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Class Struggle in Auto

articles from Workers Vanguard

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The UAW and the Crisis in Auto

The crisis of the U.S. automobile industry is an important, integral part of the crisis of U.S. capitalism as a whole. Faced with a declining rate of profit curtailing new investment and threatened with mounting foreign competition, notably Japanese, the future for U.S. auto companies is bleak unless they can expand investments abroad and heighten the exploitation of labor at home—at the expense of their foreign rivals and U.S. workers.

Nixon's aggressive economic policies of August 1971 were largely a response to the particular needs of U.S. auto makers, whose situation exemplified the needs of U.S. capitalism as a whole. Nixon sought to subsidize auto profits by curbing imports, paving the way for continued U.S. capital expansion overseas and ending the auto excise tax. Domestically, he ordered a wage freeze and an intensified "productivity" (read speed-up) campaign. Despite this attack on American workers for the sake of corporate profit, the United Auto Workers bureaucracy under Leonard Woodcock continues the Reutherite tradition of subordinating

the interests of the auto workers to those of capitalist production.

What's Good for GM Is Good for the Country?

Unlike the postwar U.S. economy as a whole, the auto industry had relatively high rates of growth, profit and increase in labor productivity. While subject to the same chronic slumps as the rest of the economy, the "Big 3" regularly returned a higher dividend rate to stockholders than other manufacturing companies. Yet in the last 20 years, this rate of growth has been steadily declining. Capitalist unwillingness to accept a declining rate of profit on invested capital prevented new investments and caused stagnation in labor productivity, which is dependent on the relative amount of capital investment per worker.

By the end of the Sixties, the auto industry was in a virtual state of disaster by capitalist standards. 1970 was especially bad: production was lower than at any time since 1961. 955 domestic new car dealers went broke for lack

of profits. GM's margin of profit on sales was lower before the auto strike of fall 1970 than in any year since 1946; and, most significantly, its 1970-71 profits on invested capital were down to 9.8 percent from 15.5 percent in 1969-70, 17.7 percent in 1968 and 25.2 percent in 1965 (Rothschild, "GM In More Trouble," *New York Review of Books*, 23 March 1972).

As U.S. auto headed into contraction and slump, foreign auto production was expanding. In 1955, the U.S. produced 72 percent of the world automobile output; in 1959, 52 percent and by 1969, 36 percent. Despite a massive effort to stem the flow of imports through the "productivity" drive and special product development to improve competitiveness, such as GM's costliest project ever to create the new "Vega," imports mounted. Despite GM's predictions that 1971 sales of foreign cars would only amount to 10 percent or 11 percent of the domestic market, they were *double* that figure by August. In the first year after the launching of the Chevrolet Vega and Ford Pinto "sub-compacts," Toyota sales increased 74 percent and Datsun's 108 percent.

Profits Are the Problem

At this juncture, the auto companies, along with American capitalism generally, demanded special measures to cope with the situation, including greater "productivity" sacrifices from American workers to make U.S. industry more competitive with its "cheap labor" rivals. But it is not the workers' lack of sacrifice that makes U.S. industry uncompetitive and unproductive; *it is the capitalist demand for profits*. Capitalists produce not when it is socially desirable or useful to do so, but only when it is *profitable* to do so.

Emma Rothschild, writing for the *New York Review of Books*, 25 February 1971 and 23 March 1972, provides useful information on this process as it applies to the U.S. auto industry, yet falls into the trap, in at least some of her conclusions, of seeing the basic cause of the crisis as saturation of

the market—the automobile glut which has provided the U.S. with at least one car for every 2-1/2 people. This over-production, Rothschild concludes, caused the drop in sales, which in turn led to lower profits, less investment incentive and stagnating productivity. Her statistics, however, show that U.S. auto companies still have a strong though shrinking edge over their foreign rivals in capital assets per employee. This means that the productivity of the American auto worker is greater than that of his foreign counterpart. It also means, however, that the *rate of profit* on new investment has been driven down, since profit is derived from labor, and the more productive the labor, the more initial capital investment is required to begin the labor process. While the immediate cause of falling profits in U.S. auto is the competition of foreign manufacturers, this takes place within the framework of the longer term phenomenon Marx described as the "tendency of the rate of profit to fall," affecting all capitalisms in all countries. It is this process, not the "glut" of the market, which halts productive new investment and brings on economic crises.

