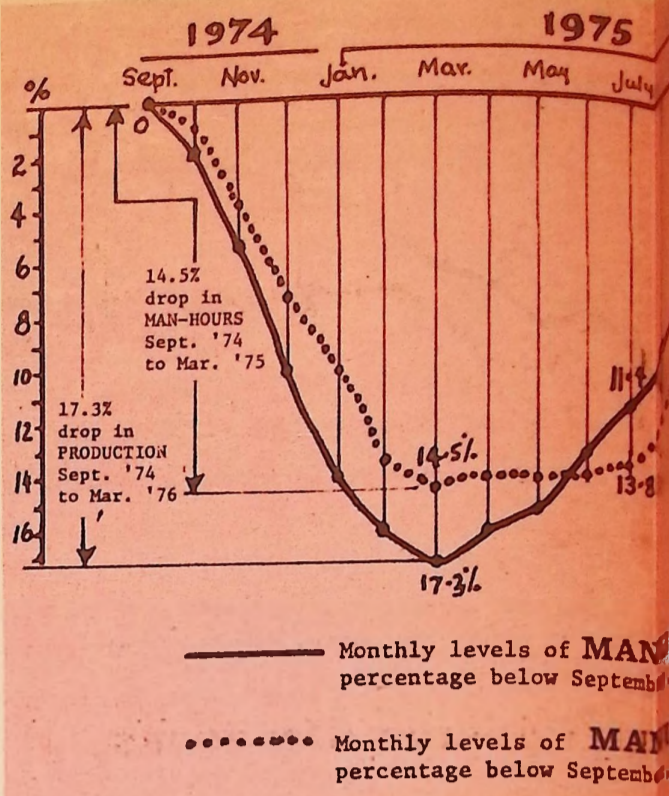
So much for what happened. Now for some why:

Three elements came together to limit the gains made during the 1976 contract bargaining:

● In the first place, the corporations were determined to hold the line. They know where profits come from and they hoped to be able to use the long lines of the unemployed to keep profits high. Any way you look at it, the bosses played their cards well: They had President Ford beating the drum of "responsibility." They had the Democratic Party and Jimmy Carter talking about "lowered expectations." They kept their phoney racist offensive rolling with uproars about "busing" and "reverse discrimination." They had their gaggle of paid hucksters warning of the threat of a new round of inflation.

● Secondly, none of the basic premises behind this corporate blitzkrieg was challenged by the dominant sections of labor leadership. The year was hardly begun before we were being told that "we'll have to wait until next year when the Democrats get elected." Worse yet, two events in March--the acceptance by the IBT of a three-year wage increase of \$1.35 and the clear signal by the Woodcock leadership that the UAW would not press for a shorter work day--severely limited the options available to the rank and file.

It didn't have to be that way. This year's negotiations were not a walk away--it wasn't amateur night at the bargaining table. There were a number of short strikes



Who is recovering?

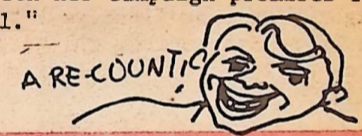
From notes by FRANK ROSEN, President, District 11, United Electrical Workers

The graph above shows that factory worker employment has increased from the depression levels of March, 1975, but at a much slower pace than the increase in production.

FOUR MORE YEARS

PLAINS, GA.--President-Elect Jimmy Carter has apparently changed his mind, according to the WALL STREET JOURNAL. Carter now says we can expect unemployment to remain at about 7 percent until 1980.

He told reporters he did not believe this conflicted with his campaign promises for "jobs for all."

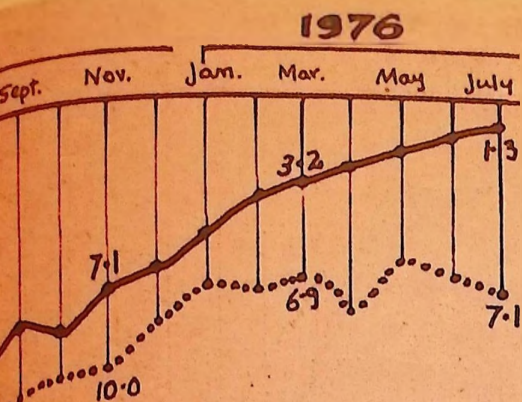


in the trucking industry and there would probably have been others were it not for the fact that a two-thirds majority is required to reject a Teamster settlement. Westinghouse was shut down tight for a week. The strikes at Ford and Deere showed that auto workers were ready, willing and able to fight back. The heroic four-month strike of rubber workers proved that the rank and file would respond to militant, courageous leadership--that it was possible to "win" in 1976.

