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the rank and file in action

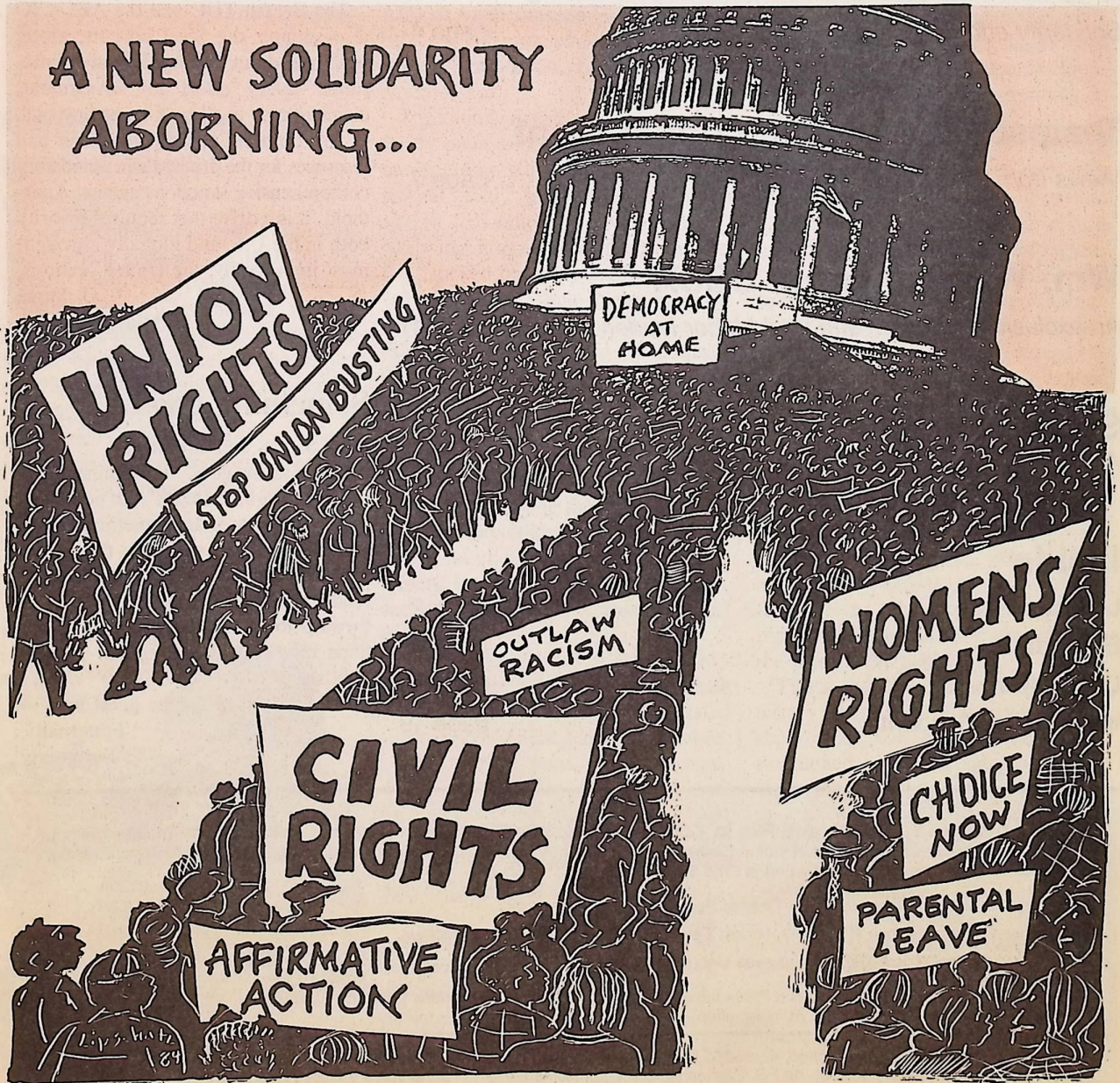
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Labor Today

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SUMMER 1989



Labor Today

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Letters to the Editor

Labor Today welcomes letters to the editor. Please be sure to include name, address, local union. Letters may be shortened to save space.

Comprehensive sanctions

Dear Editor,

The article on the Shell boycott in the Spring, 1989 disturbed me. Suppose the boycott beats Shell and they leave South Africa after selling all their property there. Wouldn't other firms sell South Africa all the oil it wants?

The British TUC and the AFL-CIO also support the Shell boycott, **along with mandatory comprehensive sanctions.** Every effort for divestment, disinvestment and brand-name boycotts, in my opinion, means less time and resources for the drive to win mandatory comprehensive sanctions against Apartheid. It is a drive that requires priority both in the U.S. and globally, through, most importantly, the United Nations.

D. Stone

Philadelphia, PA

Something good

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As the saying goes, "I'm getting a little old and long in the tooth" but not so old that I can't appreciate something good.

That something good was the Spring issue of Labor Today which I have just read cover to cover. I'll be looking forward to the Summer issue which I hope this little donation will help to publish.

Keep up the good work—

Fraternally,

Jim Daugherty

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More on universal issues

Dear Editor,

Seems that we could always use more that shows how things are linked together in the labor movement—the interlocks of issues of concern to all of us. For example, mergers, pensions, bargaining trends, job security, organizing the unorganized, and updates on major strikes such as Eastern and Pittston.

Baldwin Keenan
Carpenter
California

Canadian labor press studied

Dear Editor,

Please send me a copy of the Spring issue which contains the item on the labour press. I recently published "Radical Rag: The Pioneer Labour Press in Canada" which is the first labour history to focus on the movement's newspapers and the people who ran them. As a history, this book documents the role played by labour journalists, but my intention in writing it was also to inspire labour journalists today.

Ron Verzuh
Canadian Union of Public Employees
Ottawa, Canada

A New Solidarity Aborning

While it has long been clear whose side the Supreme Court is on, recent rulings have left no illusions. The entire federal judicial system, now blanketed with extremely one-sided judges appointed by Ronald Reagan, seems to have sworn an oath to arrest the natural and constitutional rights of labor, African Americans, and women, and is hell-bent to fix into place throughout the land an anti-union, racist and sexist environment.

Substituting malicious right-wing bias for the plain words of the Bill of Rights, the Supreme Court justices delivered several foul, below-the-belt blows against democracy, while George Bush, wrapping himself into the American flag, looked on approvingly.

The first punishing blow from the court hit the labor unions where it hurt the most. It declared that scabs (euphemistically mis-named "replacement workers") have superior seniority rights to jobs and promotions over union workers who go on strike. This decision was quickly construed by the lower courts as nullifying the Wagner Labor Law, and they followed with injunctions, arrests of thousands of striking coal miners, imprisonment of union leaders, and fines of millions of dollars against the UMWA.

Then came a series of rapid rabbit-punches from the Court which struck down affirmative action and repealed years of civil rights gains. The consequence of these decisions can be compared to the counter-revolution against the post-Civil War reconstruction, and there is a high pitch of indignation that the court is attempting to throw the nation back into another age and another world.

Predictably, the next victim was *Roe vs. Wade*, with a dictatorial decree from the Court depriving women (especially poor women) the natural and constitutional right to choose in all instances

when and if to bear a child.

These cumulative blows by the courts against peoples' rights have become a warning and a call. If left to their own devices, one cannot predict what the courts will do in the future.

The NAACP has called for a march on Washington August 26 to nullify the court's decisions. "We've heard of a city called freedom, and we're going to make it our home," said Dr. Benjamin Hooks to the organization's convention in Detroit.

Almost on the heels of the NAACP call, the National Organization of Women (NOW) began organizing Freedom Caravans for Women's Lives, also to culminate in a march on Washington.

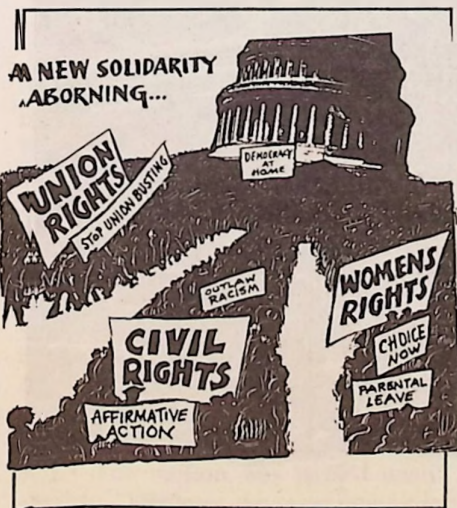
And last, but not least, in response to the coal miners' and Eastern Airline workers' strikes, a new level of labor solidarity has risen in countless workplaces, local unions, central councils, and international unions. Over 40,000 coal miners walked off the job in ten states in support of the Pittston miners. A resolution by the New Jersey Industrial Union Council and the Lorain County (Ohio) Federation of Labor for a one-day national work stoppage and a march on Washington (in support of the Eastern, Pittston and all workers' rights) is being seriously discussed in the labor movement.

This is one of those rare moments in history when all the injustices and long-suppressed grievances of the people are summoned to a common ground and merge together as one. We are reminded of the grand coalition of workers, African Americans, women, farmers, and liberals who were so potent a force in the Roosevelt New Deal era.

Wiser and more ready to fight back, the elements of that democratic coalition are again emerging.

Guess it's time to put on our walking shoes.

LT



COAL MINERS

A strike for human rights

by Debbie Albano
Editor

There is a virtual state of martial law in Southwest Virginia. Picketing has been outlawed; driving a car within miles of a mine is outlawed; camping has been outlawed. All these actions have been outlawed because the courts are seeking to protect Pittston Coal Company from the people. But the people are defying these unjust laws. Thousands of miners and supporters, including the heroic Daughters of Mother Jones, have sat down in front of coal trucks and mine gates, pitched their tents at Camp Solidarity, gone sight-seeing in their pickups and beaters, slowly winding through the roads Pittston wishes to control, walked off the job in 10 states. Hundreds have gone to jail and been subjected to fines amounting to millions of dollars.

"War in the Coalfields" has headlined many a newspaper over the last 100 years, but this time there's a new kicker.

The miner-soldiers are wearing camouflage "to confuse the enemy," and defending themselves by using the tactics of non-violence developed by Dr. King and the civil rights movement. Their shirts proclaim "Conquer evil with good."

The first fusillade in this war was shot by the Pittston Coal Company, when it torpedoed the industry-wide contract negotiations and broke rank with the other coal operators, attempting to pave the way for a fight that would destroy the UMWA and throw back working conditions 50 years in an industry known for its deadly dangers and disablingly difficult working conditions.