The "glut" of too many automobiles is apparent to any big-city dweller, especially one caught in a traffic jam. It is not the reason for lagging sales of automobiles, however. If cars were made cheaper through reduction in auto company profits, more people would buy them, since the need for adequate transportation is by no means "glutted." The opposite is true: massive new production is needed to entirely change the nature of the transportation system from one based on inefficient, polluting private vehicles to an efficient system of widespread mass transit, using clean power sources and private vehicles only in uncrowded areas. This task would require unified central planning and expropriation of auto and other transport industries by the workers. It is blocked only by the power of private capital—the handful of private owners of industry who must produce only what is immediately profitable to them.

The auto capitalists have two basic courses open to them as the squeeze of a falling rate of profit clamps down on them: I) seek to *export capital* overseas to take advantage of their competitors' "cheap" (but less productive) labor, or II) try to *drive up their rate of surplus value* (rate of exploitation).

I—The Drive to Export Capital

The drive to export capital in addition to cars is greater in the older U.S. companies than in their newer rivals, but all are headed in the same direction—toward the inevitable clash over limited investment fields. GM, which advertises the Vega as "a car built in America to American tastes," has subsidiaries producing for the U.S. in Germany, England, Australia, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and South Africa. 20 percent of GM output (including manual transmissions for the Vega) is produced outside North America and the percentage is rising. The other two of the "Big 3" import more components for their "anti-import" compacts, and Chrysler has contracted with a Japanese firm to produce the engines for Chrysler's entry into the diesel truck market. GM may have the biggest foreign ambition of all: beating Japan to the China market. It is already well down the road toward this central U.S. strategy, with sales of heavy duty equipment to China through an Italian associate and setting up of operations in South Korea, Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Japan itself.

European and Japanese companies, too, are fighting for new markets for sales and investments, but even as they gain headway in the U.S. market—especially vital for Japan—they face Nixon's retaliation on behalf of the U.S. bourgeoisie. Worldwide expansion will not lead to the "rushing toward alliances" envisioned by *Automotive News*, except in the short-run sense of overseas mergers now being actively pursued even in Japan by U.S. companies. Rather, it tends toward a life-or-death struggle for control of the world between the major capitalist powers. Like Nixon's August 1971 challenge to U.S.

trading partners, the clash of the world's auto giants, which are a vital center of the capitalist industrial system, forewarns the approach of yet another, perhaps final, inter-imperialist war for redivision of the world.

II—Productivity and the Rate of Exploitation

The *rate of exploitation* is determined by the ratio expressing the part of the working day the worker receives back in wages and the part acquired by the boss. This concept is also known as the *rate of surplus value*. One means of increasing this rate is to increase the productivity of labor without the worker expending any more energy or time. Raising productivity means investing in new labor-saving machinery (usually accompanied by layoffs to reduce the overall work force).

It is possible, however, to increase the capitalist's profits (*his* part of the day) without increasing productivity through (1) increasing the amount of work performed in the day (speed-up); (2) cutting wages; (3) prolonging the working day. The demand for "productivity" through speed-up and other workers sacrifices is a major capitalist hoax. Even when the capitalists do stop their phony howling for more "productivity" from the workers to actually engage in productive investments, layoffs and intensification of work are again the usual results for the workers.