The third factor in the '76 negotiations was the missing ingredient--the absence of a rank and file movement with enough muscle to make the leadership toe the line. The movement for a reduction in hours with no reduction in pay lacked the strength to force a showdown on the only issue that can deal with both declining real wages and continued unemployment--and we settled for less than we needed. Worse yet, we settled for less than we could have gotten.

Next year will be another big one. The Mine Workers have put the shorter work day at the top of their list of 1977 demands and other unions may follow. To win, they'll need all of the support that can be mustered.

There's one way that everybody can help. Let's renew our efforts at building a movement for shorter hours. Let every member of LABOR TODAY begin by taking the fight to their local--NOW. After all, the job you save may be your own!



In July, 1976, production almost recovered to level of September, 1974.

In July, 1976, man-hours were still 7% below level of September, 1974.

FACTURING PRODUCTION
1974 level.

FACTURING MAN.HOURS
1974 level.

ng?

ACTIVITY, or output per man-hour continue to rise. Productivity in July, 1976, was 6.2% above the level of September, 1974. This means that 94 production workers in July of this year were producing as much as 100 workers did in September of 1974, when the depression began.

MANY BELOW "LOW"

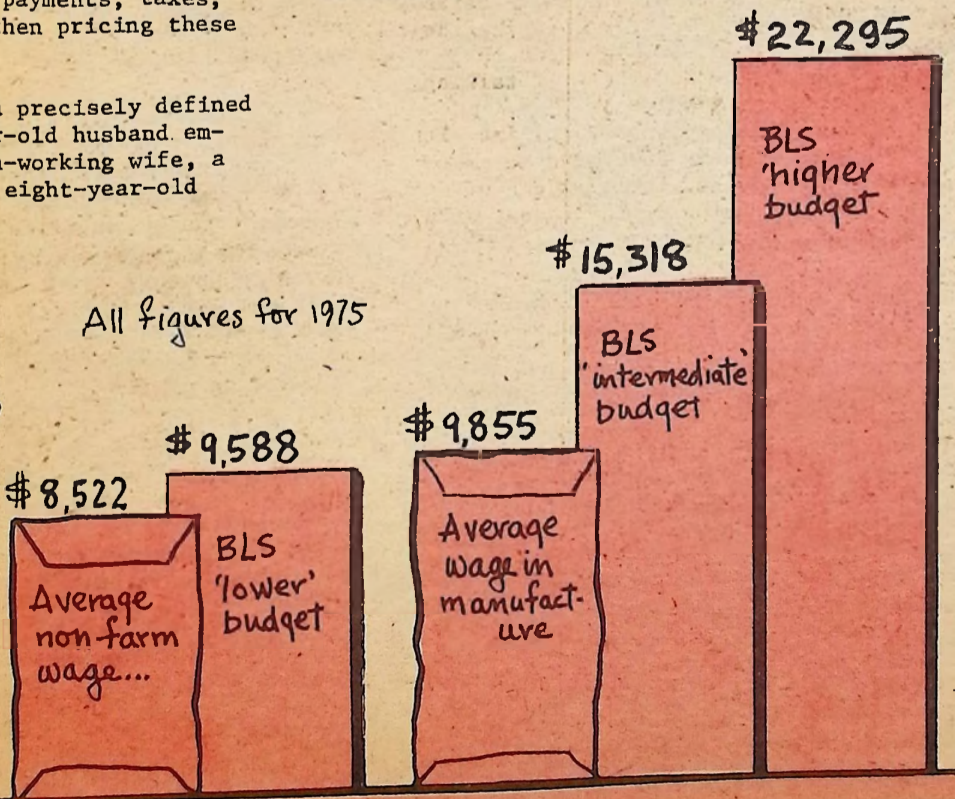
BLS budgets up, wages down

A family of four, living in an urban area in the autumn of 1975, must have had an income of \$15,318 in order to maintain an "intermediate" standard of living, according to figures released last week by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This figure represents a 6.9 percent climb from the level of 1974.