Fundamental to democracy is the right of working people to organize, to use their right to strike to protect their safety, their standard of living and their families from poverty. The Pittston Coal Company, in collusion with the Bush Administration and the coal industry, is ferociously bearing down on the miners in an attempt to destroy any semblance

of democracy.

And that's not all . . .

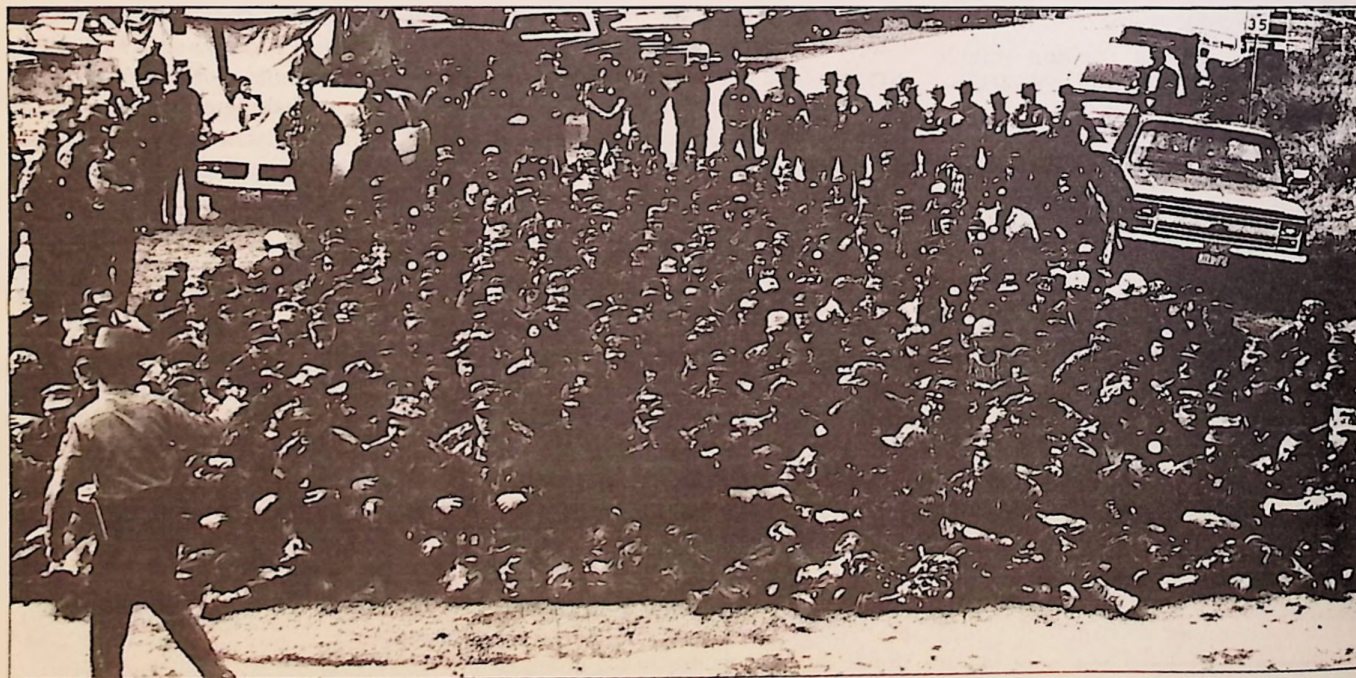
A Strike to Live and Breathe

In the last twenty years unsafe practices by Pittston have resulted in two tragic mine disasters, at McClure mine and Buffalo Creek, explosions which resulted in hundreds of deaths and in the case of Buffalo Creek, the flooding and consequent ruin of a whole community. But Pittston has continued to demand further safety and health concessions from the miners, including:

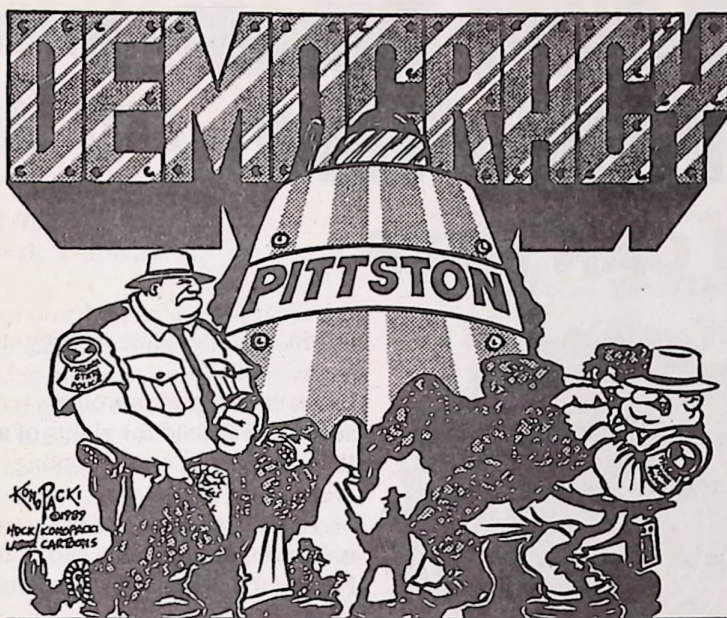
- Ending prohibitions on overtime and Sunday work (a current protection that guards against undermanning of dangerous mine operations).
- Demanding 24-hour notice from the Union of any safety inspection (a green light to cover up dangerous work situations).

Most devastating of all, Pittston's second broadside, fired in the aftermath of broken off negotiations, was its uni-

UMWA members halt truck traffic with mass civil disobedience.



AND THEY CALL IT



**SUPPORT THE UMWA STRIKE
AGAINST PITTSTON!**

Make donations to:
Justice for Pittston Miners
UMWA District 28
P.O. Box 28
Castlewood, VA 24224
703/762-5537

lateral termination of benefits for widows, retirees, and disabled miners. Reagan had already begun this process for Pittston by slashing black lung recipient's meager benefits during his administration.

The injunctions and legal sanctions against the United Mineworkers and its leaders have the purpose, in the first place, of intimidating and restricting the miners and their families. But, the courts' aim is also to intimidate and restrict solidarity efforts throughout the labor movement.

However, Tom Fricano, Secretary-Treasurer of the New Jersey Industrial Union Council moved: "If we don't get some equity and the return of jobs at Eastern and Pittston, I favor a call for a one-day shut down—nationwide. I call on the AFL-CIO to consider such a walk out." The motion was passed unanimously. Days later, the same motion for

a one-day general strike was passed by the Lorain County (Ohio) Central Labor Council, additionally calling for another Solidarity march on Washington.

"This is a life and death situation for

us," said one of the miner's wives at the Coal Employment Project conference in Southern Illinois. "Life and death for our union, our community, and our families. If Pittston wins, they'll go after every miner and every union in the country." **LT**

Miners Aid

There is no solidarity effort too small or too soon. Come to the miner's aid immediately by:

- ✓ Forming a Justice for Miners Committee in your local union, central labor body, community, church, or civic group.
- ✓ Contacting Citizens Support Committee, c/o UMWA, PO Box 28, Castlewood, VA 24224, (703) 762-5540, attn.: Ron Baker or Steve Webber.

They have • speakers

• videos

• information packets

- ✓ Organizing with committee support:
 - Delegations and food caravans to the coalfields
 - Public information campaigns
 - Protests at Pittston corporate headquarters
 - Letter writing campaigns to Pittston, local and national newspapers, the Governor of Virginia and other political representatives
 - Fundraising events

A letter to the *UMW Journal* that says it all . . .

"My husband, Paul J. Boone, has been with Peabody mines around 40 years. Paul is very fortunate that he's worked under UMWA all these years. Thanks to the UMWA, medical bills have been paid for four open heart surgeries and numerous other expenses due to illness. Can't thank you enough.

"Strong unions are very important to every working person in America. A strong union makes a person feel that they are being treated fair in today's work field. It's tough out there with government and big companies trying to break the union.

"I can't understand why ex-president Reagan didn't do anything to help the unions, and yet he's all for the unions in Poland.

"Miners are proud people. They work, strike and go through all kinds of difficulties to get where they are today. Thanks again for everything."

Betty Boone, Beaver Dam, Ky.

A special message from the coalfields

UMWA Members Deserve Better Than This

YOU CAN HELP

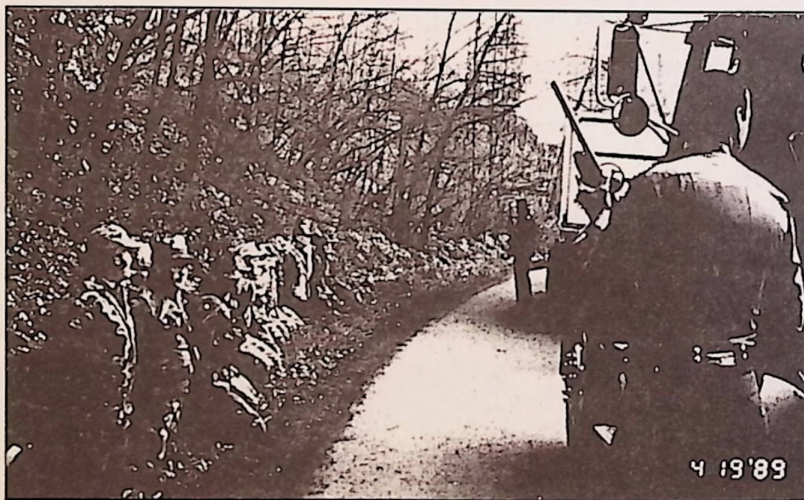
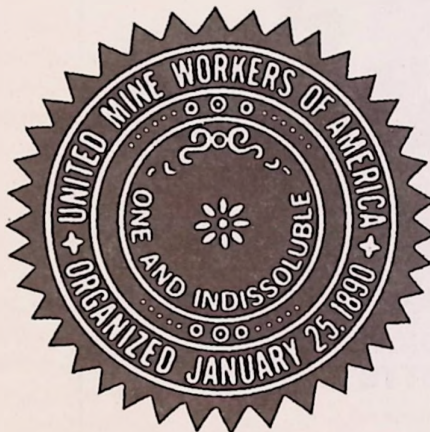
A hundred years ago, the odds were stacked against mine workers all across the coalfields:

- ✓ States and the federal government worked hand-in-glove with the coal operators to prevent the union from organizing and winning good contracts.
- ✓ Courts and judges routinely sent miners to jail for standing up for their rights.
- ✓ And company-owned gun thugs created their own brand of "law and order" in an industry-wide reign of terror.