Therefore, *to concentrate only on wage gains linked to productivity increases, while allowing layoffs, speed-ups and compulsory lengthening of the working day to proceed unchecked, as the UAW bureaucracy has done virtually since its inception, is to follow exactly the capitalists' demands.* Their essential interests are advanced, while those of the workers suffer. Nevertheless, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall is only *temporarily* slowed by these measures. The inevitable crisis will come, whether in the form of a new world war or an intensified depression or both; and when it does, the workers

will be disarmed and unprepared by a policy of capitulation.

Bureaucratic Treachery in UAW

The UAW bureaucratic elite, which was cast into an impervious leaden mass and draped in pious social-patriotism and liberal hypocrisy by Walter Reuther, has indeed been most effective in lashing the workers to the fortunes of their capitalist opponents. GM responded to the present crisis in the U.S. with two fists: Lordstown and GMAD. The \$100-million new factory complex at Lordstown, Ohio to produce Vegas was designed to raise actual labor productivity, while the special General Motors Assembly Division (GMAD) management team was created to drive up the rate of exploitation through layoffs and speed-up at Lordstown and throughout the GM system. The UAW leadership considered itself a slightly critical *partner* in both these forms of capitalist aggression against the auto workers, rather than an opponent.

Because the Lordstown experiment was the most expensive project of its kind ever undertaken by a U.S. corporation and a key test in the capitalist "productivity" drive against foreign competitors, the events at the specially designed, super-fast and (supposedly) super-efficient plant since the arrival of the GMAD management team, leading to a strike last February, were well publicized in the capitalist press. Intensification of work through the elimination of "unproductive" motion, etc., was made intolerably worse by GMAD's further intensification through layoffs, increased work loads, and victimization of those who couldn't keep up. Less well known is the fact that these policies are commonplace at other GMAD plants throughout the industry, and that many other locals, such as Norwood, Ohio and Buick Local 599 in Flint, Michigan were considering strike action over similar grievances at about the same time as

the Lordstown workers. The UAW bureaucracy managed to stall the others so that Lordstown, and then the Norwood local after it, struck *separately*. This UAW policy is precisely what GMAD wants—isolated strikes to break morale and force the workers to accept layoffs and speed-ups. GMAD itself sparked six such strikes in 1969 alone.

The Absurdity of Isolation

The workers at Lordstown, Norwood and other plants throughout the Midwest, know the absurdity of one local union trying to defeat management policies by striking alone, especially against a giant like GM. The Lordstown strike, besides forcing GM to close Fisher Body plants in Syracuse, Buffalo and Detroit, began to affect steel production in Youngstown and Warren (where 5,000 tons of steel per week is produced for Lordstown) and tire production in Akron (Vegas take 10,000 per day). The Lordstown strikers received the support of the 10,000-member IUE Local 717 in Warren, representing GM workers who make electrical wiring harnesses and other assemblies for Vegas, as well as that of many other workers in industries throughout the country. The youthful and militant Lordstown strikers themselves showed imagination and recognition of the need for *international* solidarity of workers: they wanted to send delegations to get the support of striking West Coast dockers and Japanese auto workers. Not only was this request refused by the UAW bureaucracy, which sends its bureaucrats on international pleasure trips in the name of fighting multi-national corporations, but "Solidarity" House finally succeeded in railroading the Lordstown strikers back to work with the speed-up unchanged, compulsory overtime to nine hours a day, the disciplinary layoffs (DLO's) unresolved and the other 800 laid-off workers somehow "lost" in a supposed "miscount" of the actual number laid off! (Union bureaucrats *never* miscount their *dues-paying* members!)

Recognizing the central importance

to the auto companies of the kind of cost-cutting campaigns conducted by GMAD, the UAW bureaucracy, in keeping with its general policy of partnership in the main interests of capitalism, remains consistently soft on this monster. Exasperated by the UAW tops' inaction in the face of the GMAD assault, one lower-level bureaucrat (the secretary of UAW Local 34, GMAD, in Atlanta) complained:

"Since we were changed from Fisher Body and Chevrolet Division of General Motors Assembly Division we have experienced not only much difference in bargaining with the Company but also a marked difference in the attitude of our upper leadership.... Leadership should not mean followship and that is the way it appears to the members of Local 34, especially since we have been GMAD.... We... believe our leadership has reached a place of complacency...."