To maintain a "lower" life-style in fall of 1975, a family of four would have needed \$9,588. The budget for a "higher" standard of living was \$22,294.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics computes these family budget standards each year by drawing up a list of the items a four-person family would need to spend money on, including food, clothing, transportation, rent or mortgage payments, taxes, and medical care, and then pricing these items.

The estimates are for a precisely defined urban family: a 38-year-old husband employed full-time, a non-working wife, a 13-year-old boy and an eight-year-old



WE'RE 'CHEAP LABOR' NOW U.S. wages decline Europe, Japan gain

by JIM WILLIAMS
Co-Editor

Volkswagen's announcement that it will build an assembly plant for its "Rabbit" in New Stanton, Pa., was followed by pledges of tax concessions and efforts by local and state authorities to upgrade area roads and facilities--at no cost to VW.

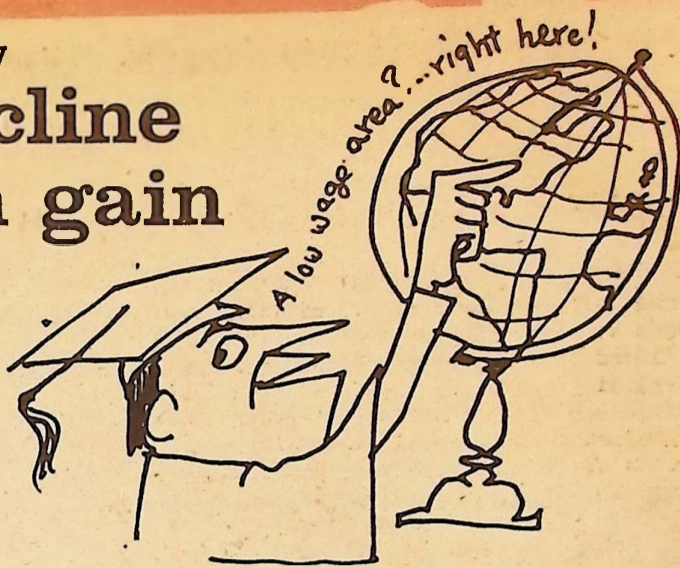
But the press releases failed to list one of the key items that has brought this mighty transnational corporation to our shores--cheap U.S. labor.

U.S. wages are now, on the average, less than wages in West Germany.

In fact, wages of U.S. workers are now behind those of five other industrialized nations, figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show.

As of mid-1976, the estimated hourly compensation of workers in Canada, West Germany, Belgium, Holland and Sweden were all ahead of the U.S. worker. The average worker in West Germany receives \$6.27 an hour compared to \$6.07 in the U.S.

This is only part of the picture. In most countries, workers receive more attractive



(and more expensive) fringe benefits than those in the United States.

American wage and fringe benefit increases lag far behind those in Japan and many European countries, a recent Swedish survey shows.

The report says the U.S. wages and benefits increased 54 percent between 1970 and 1975--compared to 214 percent in Japan, 191 percent in Belgium, 120 percent in Great Britain.

This study appeared in the conservative, business-oriented magazine U.S. News and World Report (Feb. 9, 1976), which hailed the U.S./world disparity with the headline "Cost of Labor Here and Abroad: A Turn in America's Favor."

Explaining the overseas workers' gains, the magazine cites "an American expert" as saying, "that even in receding or stagnant economies, workers are pushing for more money to offset consumer price rises that in many instances are unprecedented."

Workers in the countries studied are far ahead of American workers in fringe benefits. While such benefits add about 26 percent to basic wages in the United States, the magazine states that the amount is 87 percent in Italy, 78 percent in Austria, 65 percent in France, 63 percent in Belgium and 51 percent in West Germany.