Today, those "good old days" are making a comeback, and our brothers and sisters at Pittston are on the front lines, defending the rights that generations of mine workers, their families and communities fought and died to win.

Since the UMWA went on strike against Pittston on April 5:

- ✓ More than 2,500 people—rank-and-file miners, retirees, their families, religious leaders and other concerned citizens—have been arrested by the Virginia State Police for peacefully protesting Pittston management's attempts to scab their mines.
- ✓ A federal judge has ordered the union's strike leaders clapped in irons and placed in jail hours away from the coalfield areas where the strike is taking place.
- ✓ And the union is facing millions of



dollars in fines in Virginia state court, as the judge protects Pittston's "right" to use strikebreakers to take away UMWA members' jobs.

You Can Help

At the turn of the century, UMWA members overcame long odds by sticking together, developing new tactics and a coordinated game plan, and fighting

to win. And the same strategy can work today.

You can help your brothers and sisters at Pittston defend the rights of all UMWA members and working people everywhere by:

- ✓ **Educating yourself and your local union** about what's at stake, both for Pittston miners and for the entire union, in this strike.

To help you do this, the union has prepared a new booklet, *Betraying The Trust*, which describes Pittston's drive to break the union and our coalfield

communities. To order your free copy, write to: *Betraying the Trust*, c/o UMWA Organizing Department, 900 Fifteenth St., NW, Washington, DC 20005.

- ✓ **Contacting your brothers and sisters at Pittston** and letting them know which side you are on. Messages of solidarity, and contributions to help offset massive legal fees, potential court costs and fines, and

other expenses can be sent to: Justice for Pittston Miners, UMWA District 28, P.O. Box 28, Castlewood, VA 24224.

- ✓ **Preparing your local union** to do whatever it takes to win.

As the UMWA escalates the campaign against Pittston, your local union may be asked to help. The time to get ready is now.

From the UMWA Journal

Lunch Break—

Teamsters talk about their union and the Justice Department

by Bill Zack
New York Teamster

Lunch is at 4:00 am for the third shift at this break-bulk freight terminal. Bud is working on the other side of the noisy dock and gives me the signal that he'll take his break when I punch out for my half hour. Together we go over to the shop to join the night mechanics.

Roger is already stretched out on a bench. Having complained of loud dogs and lawn mowers, he's catching a nap. The other five of us sit down around a grease-stained old table and break open our lunches. In this musty locker room, we start talking union.

"The folks over at this magazine, *Labor Today*, asked me to write about what you guys are thinking of the Justice Department's settlement with the Teamsters," I start off.

"That damn Reagan started all this. They're all a bunch of crooks. Him, Bush, North and all those guys ought to be the ones going to jail. I never did trust them and this is just one more thing," says Mario. Twenty-seven years in the shop, he is six months away from retiring. "None of that Reagan bunch cared about us or the union. They mostly cared about not getting caught lying. You see, if they wanted to put the real crooks in jail, they'd have to lock themselves up!"

"I sure don't trust the Justice Department, but it's a Catch-22 sort of thing. It's a start, but this sure doesn't mean we've got total democracy. We don't have that in our own government itself. If it had gone to trial we would've had to pay for this thing both ways, as tax payers and as union members having to foot these legal bills," said Bud.

Dropping all pretext as an impartial reporter I had to jump right in, "(Local President) Stone had a point, saying it

"That damn Reagan started all this. They're all a bunch of crooks. Him, Bush, North and all those guys ought to be the ones going to jail."

would cost us \$20-30 million, lasted years and drug us through the mud. The big press loves to beat up on us."

"Well, like Stone said, we're the bad boys and easy pickin's," noted Bud.

"I really hadn't thought much about it, to be honest. I just don't know. I've never been in a union before and I'm not sure what to make of all this," ventures William, our most recent hire.

Bud has fresh memories of his unsuccessful local campaign for the Executive Board. "The problem is, who's going to run these campaigns? They'll have to be national, big money, who's going to be able to run? Who can afford to run?"

"I don't care," pipes in Ralph from the corner. "Our biggest problem is getting that grievance through. None of us are getting the right scale. You going to put that in the magazine? Don't use my name!"

Mention of the grievance touches off the most animated discussion, and a shared anger quickly surfaces. Every shorted paycheck is an insult and a reminder of the company's defiance of the contract. The frustration with corporate thieving spills over into criticism of local leadership.

"I keep telling you, if we don't get involved now we'll have ourselves to blame. We've got our own local elections in six months and nothing is keeping us from running a few new candidates right

here," Bud notes, "and we still need to get Stone to bring in that steward's training."

Subtle nods all around and a sense of the timeclock mark a closure to this session.

Bud gets up with a slow and purposeful defiance of that clock, carefully knocks off the end of his cigar, and with all the makings of a future local candidate says, "I'm willing to wait and see what happens with this Justice Department thing. For now, we've got these problems right here and to set them straight we've got to speak up and stick together. It always comes down to that."

With the slam of the door there's a silence. Up 'til now, Roger was seemingly asleep on the bench, but it's his voice that closes this session, "He's right." **LT**



New River Free Press

"Can the government help democratize the union?"

"What's the Justice Department got up its sleeve?"

A TEAMSTER'S OPINION

by Dave Riddle
IBT Local 299

Among Teamsters there is a general mistrust of government intervention in the union. There is also a healthy resentment of criminal influence on union leadership. It is an open question as to which the rank and file regard with greater dread—the government or the mob. For one thing, Teamsters remember the way the government deprived the union of its most effective leadership—Jimmy Hoffa. And some of the older members also recall the way the McClellan Committee functioned in the mid-fifties, in a way parallel to the McCarthy Committee in the early fifties, to drum out of the labor movement its largest and arguably most strategically placed union—all on the basis of a scare word: in this case, THE MOB.

But frankly, some Teamsters "could care less" for democracy in the union. Regarding Hoffa, the standard Teamster cliché is, "Jimmy would take a dollar. But he got you a dollar, too." I had a conversation with a Teamster dock worker in Port Newark, New Jersey once. He was a member of Local 560—the fiefdom of the Provenzano family and, later, the object of the first government union takeover. This guy said he would always support the Provenzanos. "When we had a problem, the Business Agent came down in a big black Cadillac. When he left, we didn't have a problem."

In other words, many Teamsters are interested primarily in effective leadership in their short-term struggles with employers and are less concerned with legal or even formal democratic niceties. This helps explain the embarrassing

results, from the Rudy Giuliani's point of view, of the government trusteeship of Local 560.

No Place for Mob in Union

A great many members believe, however, that organized crime has no place in the union. And it is worthwhile considering why this is so. Basically, the problem with the mob is that it works both sides of the street—making deals to make money. They are employers. But they may also have managed to infiltrate some locals as union representatives. The mob, like all employers, seeks to render the union ineffective so they can offer "a deal you can't refuse."

Many of the members who reject any role for organized crime in unions are also suspicious of the government takeover plan. They understand the bad precedent it sets for the rest of labor. They understand the strategic position that the IBT occupies in the field of labor-management relations. They are aware of the size and significance of Teamster lobbying resources. They are also aware of the large numbers of criminals (convicted or otherwise) within the government itself.

One often neglected aspect of this question—at least regarding the 20-25% of Teamsters in the traditional Teamster trucking field—is that, as a result of the nature of their job, they mistrust the government more than many other trade unionists. The government, after all, is always making their life miserable—the cops, the weigh stations, the complicated permit and license plate laws, the insurance regulations, the fuel taxes, the road use taxes, not to mention the fact that these taxes never seem to get translated

into a better road system.

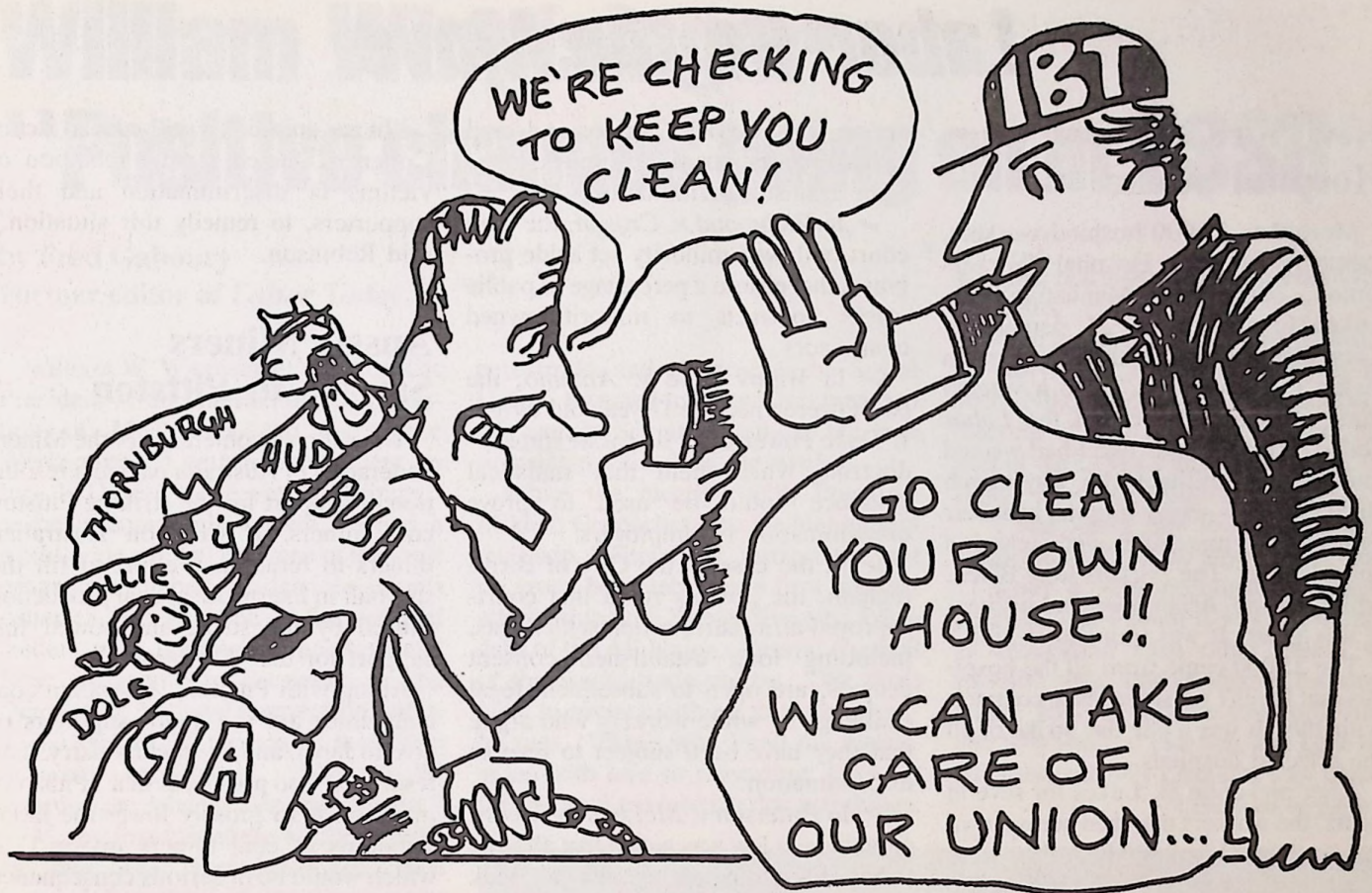
There is a constant adversarial relationship. During the past ten years there was the government program to deregulate the trucking industry which cost over 100,000 Teamster jobs. On the horizon we see the Department of Transportation determined to impose unreliable and degrading random drug testing.