—*The United National Caucus,*
Special Convention Issue, April 1972

The UAW bureaucracy's position is not fundamentally different from right-wing AFL-CIO protectionism. Both put the national interests of U.S. corporations above international labor solidarity. This leaves the bureaucrats open to attack from the right, as evidenced by the many locally-endorsed protectionist resolutions submitted to the 1972 convention. The bureaucrats have no answer except to sweep the whole problem under the rug or capitulate to the right. The March 1972 issue of *UAW Solidarity* ran an article entitled, "We're Still Not Fonda Honda," which reported that because of some unspecified UAW influence, Honda had announced a reduction in the workweek for its employees. There was no mention of the need to establish *concrete* links of solidarity with Japanese workers, or of the need for a shorter workweek in the U.S.

As to layoffs, 100 UAW workers walked off an assembly line in Detroit to protect the jobs of five fired workers. But the UAW "leadership," faced with the closing of Fisher Body plant No. 23 in Detroit, threatening "most" of 1,100 jobs *permanently*, offered a two-

fold response: 1) they "demanded" that the mayor set up a "Jobs For Detroit Committee," which they then sat on, and 2) they called for a federal law to "force" runaway plants to apply for a federal permit before they run away! The latter point would obviously make runaway plants perfectly legal, providing the bureaucrats with an iron-clad excuse for not opposing them. Instead of relying on strike action to fight the layoffs which have put 300,000 auto workers out of work and caused a 15 percent drop in UAW membership—despite an actual *increase* in production so far in 1972—the bureaucracy looks to the capitalist class and its politicians to save it from its plight. Said Woodcock to the Joint Economic Committee of Congress in 1971, "...it is up to you and to your decisions that we look for the leadership... which our country needs..." (*UAW Solidarity*, March 1971).

Woodcock Ignores Ranks

The auto worker ranks never endorsed this bureaucratic policy of cooperating with the capitalist enemy and its political stooges. Many have outspokenly opposed it at every step of the way, but the bureaucracy hears little and forgets the rest. When Nixon declared his wage freeze, 2,000 auto workers from Illinois and Iowa demonstrated, including Local 997 Maytag workers from Newton, Iowa who had just completed a five-month strike. The latter demanded a nationwide strike against the freeze. Although showing his "left" face at the time, Woodcock chose to completely ignore this demand.

GM Contract Betrayal

The contract agreed to by the UAW tops to end the 1970-71 GM strike was typical of the pattern of cooperation with capitalism. It provided some wage gains and limited cost-of-living protection against inflation, but completely sold out on speed-ups, layoffs and working conditions. The grievance procedure was actually weakened, compul-

sory overtime was maintained despite promises to eliminate it, and 30 demands for improved safety and working conditions were simply dropped altogether. As stated in the introduction to the contract: "General Motors holds that the basic interests of employers and employees are the same." Brother Woodcock couldn't agree more.

Carnival in Atlantic City

If anyone still had doubts about the treacherous nature of the UAW bureaucracy after the betrayal of the GM national and Lordstown strikes, the April 1972 UAW convention in Atlantic City should have dispelled them. Despite the defeat at Lordstown, massive grievances, speed-ups, layoffs, etc. throughout the auto industry, and an on-going strike at Norwood, Ohio, over these very questions, the convention payed virtually no attention to the vital interests of auto workers. The nearly 3,000 delegates, almost entirely local union officials and a few of their hangers-on, spent most of their time listening to capitalist politicians, passing meaningless resolutions for the *politicians* to act on and going to booze parties. It was left to *Kennedy* to note in an address to the convention that conditions on the auto assembly lines are so bad that workers are sometimes forced to *run* to keep up with them.