European workers get longer vacations than those in the United States as well as more paid holidays.

All French workers get a month's vacation every year. In West Germany vacations are at least four weeks long, but four out of five workers, according to the U.S. News story, are entitled to longer paid vacations based on age and length of service.

Starting next year every Swedish worker will be given a five week vacation by law

European workers are far ahead of American workers in the matter of social security and unemployment benefits as well.

French employers have to contribute an amount equivalent to as much as 39 percent of a worker's income to social security programs. American employers contribute only five percent. This helps explain why there is such a heavy social security tax burden on American workers and why there is concern that the funds will run down.

Not only have workers in those countries been keeping up with inflation, they have also been pushing up their real wages, the amount of goods their money buys.

Figures cited in the magazine show that real wages in Europe and Japan rose by between 70 and 150 percent from 1960 to now. In the United States, real wages rose by less than 20 percent over a 15 year period and are declining during this recession.

the rank and file in action

Labor Today

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STEEL RANK AND FILE:

We have only just begun to fight!

Labor Today

Statement of National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee, Box 1152, Lorain, Ohio 44055.

The USWA elections have marked a tremendous step forward for rank and file steelworkers. The results are a mandate for far-reaching change in working conditions, contract demands and internal union democracy. They show that a broad, powerful and growing current in the union demands action on issues, jobs, speed-up, discrimination, health and safety and other urgent questions.

Our union will never be the same. The rank and file movement has sunk roots throughout the union and the stage has been set for a thoroughgoing victory.

Ed Sadlowski, Oliver Montgomery and the entire Fight Back slate deserves the deepest admiration and respect of all rank and file steelworkers for their courageous and tireless efforts during this historic campaign.

Never before have any candidates for international offices faced such fierce and concentrated opposition from the steel corporations and their friends. These forces poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into the drive to stop the Fight Back slate. Top corporation executives openly sided with Lloyd McBride. Anti-labor columnists and editorial writers conducted an unprecedented campaign of slander and vilification against the reform slate.

Within the labor movement, every backward force sought to prevent a rank and file breakthrough in our union. Tottering bureaucrats in the AFL-CIO Executive Board unleashed a barrage of funds, resources and propaganda to influence our election.

The entire USWA international apparatus was used as a "war machine" for the McBride slate. District offices were turned into campaign headquarters, and the great majority of staff and employees were mobilized into an army to stop Sadlowski.

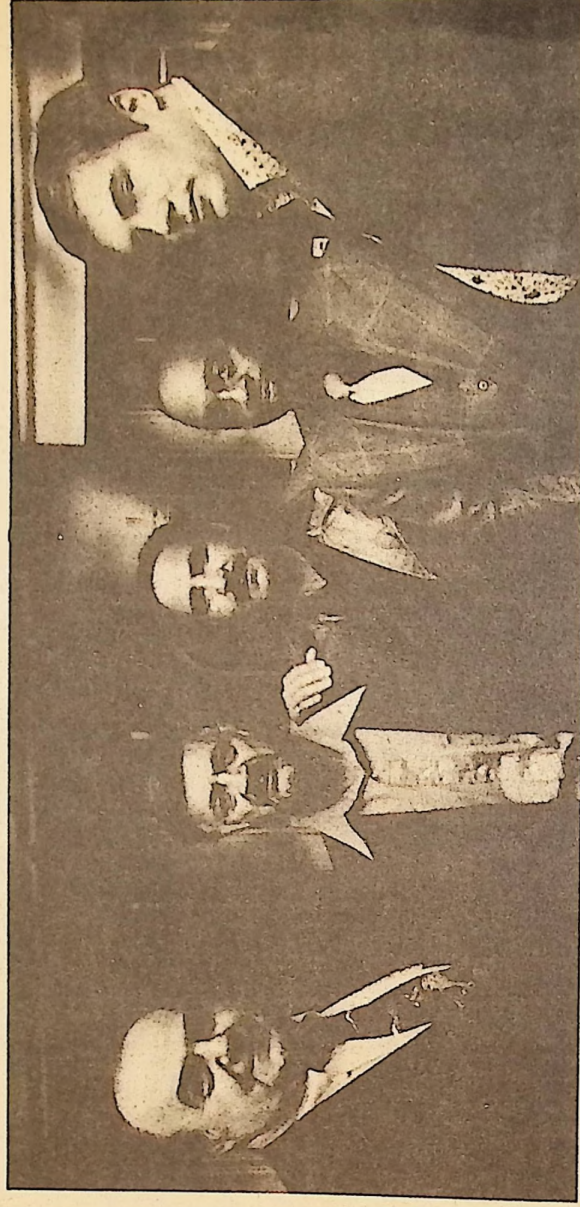
This machine conducted one of the dirtiest campaigns on record. The reform slate was slandered and red-baited. Its positions on every issue were misrepresented.