Lawsuit Costly But...

What about the future? The proposed settlement of the RICO government takeover lawsuit is thought by some to be better than the alternative—costly litigation and further besmirching the union's reputation. But there are some dangers in this.

For one thing, the concept of "one man, one vote" sounds good but can result in a lot of poor leadership decisions if you don't know anything about the people running. I know half a dozen members of my own local union who would make good Stewards or Business Agents in my craft. I have no idea who to vote for nationally to represent the Teamster airline workers or UPS workers. When I raise this with other rank and file Teamsters, who have made "one man, one vote" their rallying cry, they say that the government could mandate that our union magazine, *International Teamster*, run background information and platform statements of the candidates. To me, this simply means that these candidates would hire public relations people and you still wouldn't be able to verify their claims.

This raises the related issue of campaign funding. Anyone who has participated in local union elections knows the



money-crunch problems—the beer busts and raffle ticket sales necessary just to do a couple of mailings in a 7,000 member local. What will happen when this is expanded to 1.6 million members? Who has this kind of money? The Employer Associations and the mob do. We will have to be on guard against this.

Stand Up to Intervention

I think the case could be made that the union would be better served to reject the government-imposed constitutional changes in the upcoming convention in 1990 and defy the government to do its worst. In this way, the union will be taking an unambiguous stand against government intervention in union affairs and the experience of Local 560 indicates that a government trusteeship may be ill-prepared to deal with the massive resistance of a membership outraged by government violation of its autonomy.

The possibility of a united front of support from other unions and peoples'

organizations makes this defiance a very real possibility for rallying the forces of labor against the Bush Administration and its pro-big business agenda.

The primary task of union activists is to build the union and engage management in the economic struggle. Some organizations have wholly failed to do this, frequently tearing down the union by chastising its leadership as if it were the main enemy, rather than recognizing the employers as the main problem. This kind of attitude might explain why Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), for example, essentially allied with the government in building the case against the union leadership.

We saw the same rank and file confusion in last year's struggle in the meat-packing industry in Austin, Minnesota. There, the leadership of the UFCW P-9 Local rallied the rank and file and attempted, with disastrous results, to wage a simultaneous struggle with management and with national union leadership.

Monopolies and the Government

Any long-range thinking of how to build the union and fight the economic struggles ahead must take into account the new level of control which the monopolies exercise over the government in the Reagan-Bush period, and their profit-gorging strategies to bleed the workers and small businesses. In the case of deregulation, for example, the government is simply implementing a plank in the monopoly corporations' platform for economic change. The present government-Teamster struggle imposes a certain priority on our union—to fight to defend the labor movement in its efforts to re-regulate the economy for the benefit of workers and consumers.

Labor Today serves a good purpose by allowing us to engage in this discussion. I hope other rank and file IBT members will contribute some thoughts on these issues.

LT

Labor On the Move

New York Hospital Strike

More than 25,000 hospital workers, members of 1199 Hospital Workers Union, surrounded Manhattan's St. Lukes Hospital on July 24, demanding a new contract. "It was the greatest mass picket I've ever seen," said a veteran trade unionist who called the *Labor Today* office. "It was like I had walked into the most militant May Day march since the '30's—every hospital had their own banner, marching contingent and chant leaders. The workers were Black, white, Latino, Asian, men and women. It was great. It was unity in motion."

The 25,000 came from all the hospitals that haven't yet signed new contracts with 1199. It was a one day strike of all the affected hospitals.

After picketing St. Lukes for several hours, the workers marched across town to Mt. Sinai Hospital where they were greeted by Reverend Jesse Jackson and Dennis Rivera, President of 1199.

The picketline demonstration caps a revival of mass rank and file union mobilization and activity promoted by the hospital workers union. The new union leadership, elected last year, is combining traditional strategies of industrial unionism with innovative tactics, such as the one day strike.

Terrible, Terrible Decisions

Cleveland Robinson, Vice President of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and Secretary-Treasurer of UAW's District 65 in New York, charged the Supreme Court with "attempting to nullify any progress we have made in the eradication of racial and sex discrimination" and "attempting to reverse the progress of our entire nation."

The four key "terrible decisions" referred to by Robinson reversed nearly 30 years of law and precedent that had established the legality of affirmative

action and afforded "unions and civil rights organizations some leverage in the fight against discrimination."

✓ In *Richmond v. Croson*, the high court outlawed minority set aside programs that ensure a percentage of public works contracts to minority-owned contractors.

✓ In *Wards Cove v. Antonio*, the court overturned the 17-year-old *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.* "disparate impact" doctrine which held that statistical evidence could be used to prove discrimination by employers.

✓ In the case of the City of Birmingham, the justices ruled that court-approved affirmative action settlements, including long established consent decrees, are open to subsequent legal challenge by white workers who argue that they have been subject to reverse discrimination.

✓ In *Patterson v. McLean*, a Reconstruction-era law was gutted that allowed those discriminated against to seek redress in the courts.

"In my opinion, it will take an Act of Congress, fueled by the rebellion of victims of discrimination and their supporters, to remedy this situation," said Robinson.

Aussie Miners Say No to Pittston

The national conference of the Miners Federation of Australia passed a resolution of support for the striking Pittston coal miners. It calls on Australian miners to refuse any effort to fill the shortfall in international coal production caused by the strike and vowed full support for the U.S. miners.

Along with Pittston, Australian coal companies are the major suppliers of coal to Japan and its steel industry. The resolution also points out that "Pittston's intention is to grossly lower the labor standards of coal miners in the U.S. which would be of serious consequence to Australian coal miners."



Eastern Still Grounded

Virtually grounded for over five months, Eastern claims it will have 390 flights in the air by the end of August. To do this, it needs to lease five planes, complete with crews, from Continental Airlines, also owned by Texas Air and Frank Lorenzo. None of the striking unions believe Eastern will succeed, and they intend to defend themselves with

the Railway Labor Act which prohibits such aid by one airline to another to break a strike.

A petition drive has been launched in support of workers at Eastern and Continental Airlines by the AFL-CIO. "We take the pledge for fairness at Eastern and Continental" petitions are available from the AFL-CIO Fairness at Eastern Campaign, Room 807, 815 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20006.

William Winpisinger: "Positive changes going on in USSR"

by Fred Gaboury
Former editor of *Labor Today*

William W. Winpisinger's 12-years as President of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers ended with his retirement on July 1. During those years, "Wimpy," as he is commonly known, earned a world-wide reputation as one of the most progressive labor leaders in North America. He was one of the national leaders who nominated the Reverend Jesse Jackson for President at the Democratic National Convention, introduced by one of the major television networks as, simply, "William W. Winpisinger, labor leader and socialist."

Wimpy first visited the USSR in 1983. He met with Yuri Andropov, then General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Wimpy was also made an honorary cosmonaut. ("Buzz" Aldrin, part of the historic Apollo moon-landing mission, was a member of the Machinists Union.) The second visit was in 1986 when, as Winpisinger says, "perestroika and glasnost were in their relative infancy."

On his most recent trip in April of this year, Winpisinger was accompanied by Jack Sheinkman, President of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union. They met with Soviet trade unionists, visited a factory that had been converted from military to civilian production, and had a 2-hour meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev.

Unique Opportunity

Winpisinger, who makes it a point to remind people that workers in the United States have been faced with "a lot of perestroika (restructuring) and damned little glasnost (openness)," had what he calls "a unique opportunity to see what had been accomplished under

perestroika and glasnost in the Soviet Union. I wanted to see what it meant to the average Soviet citizen—to the man or woman who does the work."

While the meeting with President Mikhail Gorbachev was the highlight of their trip, Winpisinger, through the past six years, has established a firm fraternal relationship with Stepan Shalayev, President of the All Unions Central Council of the Soviet trade unions. "We don't have to prove anything to each other," he says. "That's why I call my discussions with him so rewarding. He's not up on cloud ten looking down at things.

He's in a real world and talks about real problems."

Winpisinger obviously enjoys telling the story of how he was invited by his host, Nikolai Zonoviev, to address a meeting of 200 full-time officers and staff of the IAM's counterpart union, the Heavy Machine Builders Union.

"I was never one to turn down an opportunity to talk to anyone," he said. "I made a very perfunctory speech, actually. I told them it was impossible to understand each other unless we establish some kind of ongoing exchange where you can tell me your problems and why you feel that way, and I can tell you mine and why I feel that way. I made

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William Winpisinger



Union leaders William Winpisinger and Jack Sheinkman (right side of table) meet with union counterpart Stepan Shalayev (left foreground) and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev (second from left.)

Winpisinger. . .

Continued from page 11

the pitch about how we both inhabit this space ship we call Earth and how, if we blow the whole thing up, we aren't really accomplishing anything."

Wimpy was then asked if he'd "go for questions and answers" and responded, "Hell, yes—let's go."

For the next hour he answered questions "and not a damn one dealt with anything I had said. They took all that as a given." Instead, Winpisinger was asked: How do you run your union? How many departments do you have? What do they do? How do you translate that to the problems of the shop floor? How do you handle grievances?

He smiles and says, "You could just see the light go on. And I said to myself, 'What an opportunity to come in here and try to help them find their own way and explore new ideas in terms of representing workers.'"

Winpisinger thinks that "in some respects, Soviet trade unions have had to invent what we've gone through in this country when it comes to defending worker's rights." For example, in his

visit with Mikhail Gorbachev, the President told him that he had attended the Soviet trade union Congress and said, "You guys have been dancing too close to the managers for too long. You ought to step back and decide how you're going to represent your members."