"Don't Worry About Your Contracts, Leonard"

Woodcock's dull State of the Union address to an inattentive audience emphasized his pro-capitalist ideology. Referring to inflation, Woodcock asserted that "labor, fighting to recapture its eroded position, began to be part of the problem...." He criticized the 1970 Teamster wildcat victory of a \$1.85 hourly increase as inflationary, and wondered aloud why the Pay Board had been critical of the Aerospace pact, since:

"UAW contracts, I repeat and insist, are socially responsible, are counter-

inflationary; the leading industrial spokesman on the Pay Board, Mr. Virgil Day, said to me, 'Don't worry about your contracts, Leonard, they are on the side of the angels.'"

The first day of the convention was devoted mainly to post-mortem worship of Walter Reuther, and included the showing "for the first time anywhere" of a film about his life—some of it. The film reminded the delegates that the union wasn't built on wage demands alone, but on the struggle against speed-up and intolerable working conditions—implying, of course, that all this had been taken care of the minute Reuther left the auto plants and became a union bureaucrat.

The Heritage of Walter Reuther

Reuther was a bureaucratic *leader* whose accomplishment was to forge an impervious bureaucracy to control a powerful, lively and sometimes "unruly" union. He didn't change conditions on the auto assembly lines; he did succeed in deadening the union. Woodcock is an equally bureaucratic *follower* whose accomplishment will be to preside over the disintegration of that bureaucracy (it is already beginning to crack) until he is discarded, or thrown out of office by the auto workers. There is a tendency on the part of dolts like *Daily World* columnist George Morris to assume that Woodcock represents a shift to the right away from Reutherism who is unable to carry forward the "progressive tradition" of the UAW. Says Morris: "...the pace of decline in the UAW's relative progressiveness... has increased since Leonard Woodcock stepped into the union's presidency (*Daily World*, 4 May 1972). What Morris is trying to cover up beneath an elaborate, phony theory of "good-guy" progressive trade-union bureaucrats like Reuther vs. "bad-guy" reactionaries like Meany, is that Woodcock represents absolutely *nothing new*: Reuther did it all, in a much slimmer fashion, long ago.

It was Reuther who firmly estab-

lished bureaucratic one-man rule in the UAW in 1949, after years of lively and relatively democratic factional struggle. His complacent slogan, "teamwork in the leadership and solidarity in the ranks," which is so highly touted by his squabbling heirs, was the drapery that concealed his steamrolling, in one way or another, of all those who dared oppose him. It was Reuther who laid the groundwork for Woodcock's betrayal on Nixon's Pay Board by thoroughly establishing the "principle" of class-collaboration and participation on every available government board and agency—during World War II, the Korean War and in between. It was Reuther, too, who established once and for all the "tradition" of linking wages to increases in

ernment witchhunting agencies such as HUAC!

"People's Car"— "Peoples" Capitalism

It was Reuther who established the slick social-patriotism which characterizes the UAW bureaucracy today. His biographers emphasize how he was always coming up with "Reuther plans" to make things work better for the capitalists, such as getting fighter plane engine production on an assembly-line basis during World War II and drastically reducing the amount of labor time required in the boring of tank cannon and artillery. A more recent example, which would be ludicrous if



Walter
Reuther (left),
Leonard
Woodcock



—AP/Wide World Photo

productivity and letting working conditions go to hell. Those who praise Reuther's "achievements" also boast of reversing many of his distinctive "achievements"—contracts as long as five years (over the original one or two) with separate termination dates for the major companies, no-strike and "company security" clauses imposed in defiance of explicit convention decisions, taking wage cuts under pressure and bargaining away cost-of-living protection. It was Reuther, moreover, who rode to power and stayed there as one of the worst red-baiters in the labor movement, combining with reactionaries and racists in and out of the labor movement to defeat his opponents, even setting them up for persecution by gov-

it weren't serious, demonstrates clearly how Reuther's "leftism" was only designed to make U.S. capitalism more efficient. Concerned about the threat that imports posed to U.S. auto capitalists from the very beginning, Reuther proposed that the major auto makers be permitted to set up a joint-venture corporation to produce a "people's car" to compete with Volkswagen. This would turn back the import threat, help sales and profits, fight unemployment and strengthen the U.S. balance-of-payments position. "[Lyndon] Johnson was impressed..." (Cormier and Eaton, *Reuther*, 1970, p. 365).