Nevertheless, despite everything, Sadlowski nearly won. The Abel-McBride effort to confuse and frighten the rank and file fell flat. Some 250,000 members of our union voted for change.

This support came from every section of our union including locals and districts where the Fight Back slate had little or no organization. They included the votes of the large majority of Black, Chicano, female and young workers who rallied to the reform slate.

The Fight Back slate won a clear-cut majority in locals in every industry. Most significantly, they won the majority in basic steel, winning all the largest basic steel mills in the key steel districts, including Baltimore, Bethlehem, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Cleveland, the Iron Range and Chicago-Gary. This is the heartland of our union. It shows to all concerned that the handwriting is on the wall.

FIGHT BACK SLATE: (left to right) Kmec, Weinstock, Rodriguez, Montgomery, Sadlowski



The basic steel vote is of special importance for contract talks now going on in that industry. Those workers directly affected by the no-strike "Experimental Negotiating Agreement" voted to reject it.

They voted against the "productivity drive" which has meant speed-up, crew cutting and the elimination of thousands of jobs. In short, the basic steel vote is a decisive repudiation of the Abel-McBride sell-out policies in that industry.

Instead, steelworkers voted for an entirely new set of policies laid out in the Fight Back program. These included the right to ratify contracts, end discrimination, right to shut down unsafe areas and the six-hour day with no cut in pay.

The impact of the Fight Back campaign was demonstrated when an official committee of 50 local union presidents in basic steel called for a 32-hour week with no cut in pay as a major contract demand. Abel and McBride are now trying to side-track this urgent demand with gimmicky promises about a "life-time pay guarantee."

An entirely new leadership will take office in our union June 1. There are new top officers, a new Canadian director, and 15 new district directors out of a total of 25. Some of the new district directors sup-



GEORGE EDWARDS

ported Sadlowski. Some remained neutral. Many supported McBride.

But the main thing is that the leadership has changed. The old machine has been dislocated. It cannot exert the same bureaucratic control.

One of the most significant changes is the first election of a Black vice president, and we wish to express our best wishes to Leon Lynch, the first Black person to break through the Lily-white character of the International Executive Board. We also heartily congratulate Oliver Montgomery for the tremendous vote he received. Montgomery came the closest of any on the Fight Back slate to winning the official vote and has now emerged as an outstanding leader of our union.

The most significant election was in District 31, Chicago-Gary, where Jim Balanoff was elected director. Balanoff has played an outstanding role for many years in innumerable battles for the rank and file. He has been a vocal leader of the rank and file in recent conventions.

The Abel-McBride forces have challenged Balanoff's election and are conspiring to prevent this important victory for the union membership. They are also trotting out the tired old schemes for dividing up District 31. These attempts will not succeed any more than did the previous attempts against Sadlowski.

These actions as well as the wide-spread irregularities in the election of the top officers, show that the Abel-McBride forces continued to do the companies' bidding in our union. As Ed Sadlowski has said, the vote fraud, ballot box stuffing and intimidation by the staff and union apparatus are serious crimes and those who are responsible should be prosecuted.

The Abel-McBride drive against union democracy is also shown by their threat to eliminate referendum elections of top officers and district directors altogether. They propose turning these vital decisions over to our International conventions where the machine and the staff can exert maximum control. We intend to do everything possible to block this effort to steal our right to vote.