But he is careful to underline "in some respects" because, "When it comes to worker rights legislation, the laws they are talking about improving far transcend anything we've ever dreamed about: the right to elect stewards and shop committee, the right to elect or fire the managers, no protection for scabs."

Returning to the subject of perestroika, Wimpy says, "It's a fascinating, interesting approach that is very ambitious. If the Soviet citizenry has the same tolerance for compromise in a different value system that we have in the USA, it ain't going to take them long to straighten things out."

We asked Winpisinger what he meant by a different "system of values." "The value of a worker's work, the value of a modicum of freedom, the value of speaking out when your conditions aren't what you like 'em to be. Here in the United States, the aspirations of workers always have to be tempered by

the aspirations of the state, as much as the government wants to deny that. Ronald Reagan was proof enough of that: the ambition of the state was to crush PATCO, and he did."

He finds it "somewhat amusing" when he listens "to all of the pundits—including, I'm sorry to say, some of my fellow unionists on the AFL-CIO Executive Council—who say, 'Perestroika is a failure!' Yeah, if you had overly ambitious designs at the outset, then it's a failure. But if our country is going to stake its position in history on perestroika being a failure, we're going to make a serious, a very serious mistake," he said, his voice hardening.

"Besides, those are not the stakes. The average Soviet citizen is still the principle player in all this. The stakes are how his or her life will be improved. It is to what degree the Soviet citizen perceives changes and the importance of those changes—not our perceptions or our assessment—but theirs that will measure the success or failure. Looking at it this way, perestroika takes on a whole new dimension.

"If the average Soviet citizen believes that glasnost is worth something, that he or she can speak out with impunity, that's progress. We must recognize that any country that truly takes popular opinion into consideration and subjects

its leaders to elections has taken a forward step."

For those who would pass premature judgment on the success or failure of perestroika, Wimpy warns: "You have to look at it in terms of little increments," indicating with his thumb and forefinger. "Neither world relations or the Soviet economy is a drag strip where you can go from zero to 60 in 6 seconds. I don't give a damn what kind of reservations you may have, changes are going on in the Soviet Union and must be acknowledged as positive."

What Kind of Changes?

Winpisinger and Sheinkman visited a clothing factory that he "guesses" had been making military uniforms six months earlier. "They gutted it of the old machinery, installed new, and restarted it as a men's suit factory," he says.

Claiming ignorance of clothing manufacture for himself, Wimpy quotes Sheinkman. "He told me, 'Top quality. Latest technology. Efficient production. Estimated price in the United States, \$300.00.' And he knows."

Because they saw no other plants, Wimpy says, "If one is a cynic, which I am not, one might say that it was the only plant they've converted. But," he adds somewhat belligerently, "I'll tell you something: I saw that factory, and those who would detract from my judgment have never seen it. Even if it is the only one that's been converted, it's one more than has been converted over here!"

Pointing out that the already-announced unilateral reduction of Soviet armed forces means that "for the first time in the 70-plus year history of the Soviet Union they now are compelled to countenance and plan for unemployment. The whole world will have its binoculars trained on that experiment in converting plants and retraining workers from the production of military goods to consumer products.

"They are looking at real troop reductions. There are 150,000 officers for whom they have to have good jobs." While agreeing that "they don't know

how they're going to bring it off exactly" and that the whole process is "in its infancy," Winpisinger is sure of one thing: "Even the fact that they are talking about the problem means that they are way ahead of our country. They are planning for it, God bless 'em, they are planning for it."

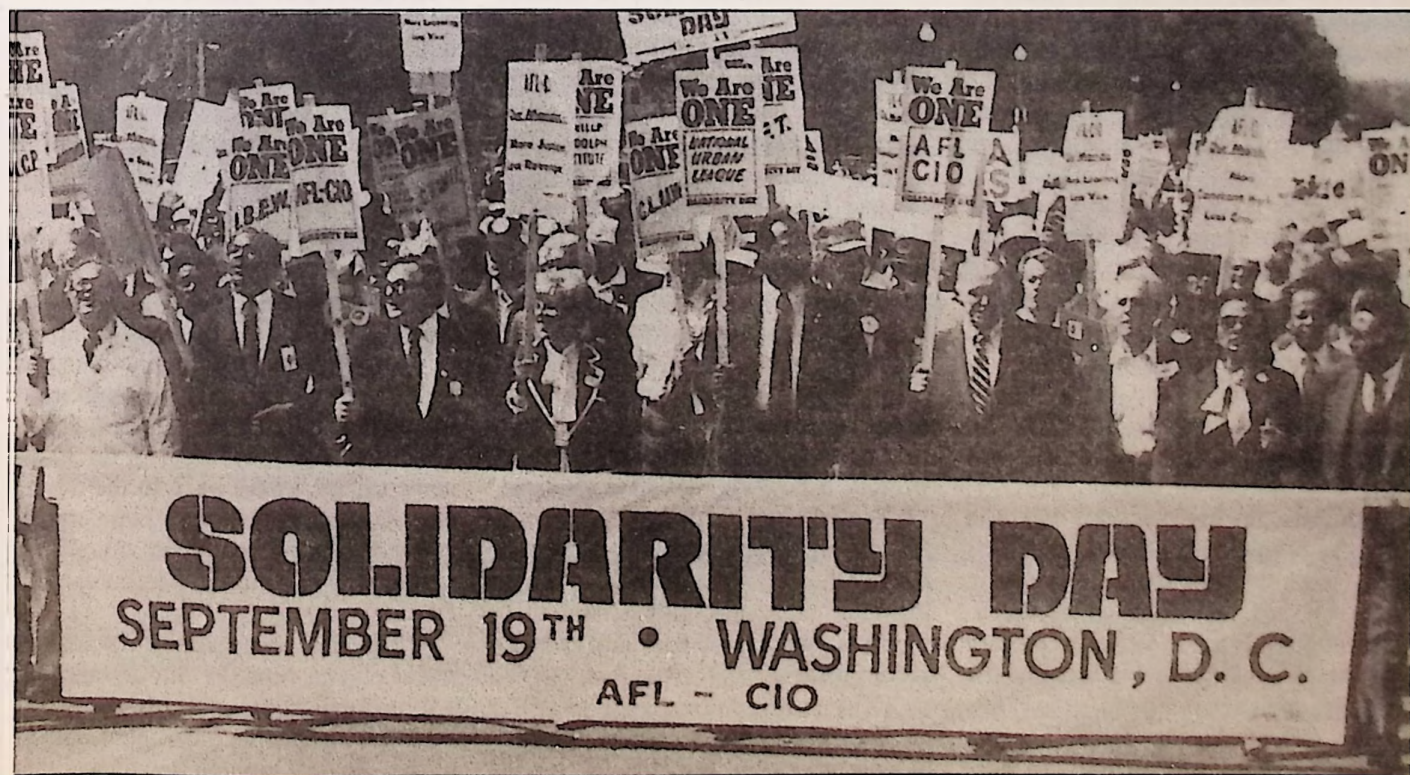
Meeting with Gorbachev

"When you sit down with a person one-on-one or two-on-two and talk about problems, as we did with President Gorbachev, it either meshes or it doesn't. Given the fact that we could end up by blowing the world to hell, it behooves us to *make things mesh.*"

Although neither Winpisinger nor Gorbachev mentioned the fact that the U.S. State Department systematically denies entry visas to Soviet trade unionists—"we both understand the problem so why waste time"—Winpisinger's meeting with Gorbachev

Continued on page 14

One million union members marched on Washington, DC in 1981 to display their solidarity with all of labor's struggles and to demand an end to anti-worker policies of the Reagan Administration. Both Winpisinger and Sheinkman's unions had thousands of participants in the march.



Winpisinger. . .

Continued from page 13

touched on the hard questions.

"He cannot understand, for instance, how the US cannot give a corresponding response to all the things the USSR is doing when it comes to the world scene. He is very careful not to mention individuals, but he's looking for a little more from us. He's patient, but expects a rational response which he hasn't seen yet. 'We make initiatives,' he said, 'and you crawl in your shell.' Though he spoke at length about the Bush Administration having to consolidate in order to get things going, it was clear he expected things to get going. It was also clear that he included US trade unionists in that shell-crawling."

Winpisinger thinks Gorbachev is "an amazing man—more than amazing. He has charisma, imagination, a willingness to stake something in the 'crap game' out of the certain knowledge that if you don't risk something you don't get anything.

"He impresses me as a man who is absolutely committed to confronting the problems they face. He's prepared to risk his whole political future and his not insignificant position in the world on his success or failure. That's pretty high-powered stuff where I come from."

Wimpy says he's drawn several conclusions from his meeting with the Soviet President. "They don't want to continue the level of nuclear terror that has existed in the world for a long period of time. . . They have no aversion to backing away from the nuclear precipice. . . They are sincerely trying to create an atmosphere in which competition can take place for better or worse in order to make the lot of the average Soviet citizen better than it is now. . . I believe all of that."

Summing up his meeting, and in a way, the whole trip, Winpisinger says, "Gorbachev wants democratic socialism, and there's a long road ahead. The situation is made difficult by those who want instant success and by the carping critics over here who keep saying 'Perestroika has failed.'

"I have a lot of empathy for that

predicament and a lot of hope that they'll succeed. That may make me a heretic in some circles, but I had an opportunity to meet the man face to face for nearly

two hours, and to visit the USSR three times, which is a helluva lot longer than any other US trade union leader." U

AFL-CIO committee to study perestroika

"A recognition of reality"



As our discussion with William W. Winpisinger neared its end, we asked him about the AFL-CIO's committee to study perestroika. He told us that although he was a member of the committee, he was there only because he had "demanded" to be on it. "After all," he says, "I rank fifth in seniority on the Council."

While all members of the Executive Council have the right to attend meetings of AFL-CIO bodies, "it's always nice to be included rather than excluded." The other members of the committee are Owen Bieber, President, UAW; Gerald McEntee, President, AFSCME; John Joyce, President, Bricklayers; John Sweeney, President, SEIU; and Albert Shanker, President, AFT.

When he was asked why the committee had been established in the first place, Winpisinger said that AFL-CIO President Kirkland's decision was the result of "a recognition of reality."

However, Wimpy doesn't anticipate any major policy changes in the AFL-CIO's approach to trade union contacts and relations with unions in the Soviet Union or other socialist countries without a powerful lot of persuasion. "When you look at the composition of the committee and especially the chairman (Albert Shanker, Teachers Union President)," he says, "it's rather easy to figure out what Lane Kirkland hopes to accomplish.

"He wants the convention to re-affirm the Federation's policy of shunning what he and others call the 'official' unions

in the USSR and other socialist countries. And I don't want that to happen—that's why I wanted on the committee in the first place.