Reuther was a "new-style" bureaucrat, unlike old-line AFL leaders (like Tobin, Hutcheson, Green, etc.), who

could never have kept power in a union like the UAW. Without ruling out open suppression of opponents, he generally used more subtle means to stay in power. He pretended to agree with a position or program he actually opposed, to avoid an honest confrontation of views. He used "tactical" and organizational excuses to defeat principled demands such as the creation of a labor party, a shorter workweek at no loss in pay, opposition to class-collaboration, etc., so he could sabotage them later. This was the school in which Woodcock learned to whine out of both sides of his mouth.

Reutherite Slime: Food for Liberals

Reuther succeeded by combining militant phraseology and social demagoguery with maneuvering, trickery and cunning. Probably his most important single "achievement" was at the 1944 convention, where his trickery prevented the UAW from discarding the wartime no-strike pledge, thereby beheading the powerful class-struggle momentum which was strongest in the UAW ranks. His use of social demagoguery and his ability to conceal undemocratic acts under a cloak of pseudo-democracy made him popular with intellectuals and liberals. He was regarded as a man of "social vision" because of his fluency in blocking or confusing the discussion of class-struggle policies and cloaking his basically *conservative, bureaucratic* machine in an aura of social and political progressive rhetoric.

Reuther's fundamental opportunism was established as early as the 1936 convention when, as a newly elected executive board member, he covertly aided John L. Lewis' pressure to overturn the convention's pro-labor party and anti-Roosevelt position in order to appear "respectable." From that point on, his position on the labor party was always, "Now is not the time." With this excuse he supported the Democrats and finally, at the 1955 CIO convention, with the ranks disillusioned and demoralized—and the CIO bureaucrats

eager to prove their respectability to their soon-to-be marriage partners in the AFL—Reuther's real position came out: "A labor party would commit the American political system to the same narrow class structure upon which the political parties of Europe are built.... Basically what we are trying to do is work within the two-party system of America..." he said. So it was that a great industrial union was brought back to the reformist cretinism of Samuel Gompers.

The Old Opposition

There has been a long history of opposition to reformism and bureaucracy in the UAW, even extending through the Reuther-dominated cold-war years, when other unions were more easily cowed. Auto workers demonstrated their contempt for the cold-war witch-hunt when, at the height of it, they came out in force to defend a small strike in Detroit being baited as "communist" and attacked by the police. UAW oppositionists spoke out against the Korean War at the time, and the leadership of the giant Ford Local 600 staged a long rebellion against Reuther, emphasizing among other things the demand for a labor party. Yet at no time during this period did the opposition manage to forge a permanent, cohesive organized force based on a principled program. Without a consistent anti-bureaucratic and anti-capitalist perspective, the groups tended to come and go, some selling out to Reuther's bureaucracy, others leaving the labor movement. A long-term political focus and basic cadre for *overthrowing* the bureaucracy and replacing it with revolutionary working-class leadership was lacking.