Aside from continuing problems in the union, rank and file steelworkers now face a renewed company offensive. There is every indication of a widespread crackdown in terms of harassment, speed-up and discipline. We also see a much

(continued on page 5)

NO PROTECTION AT G.E.

Supreme Court OK's sex discrimination

by NOLA J. HITCHCOCK CROSS, Attorney Milwaukee, Wisconsin

The United States Supreme Court recently dealt a severe blow to all working women. It held that federal sex-discrimination legislation (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended) does not prohibit employers from excluding pregnancy-related disabilities from employer-contributed disability plans.

In this case, Gilbert vs. General Electric, the employees had won a disability benefit plan financed entirely by the company. The plan paid certain benefits to employees who were physically unable to work because of any non-work related ailment except pregnancy. The female employees sued the company, claiming that by excluding pregnancy-related disabilities from the benefit plan, General Electric was illegally discriminating against them on the basis of sex and violating Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The federal Court of Appeals agreed. Basing its decision on the guidelines promulgated by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) which administers Title VII, the federal Appeals Court ordered General Electric to pay back disability benefits to all female employees who had been denied such benefits.

In its December, 1976 decision, the Supreme Court reversed the lower court, along with five other federal Appeals Courts in other jurisdictions which had similarly held that excluding pregnancy from disability plans constituted illegal sex discrimination. Speaking for the majority, Nixon-appointed Justice Rehnquist stated in the opinion:

"For all that appears, pregnancy-related disabilities constitute an additional risk, unique to women, and the failure to compensate them for this risk does not destroy the presumed parity of the benefits, accruing to men and women alike, which results from the facially evenhanded inclusion of risks."

Thus, the high court, in its "wisdom" found that an employer disability plan which excluded pregnancy-related disabilities was "facially neutral" because it insured men and women against exactly the same risks, although it excluded altogether one risk which is "unique" to women--pregnancy.

Although the decision was 6-3, two of the justices siding with the majority, partially disagreed with the Court's reasoning. The dissenting justices pointed out that a disability plan which excluded pregnancy disabilities is not neutral. Such a plan is designed, they explained, to insure employees against the risk of

being physically unable to work generally. General Electric's disability plan, however, insured male employees 100% against the risk of being physically unable to work, while not offering female employees such complete protection. In his separate dissent, Justice Stevens noted simply:

"Rather, the rule at issue places the risk of absence due to pregnancy in a class by itself. By definition, such a rule discriminates on account of sex; for it is the capacity to become pregnant which primarily differentiates the female from the male. The analysis is the same whether the rule relates to hiring, promotion, the acceptability of an excuse for absence, or an exclusion from a disability insurance plan."

First, and most effectively, the federal legislation (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) should be amended to overrule the Supreme Court's decision. But until that happens, action must be taken at the State level.

The Court's decision, which was based on federal law, does not disturb existing state law nor does it in any way prohibit states from requiring employers to cover pregnancy-related disabilities in the same manner as all other disabilities. Thus, in Wisconsin and New York, the state courts have ruled that the state fair employment laws, which prohibit discrimination based on sex, do prevent employers from excluding pregnancy-related disabilities from disability benefit plans. This is not to say that employers in Wisconsin and New York will not try to change the law nor that employers in other states will not seek to insure that they do not follow Wisconsin's and New York's progressive lead. Still, it is clear that since the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling has no legal effect on state law, that women workers can and should lobby to get and keep state legislation prohibiting employers from treating pregnancy-related disabilities differently from other disabilities.

TWO CONGRESSMEN SEND GREETINGS!

To the Editor:

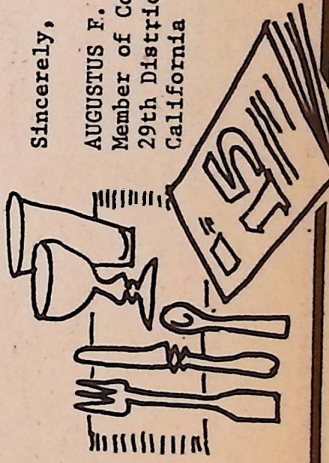
Please excuse my delay in responding to your letter inviting me to attend LABOR TODAY's 15th Anniversary Celebration on Saturday, February 19, 1977 in Evergreen Park, Illinois.