"If I had to guess what the committee would recommend at this stage it would go something like this: 'Our posture in the case of Poland has been vindicated.' As for the Soviet Union, they are going to say that events are too rapid and the results too chaotic at this time to change our policy and that we should just sit back and await developments."

The first meeting of the Committee took place on June 6. "We listened to Zbigniew Brezinski and two other guys, one from the American Enterprise Institute. Under questioning, the guy from the AEI said, 'It may be the appropriate time for people-to-people exchanges.' So, I said, 'Why don't you shout that from the rooftops?' Even Tom Kahn, head of the International Affairs Department of the AFL-CIO, laughed."

Wimpy makes "no claim to being an expert" when it comes to viewing events of the kind taking place in the Soviet Union. "But," he adds, "I do know some things. I *have* been to the Soviet Union. I *have* met with my counterparts in the Soviet trade unions. And I *did* spend an hour and fifty minutes with President Gorbachev."

Wimpy then emphasizes the point he's made several times in our discussion: "Tom Kahn labors under one tremendous handicap. I've been there and he hasn't. There's nothing he can say that



transcends my observations.

"On the other hand, I'm not acquainted with everything Tom Kahn does. And frankly, I don't want to be—I want to be able to sleep at night."

Though Wipsinger thinks it's going to take a "powerful lot" of persuasion to change the mind set of the AFL-CIO leadership, he thinks it can be done. As he put it, "Don't forget that I'll be leaving this post on the first of July. That will give me all kinds of time to work on this." **LT**

The AFL-CIO National Convention will be held November 13-16 in Washington, DC. Resolutions and recommendations should be submitted to International Union officers, including Executive Council members of the AFL-CIO, and convention delegates in advance of the Convention.

Illinois Labor Leaders to China and USSR

"Trade is a good guarantor of peace"

**By Norman Roth
Contributing Editor**

Governor Jim Thompson (R-IL) invited the presidents of both the Chicago Federation of Labor and the State Federation of Labor to be part of Illinois' recent trade mission to the Soviet Union and China. In an interview on his return, Bob Gibson, president of the State AFL-CIO responded to a number of questions.

Have other states included labor leaders in these types of delegations?

I'm not sure, but Governor Thompson wanted the Chinese and Soviet officials to know that labor would be involved in any trade mission and that there were certain labor interests that would have to be agreed to before an agreement could be reached.

In the course of the negotiations, did you meet with your labor counterparts in the USSR and China?

As Bob Healey, president of the CFL said, 'We met with them all the time.' Most all the government people are also trade unionists.

In China, I did meet specifically with a union leader, a woman, whose rank is equivalent to mine. We exchanged views about our problems and agreed that the establishment of friendly trade relations would be beneficial to the workers in both countries.

How are trade missions related to peaceful relations between the USSR, China and the US?

I believe the trade question is a very important component of the issue of peace. Trade is a good guarantor of peace.

In both countries, especially in the USSR, the question of peace was prominent in discussions. I was surprised to learn how deep the peace issue is in the minds of all the ordinary people we met there. It was obvious to me that World War II has left a very deep impression

on the Soviet citizens.

Did your visit change any previous ideas you might have had about either country?

Yes. I was very glad to get the opportunity to visit both countries and learn something first hand about how they think and what they are doing. I was very much impressed with China. It has so many people—everyone working so hard. It is also a very beautiful nation.

Three years ago, before Gorbachev, I would not have gone to the Soviet Union. Now, I'd like to go back and see and learn more about the country.

Moscow is a beautiful city. The subway is magnificent. The Russian people are a lot like Americans. They want to build friendly relations with us and peace is the main topic on their minds.

Trade relations between our two countries would guarantee good markets for our farmers as well as for workers in manufacturing. **LT**

The Newspaper Guild's 1989 Convention adopted a resolution urging legislation that would repeal the McCarren-Walter Act, long used to deny entry visas to "representatives of purported labor organizations" from socialist countries. The Convention also urged the AFL-CIO to reconsider its opposition to repeal of that provision. Citing the law as a "relic of the Cold War," the Convention said, "In this period of East-West thaw and the loosening of state controls in several Eastern bloc countries, their continued exclusion is as purposeless as it is objectionable."

Hard Hatted Women

By Donna Weems
Truck Driver



After reading *Hard-Hatted Women*, I felt as though I had been re-introduced to old friends. For those not familiar with the stories of women in non-traditional work, it is must reading.

In particular, these stories should be read aloud in the halls of Congress, the State Legislatures, the City Councils, and, most importantly, the Supreme Court chambers for the benefit of those who have decided that affirmative action is no longer necessary, and that the employers need not bear any responsibility for discriminatory actions.

The stories of success and struggle, told in the voices of the women who lived them are powerful and moving. The road traveled from years of schooling for a degree in social work to a carpenter's apprenticeship at 31 years of age is full of uncertain avenues and dark corridors, but you can't help but applaud the courage of a Pat Cull, who made that journey. I read with a certain envy the story of Gigi Marino, merchant sailor from Pennsylvania, because she knew at the age of twelve what she wanted to do.

Why is it that the trades are not

considered options for women? Historically, the trades have been exclusionary. Women were allowed to learn these skills only when industry needed labor, when the men were sent off to fight in a war, for example. In the British colonies, including the United States, only freemen and frequently those who owned property could become tradesmen. This racism and sexism became institutionalized, encouraged by government and industry alike. Unfortunately, it has been furthered by the trade unions of the construction industry themselves which over the years guarded their territory against "outsiders" and "inter-

Hard Hatted Women, Stories of Struggle and Success in the Trades. Edited by Molly Martin. Seal Press, 1988. 265 pp. \$10.95 paper.

lopers," possibly believing that they would gain something if they "went along with the contractors on this one."

Because of the social education received by women, they have also been considered "easy targets" of special intimidation, sexual harassment. *Hard-hatted Women*, however, signals to all its readers that there is a new breed of woman; one who has experience and knows how to fight back.

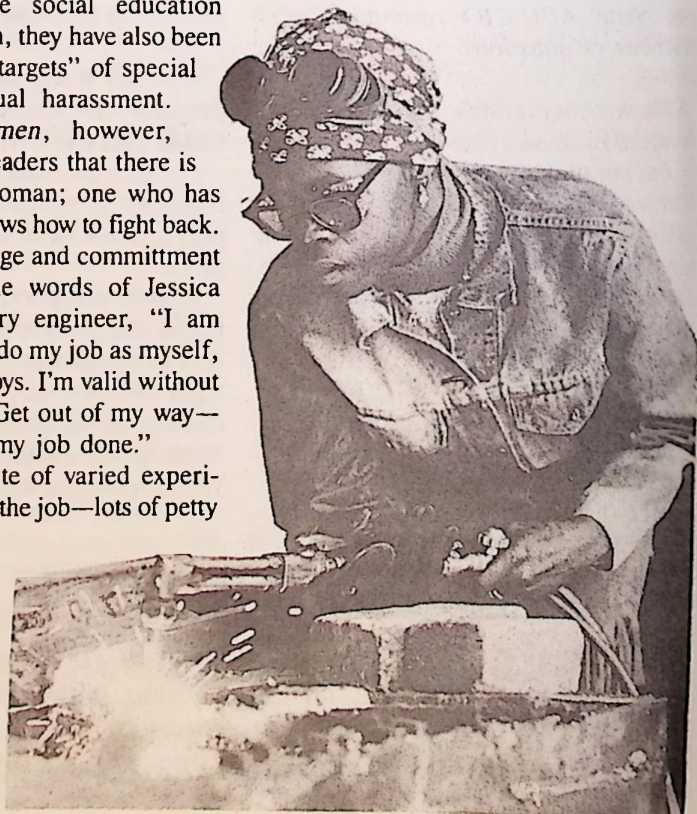
Individual courage and commitment are echoed by the words of Jessica Hopkins, stationary engineer, "I am here. I'm going to do my job as myself, not as one of the boys. I'm valid without their acceptance. Get out of my way—I'm trying to get my job done."

The women write of varied experiences with men on the job—lots of petty

and not-so petty irritations. But many also tell of male coworkers who are helpful and supportive.

The need for support, both organized and informal, is emphasized by most of these women as essential and credit groups such as "Women in the Trades" in Chicago, or the "Southeast Women's Employment Coalition" in Kentucky with helping them get their jobs and stick to them. (Over 600 women recently attended the 2nd National Women in the Trades Conference held in Chicago over the Memorial Day weekend.) A list of most of these support organizations are provided in the book's appendix.

In short, this book is about a lot of strong women. Mary Ruggiero, a welder, ends her story this way: "I'm now 68 and retired. We have five kids and eight grandchildren. My mother was a dressmaker and union activist. She was a fighter. My daughter works on the line for GM and she's a union activist, too. She told her union, 'We're all fighters in this family.' And it's true." **LT**



Sexual Harassment in the workplace:

Olivia Young fights for justice

By Jamala Rogers
St. Louis, Missouri

No area has suffered more from the Reagan-touch than the American workplace. Protective laws and programs have been gutted. Racial and sexual discrimination have been resurrected as a monstrous mutation of the affirmative action gains of the last twenty years. Early in his first term, after beating his chest as a unionbuster, Ronald Reagan declared racism a figment of the imagination. Governmental agencies, including the Justice Department and most recently the Supreme Court, made major shifts—to the right—to accommodate this derelict thinking. In addition to having little or no protective armor of legal rights, plaintiffs in discrimination cases now have the burden of proving "intent," a most intimidating feature which makes building a successful case almost impossible. It is in front of this backdrop that the tale of justice for Olivia Young unfolds.

In 1980, Olivia Young was a health professional employed by Janna Medical Systems as a consultant. On March 31, 1980, she attended a meeting to finalize a joint management training program between Janna and St. Louis University. Richard Stensrude, Chief Executive Officer of the University's medical center and four other executives attended the meeting. All five males present were white, Ms. Young, the only female, is African American.

During her presentation, Young was interrupted by Stensrude and asked if she would mind viewing a film that St. Louis University used to educate its nurses. Although her presentation was incomplete, Young reluctantly agreed. As the film was set up and began rolling, she witnessed lewd scenes with men and women engaged in explicit sex acts. Her shock and outrage quickly heightened as the men began to verbally assault her with obscene, vulgar and highly suggestive comments, such as, "We can make you feel like that, Olivia."

*"In typical fashion
in sex and race-
related cases the
finger of blame
was pointed at the
victim herself."*

The threat of an impending rape paralyzed Olivia Young with fear.

The film was the X-rated, pornographic movie, "Deep Throat." That day, that incident, changed Young's life forever.

It should be noted that St. Louis University is a Catholic institution with a longstanding, respectable history in the community. One would assume that Stensrude and his cohorts were governed by some moral and ethical code of



**Olivia Young
RN, MSN**

...with the transcripts from her trial.

conduct. To my knowledge, Stensrude was never reprimanded for his sick and degrading behavior. In fact, he was later promoted. St. Louis University never issued or offered an apology to Young or her family. The case has received considerable media attention, both local and national, yet the University has never issued a disclaimer of the act to the community at large.

The stress and strain of the emotional trauma began to take its toll immediately. March 31 was also the day for a celebration marking the wedding anniversary of Olivia and her husband of 13 years. The celebration was abruptly cancelled as Olivia futilely tried to understand and put into perspective what had happened to her earlier that day. The eventual break up of her marriage and the loss of her job were only the beginning of major disruptions in Olivia's life.

Experiencing uncontrollable angry outbursts and depression, she was compelled to seek professional counseling and treatment. She was diagnosed as suffering from post traumatic stress, a condition that made normal functioning a daily chore. With escalating medical bills, loss of income, and the frustration of a victim, Young decided to take her case before the courts

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Sexual Harassment . . .

Continued from page 17

to seek justice for herself and other women who have suffered similar dehumanizing treatment.

She soon discovered that she was outside federal guidelines to sue for racism or sexism because Stensrude and St. Louis University were not her employer. Unable to pursue that avenue, she filed an emotional distress petition in 1982. After being batted around between circuit court and state appeals court, she finally faced presiding Judge Richard Mehan in circuit. Mehan, his grandfather, father and son, are all graduates of St. Louis University. This "was not enough" to constitute conflict

the finger of blame was pointed toward the victim herself.

A few weeks ago, the Missouri Court of Appeals upheld the lower court's ruling that viewing of "Deep Throat" did not result in Olivia's mental problems.

Unbeknownst to St. Louis University and the American justice system, however, Olivia Young possesses the qualities of the legendary phoenix, continuing to rise from the dust to continue the fight. Those fortunate to personally hear Olivia talk about her case are captivated by her intense focus and quiet tenacity. While **The Justice for Olivia Young Coalition**, including

"The nature of all harassment in the workplace requires [union] locals to act with sensitivity and respect for personal privacy and the reputations of those involved, for often it raises deep emotions including hurt, anger, fear, humiliation and shock."

**From the report of the Human Rights Committee
The Newspaper Guild's 1989 Convention**

of interest, however.

The court refused to allow Young and her attorney, Mary Anne Sedey, to introduce as scientific evidence, the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association* which is the legally accepted foundation for diagnostic techniques. On the other hand, St. Louis University's team of psychiatric experts, put forth hearsay evidence. Dr. Ahmed El Toumi emphatically stated that since pornography is commonplace in society and harmless, Olivia Young's "over-reaction" to the "little practical joke" was due to genetics. El Toumi linked Young's emotional problems with that of her sister, who had been diagnosed as a schizophrenic at one time. In typical fashion with cases that are sex and race-related,

the Missouri chapters of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the National Organization for Women, the Methodist Ministers Alliance, Women for Racial and Economic Equality, Women Against Pornography, the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, and many others, has played a vital role in her defense, Young's unrelenting

"We cannot allow a verdict to stand that suggests such extreme and outrageous conduct is allowable in the workplace."

Labor Today readers can write or call Justice for Olivia Young Coalition, P.O. Box 13551, St. Louis, MO 63138, (314) 355-8738, to receive sample petitions and letters, to request a speaker, or to make a contribution.



determination has not been without painful and costly sacrifices. Olivia is a symbol of struggle and inspiration, but a martyr she is not. She is fighting to win.

Our court system is actively taking part in the corrosion of civil and human rights, whether they center around reproductive choice or protection from scabs. Young has vowed to take her case all the way to the Supreme Court, if necessary. "We cannot allow a verdict to stand," she has reiterated, "that suggests such extreme and outrageous conduct is allowable in the workplace and is not harmful to a normal, mentally healthy female adult. For society in general, and women in particular, we cannot afford to lose such an important case." **LT**

The reality of apartheid hits home

Conversation with a South African
labor organizer and educator—

by Ellen Jo Schur
Assistant Editor
Chicago Union Teacher (CUT)

Mr. Curtis Nkondo, President of the National Education Union of South Africa visited the Chicago Teachers Union officers and staff to discuss the political and educational situation in South Africa.

A leader in several anti-apartheid organizations, Mr. Nkondo is a prominent political activist in South Africa. In 1975, as principal of a Soweto secondary school, he used civil disobedience techniques when he refused to use Afrikaans as his language of instruction. In 1977, he led the mass resignation of hundreds of high school teachers in Soweto who were protesting a separate system of education in the bantustans or black homelands. He has been denied a teaching position since.

Mr. Nkondo visited the United States in June under the auspices of the International Visitor Program of the US Information Agency. His three-week visit included stops in Washington, DC, New Orleans, Atlanta, San Francisco and Sacramento. While in Chicago, he met with the Metropolitan Correction Facility, the PTA, De Paul University and church representatives, in addition to the Teacher's Union.

CUT: What is the status of education in South Africa today?

Nkondo: "It's difficult to separate education from politics, particularly in South Africa. Education is run by the same political and economic powers who control the means of production. It's a pillar of the apartheid system.

"In South Africa, the division is one school district for each bantustan, or

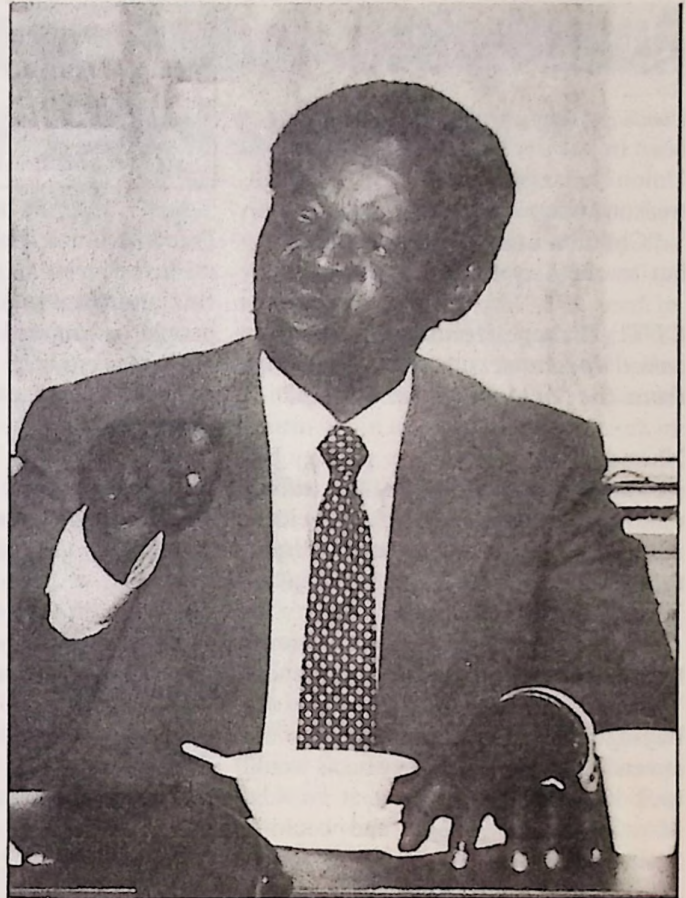
homeland state. There are 15 departments of education, along the lines of the "separate but equal" facilities in the early American South.

"White education prepares the whites

**"Sanctions will not
kill us. Apartheid
will and does."**

in power to believe they are superior. They are taught to rule and manage, that manual labor is for Blacks, not for them.

"Meanwhile, Blacks are taught to be domestics. Bantu education prepares them for subservient positions. They aren't taught math and science; they are



South African labor activist and president of the National Education Union of South Africa Curtis Nkondo visited the offices of the Chicago Teachers Union in June 1989 to discuss education under apartheid.

taught to accept instruction without question. They are manipulated, abused and dehumanized."

CUT: Can't the teachers end these practices?

Nkondo: "Every tribal group has a teachers' association. Our National Education Union, NEUSA, was established as an indictment of the racist system.

But the teachers who joined were harassed and detained by the state. We can't work within the system.

"Labor unions are effective because they can withdraw their labor, but many teachers have lost their jobs. They've taken away my way to earn a living. I've

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Apartheid . . .

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been in jail five times. Once the whole Union leadership was held on high treason without bail for nine months.

"Children in bantustans are illiterate, but teachers are out of work."

CUT: *Bishop Desmond Tutu has called for more powerful sanctions from the West. Would this help?*

Nkondo: "It's a hard line strategy but we need ways to make the ruling minority uncomfortable. Apartheid is not easy to dismantle. Who will throw the whites in power out of their jobs? Who will build the roads?"

"Guerilla strategies meant to annoy the government will result in bloodshed. We can withdraw our labor and our buying power, but we can't take to the streets. You'll see what the streets would look like. They will shoot at crowds. Most whites hate Blacks and wouldn't hesitate to shoot us.

"In 1960, they banned a peaceful protest. We were singing freedom songs.

Freedom songs, do you know what that means? The police arrived and opened fire into the crowds. They killed 69 people and injured hundreds.

"We need help from the Western powers. We must cause an economic collapse."

CUT: *We've been told the sanctions would only hurt the Blacks who would lose their jobs. Isn't that true?*

Nkondo: "It's not true that sanctions will kill us. Highly sophisticated people believe we are inferior. They will kill us first.

"Look at the reality in South Africa. The urban areas are all white. The remaining 13% of the land contains 87%

of the population—the Blacks. 30 million Blacks are manipulated by 4 million whites.

"We have nothing to lose. In the past thirty years, the economy has boomed, but Blacks are not sharing the prosperity. Multinationals have come in reaping enormous profits with increased investments and new technology. Yet the unemployment rate among Blacks continues to rise.

"Companies are disinvesting because labor strikes portend they will no longer be able to wreak sky high profits—they're not divesting for moral reasons."

CUT: *Is there work available?*

Nkondo: "The bantustans represent

Chicago Teachers Union President Jacqueline B. Vaughn met with Curtis Nkondo, a South African labor activist and president of the National Education Union of South Africa, and Jeffrey Prather (left), Mr. Nkondo's escort from the International Visitors Center in June 1989.



International labor conference calls for global solidarity

reservoirs of cheap labor, a dumping grounds for strikers and "trouble-makers." They are unproductive, crowded; starvation and diseases are high. The majority of children there are illiterate, putting Blacks at another disadvantage. One million children die before their first birthday.