According to my calendar, I have already been committed for that time and regret that I will not be able to participate in your celebration.

Please be assured that I very much appreciate receiving your invitation and would like to extend my very best wishes for a successful program.

Sincerely,

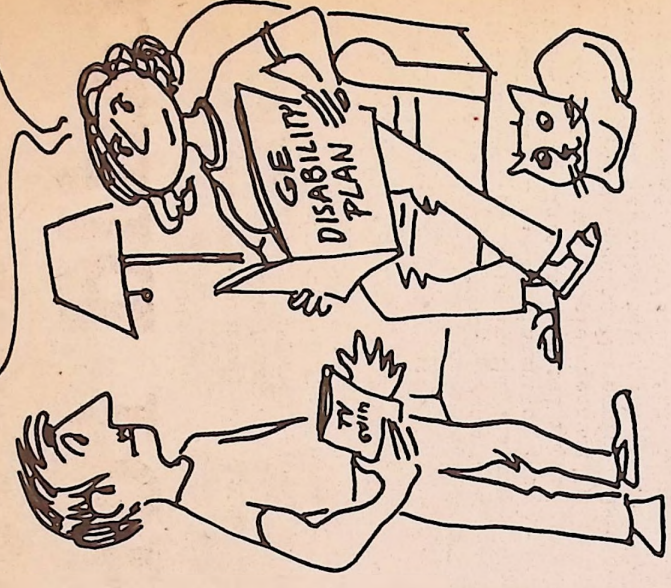
AUGUSTUS F. HAWKINS
Member of Congress
29th District
California



Best wishes,
JOHN CONYERS, JR.
Member of Congress
1st District
Michigan



How come they cover your prostate but not my pregnancy?



Finally, women can secure equal treatment of pregnancy-related disabilities through the Labor Agreement between the company and the union.

Since most women work in unorganized shops, this is a long process involving several steps. Yet, as long as federal or state legislation does not require employers to treat women workers equally, such treatment can only be won through a union contract. This requires, first, that women throughout the country recognize the need to organize unions at their work place, to participate in their unions once organized, and to convince their fellow male workers that treating pregnancy-related disabilities like all other disabilities for purposes of use of accumulated sick leave, seniority retention, medical insurance and disability pay is a high priority at the collective bargaining table.

Although the minority sounded a voice of reason, the majority's holding remains. In Gilbert vs. G.E. the U.S. Supreme Court has shown working women that they cannot rely on the courts to secure their rights. Rather, they must now more than ever become active labor organization leaders.

Write on



Active Participation of women strengthens the union..

strong as its weakest link... participation of the women... progressive social and movement, then it's in every woman's interest to have a special involvement in the union and organizational strength to see the labor movement in which tradition. This is a strong recognition. It's very important for women to have a strong labor movement. See it as a factor in building a base in the union... You often speak of building a base, of developing strength so that you can build a base in the union... When women get together, they have a kind of strength.

ADDDIE WYATT SA

Unio build

Last fall, LABOR TODAY interviewed international union leaders, and the highest-ranking woman in the trade union movement in the U.S. What kinds of gains are you getting from the union movement? What trade union setbacks, what gains in the attainment of vital needs, and in the is of vital movement. This people, becoming to all working women the same way of strengthening the union. This is especially true in movement. This is especially true in movement. This is especially true in movement. This is especially true in movement.

What: We have a fundamental duty to women into the unions and an opportunity to get together a inspiration. The union has a duty to encourage this, because the union is a factor in building a base in the union... You often speak of building a base, of developing strength so that you can build a base in the union... When women get together, they have a kind of strength.

What: There are, as you say, many blocks that stand in the way of women's participation in the union--the "second shift" when they return home, one problem seems to be that many women lack confidence in themselves and are hesitant to become involved. How can we overcome this? What: We have a fundamental duty to women into the unions and an opportunity to get together a inspiration. The union has a duty to encourage this, because the union is a factor in building a base in the union... You often speak of building a base, of developing strength so that you can build a base in the union... When women get together, they have a kind of strength.

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