"They transport strikers to a bantustan away from their families and hire new workers for less. The workers are taken far away to the mines; they live away from their families for six or 12 months. A man earns enough wages to pay his room and board. His family gets nothing.

"Weak families further weaken the Blacks' political position. It's genocide.

"Trade unions and powerful political organization could and do organize and mobilize people, but the government gets scared. They have introduced a state of emergency to restrict union organizing.

"The United Democratic Front (UDF), because of the state of emergency, is forbidden to meet. Even though I'm vice president, if I represent the UDF in South Africa, I risk detention or restriction."

CUT: *Aren't you taking a great risk to come here and talk with us?*

Nkondo: "Revolutions are a risk. The truth has to be told. This is the first time I've spoken about sanctions freely. If I said this in South Africa, I'd go to jail."

CUT: *What can we do to help?*

Nkondo: "Children are victims of apartheid from age five on. They cannot enter the same public schools as whites. We're talking to private school. The Catholic schools have agreed to lessen their elitist status to include low income children, but we do need funds to pay the tuition. We need money for books and supplies." **LT**

Reprinted with permission, Chicago Union Teacher, 1989

Almost under the nose of George Bush and the other leaders of the seven richest capitalist nations which met in Paris to agree on strengthening the transnational corporations without regard to national frontiers, another meeting of more than 200 trade union leaders from 20 nations was being held in Washington, DC which called for global labor solidarity to defend the workers against the transnationals.

The union gathering went unnoticed on the nightly news and in the daily papers, but its message, in the words of Jerry Zellhoefer, an economist for the International Confederation of Trade Unions (ICTU), can lead to "future collective bargaining with the transnational corporations on a global basis."

Michael Boggs, general secretary of the Brussels-based International Federation of Chemical Energy and General Workers (ICEF) told the unionists in Washington that transnational corporations are destroying the living standards of workers in both industrialized and developing nations. "We need to drop the boundaries that separate us to meet the challenges that confront us in the last decade of the 20th century."

Boggs urged the use of computerized

networks to provide instantaneous information for workers employed by the same transnational corporation anywhere in the world. "We need to keep in touch to expand global solidarity. . . We need to take the news of the Pittston coal miners strike to inform union members of the horrors in Virginia."

"The transnationals' best friends and allies are our governments," said R.A. Gingrich, national secretary of Canada's Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers. "We have the most reactionary government in the history of our country and they are moving very quickly to reshape Canada's economy."

The Conference on "Strategies for Global Solidarity" was co-sponsored by the ICEF and several other labor bodies affiliated with the ICTU, including the International Union of Food and Allied Workers, the International Federation of Journalists and the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers.

Union leaders from the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Federal Republic of Germany, the Scandinavian countries, Turkey, New Zealand and Australia, among others, took part in the conference. **LT**

South Africa is Here

The vitality of the United Mineworkers anti-apartheid boycott of Royal Dutch/Shell meets you head on in mining country. (Shell owns many coal mines in South Africa.)

A homemade sign nailed to a plywood shack next to a Pittston coal mine in Logan County, West Virginia sends the message:

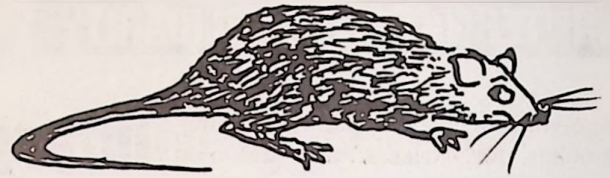


**BOYCOTT
SHELL**

**Stop Pittston
Stop Apartheid
Stop Scab Labor
South Africa is Here in USA**

Ideas from on the line

Playing the Rat



by **Berry Craig**
Kentucky journalist

Union carpenter Danny Hawkins loves playing the rat. "It definitely attracts more attention than just a picket sign," said Hawkins, a member of Carpenters Local 357 in Paducah, KY.

He's not kidding. Hawkins has been walking a picket line in a fuzzy gray rat suit, complete with a pot belly, pointy

nose, spindly tail and ratty teeth.

Unionists in the building trades call non-union contractors "rats." While the getup may look funny, Hawkins said its message is serious. "Seven out of ten people who notice you in the suit also take time to read the sign you are carrying," said Hawkins. "Reading the sign—that's the main idea."

The costume belongs to the Kentucky State District Council of Carpenters,

based in Frankfort, the state capital. State union officials loan it to locals across the state. Lately, it was the turn of Local 357, whose 500 members are from far western Kentucky. Local 357 used the suit to protest low wages and poor benefits paid by a non-union contractor building a fast food restaurant in Paducah, the region's largest town.

Dale Williams, the Carpenters State Council business representative and Local 357 member said that western Kentuckians will see more of the suit. "It is going to be used in conjunction with a handbilling campaign against the clients of non-union contractors," he said. Williams added that the suit is "an extension of our First Amendment rights of free expression. We are going to exercise our rights in peaceful protest."

Hawkins didn't know about the suit until he went to the union hall and heard volunteers were needed for an informational picket line. Williams invited him to try on the suit. "I volunteered," Hawkins said with a chuckle. "It was cold and that suit was really warm."

A photographer from the local paper, the *Paducah Sun*, spotted the rodent-suited Hawkins. The photo ended up on the front page of the 32,000-circulation paper. As a result, the union and its protest against the non-union contractor got instant, free publicity.

A *Sun* reporter said the suit "added a light, ironic touch to the serious business of picketing. Too often, the public wrongly views picketers as just troublemakers. A funny-looking suit is an imaginative way to get the public on the union's side."

Hawkins agreed that other unions, not just those in the building and construction trades, could put such a costume to good use on strike or on informational picket lines. Hawkins said few passersby, in cars or on foot, failed to notice him in the rat costume. "It got everybody's attention, from the first-graders to the senior citizens," he said. **LT**



Danny Hawkins (in rat suit) and Joe Sedlock, members IBC Local 357.

A National Holiday for Eugene V. Debs

By Charles Spencer
Associate Editor

It is quite universally known that any social movement, to be lasting and successful, must have a foundation deeply set in timeless values, and be regularly confirmed by the people it stands for. The third dimension of that foundation is its public legends, songs, heroes, anniversaries and martyrs.

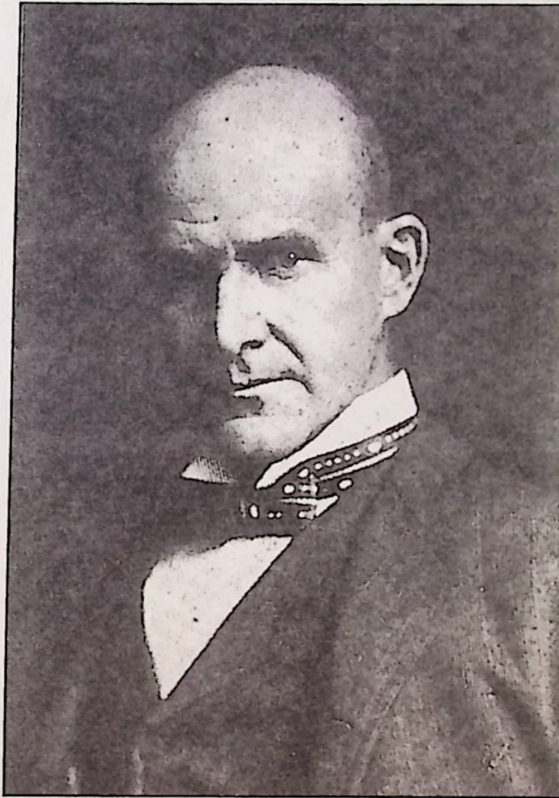
The Labor movement has not had an easy time forming such a foundation in the United States of America, due, in large measure, to the persistent, subtle, and far-reaching hostility from corporate interests, whose nightly recurring dream is of a "union-free environment." Corporate America's latest and most intoxicating dream is of some new technology to completely eliminate the working class, and once and for all do away with strikes, unions, Labor-African American unity, labor contracts, or any nasty notion of labor solidarity.

The United Mine Workers of America deserves a thumping salute for its campaign to commemorate its centennial (1890-1990) with a U.S. postage stamp of John L. Lewis, and the AFL-CIO is to be congratulated for its success in getting a postage stamp in honor of A. Phillip Randolph. While inching a bit closer to the respect which Labor rates, it seems that union-minded workers of this country are prepared to demand more in the way of recognition.

The campaign of the civil rights movement in our country to establish the birthdate of Dr. Martin Luther King as a national holiday is an inspiring model which many sections of the Labor movement had helped along, and from which Labor can learn how to establish a similar national holiday for one of labor's recognized heroes. It's "do-able,"

as they say.

In a labor agreement just concluded between the OCAW and its employees represented by CWA Local 7777, the birthday of Eugene V. Debs, along with



Eugene V. Debs

Dr. King's birthday, became paid holidays.

Now we're cooking! The time was bound to come, and it has!

The nation's schoolbooks rarely mention Eugene V. Debs. Corporate America, which jailed him several times, wants the memory of his name to be erased.

Eugene V. Debs is one of America's most respected and admired figures. Along with the Haymarket martyrs, William Z. Foster, John L. Lewis, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Big Bill Haywood, he prepared the road the labor movement was to travel—industrial unionism, labor solidarity, and worker's

control. He tirelessly fought the massed power of the railroads, the newspapers, the Federal courts, and the United States Army, and he went to prison for six months rather than obey a union-busting federal injunction to call off the strike that tied up the railroads in 1894. He spent several years in prison for opposing World War I, which, true to his Socialist principles, he denounced as a rich man's war and a poor man's fight.

In prison, Debs ran for President of the United States on the ticket of the Socialist Party, and with broad labor union support, Debs polled an astonishing one million votes.

A number of local and international unions in the country have in recent times shown their kinship with Eugene V. Debs, and have recognized his profound role in the development of the American trade union movement. Union officers regularly address annual Debs Day Dinners. The United Auto Workers has played a major role in memorializing the Debs homestead in Terre Haute, Indiana, and it has become a national shrine. Debs' rampageous proletarian spirit inspires organized labor throughout the world.

An Act of Congress to establish the birthdate of Eugene V. Debs as a national holiday will probably take some very special doing. But its time has come.

An abbreviated, pre-publication version of the above article was distributed at the recent UAW Convention in Anaheim, Calif. Comments from the delegates were varied, from "Debs? Who's he?" to "My grandpa voted for him in 1916." Labor Today would appreciate receiving readers' comments on the idea of a national labor holiday commemorating the legacy of Eugene V. Debs.

LT

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