The New Opposition

The new opposition is destined to travel the same road as the old, unless it learns the lessons of the past. Many caucuses exist ("Rank and File for Progress," "Action Caucus," etc.), but the only serious political opposition to the machine at the 1972 convention came

from the United National Caucus (UNC). The UNC is loosely structured and based on previous caucuses, particularly Art Fox's caucus in the skilled trades unit of Local 600, but it represents the fusion of diverse forces and new ideas. Fox himself, no longer the sole leader, publicly spurns his own opportunist past without having changed one iota. The new caucus has a relatively advanced program on paper, with demands for 30 for 40, no labor participation on government boards, immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Southeast Asia, and for a labor party. It prides itself on efforts to become integrated and to develop programs to combat racism from a working-class standpoint. Yet the caucus incorporates the grossest opportunism within its ranks because of failure to appreciate the true nature of its tasks.

With no membership requirements beyond dues payment, the UNC stands open to many completely contradictory, even counterposed political tendencies and to careerists simply looking for an avenue to personal power. Many of the latter, like the frustrated candidate for president of Local 600 who received special speaking rights at the UNC caucus meeting at the '72 convention, are fully embroiled in suing the union in the capitalist courts, a basic class betrayal which can only increase the tendency toward government control over the unions. Illusory, immediate or personal gains may sometimes be won in this way, but the workers will never advance under this cop-out masquerading as a "tactic": in fact, rank-and-file control will be blocked and militants victimized, as bureaucratic control is supplanted by direct government supervision from judges to "arbitrators" to HUAC-style inquisitors. Bureaucracy must be fought by rank-and-file caucuses based on a principled program of struggle *within* the labor movement to defend it against all interference from the capitalists and their state machinery.

Despite UNC labor party rhetoric, a leaflet issued by the League of Cau-

causes at the convention contained a statement which could easily be construed as backhanded endorsement of, or at least softness toward, a "reforming" orientation toward the Democratic Party. In "An Open Letter to the Membership of the UAW," the League declared:

"All over the United States, the people are in motion, trying to make institutions which are important to them (such as the Church, School, Political Party) more democratic, more sensitive and responsive to their needs."

And in response to the convention's grant of honorary UAW membership to Senator Edward Kennedy, UNC leader Art Fox declared that the caucus was considering making New York Democratic Representative Bella Abzug an honorary UNC member!

Convention Maneuvers

Because of the UNC's loose attitude toward program, it largely succumbed to pressure to drop most of its program at the convention in favor of support to a referendum system for the election of all UAW officers (instead of delegated elections at conventions), a position endorsed by 13 local unions prior to the convention. The referendum position has a history in the UAW (it got more support in '68 than in '72), and gave the UNC the opportunity of appearing to head a powerful movement beyond the limited scope of its own forces. To aid this opportunist impulse, the UNC set up a "League of Caucuses" before the convention, based on only two points: the referendum vote question and a court-suit campaign against the union on the retiree-vote question (the retiree vote is used by the bureaucracy to maintain conservatism and even overturn the wishes of the working majority, as happened in a recent Local 600 election). Thus the UNC's more radical and class-conscious paper positions were revealed as empty rhetoric to be dropped at the first opportunity in favor of a power bloc around abstract "democracy"—the *real* program of the UNC.

Although some UNC members re-

gretted it, and the "League" didn't function as an organization on the convention floor, the UNC itself concentrated on a push to get the referendum question on the floor. This effort was quashed by the bureaucracy in high-handed fashion, leaving the UNC with little to show for its effort. Some Caucus leaders, such as co-chairman Pete Kelly, who spoke from the floor for the labor party, seemed more concerned about the struggle for the full Caucus program; yet none were willing to fight *inside* the Caucus for a split with the careerists and reformists, politically hardening the better elements.

Real Meaning of Referendum Proposal

The referendum proposal *appears* to make the union more democratic by placing decision-making power directly in the hands of the ranks. A sheer illusion! A referendum system is in fact *less* democratic in that it reduces the decision-making body to dispersed and isolated individuals who never come together in a discussion in which counterposed proposals and programs are debated. Union policy is thus determined by polling the existing consciousness rather than a process of political struggle. One need only look at the ossified National Maritime Union (NMU) or the rigid Steelworkers Union, both of which use the system, to see its effects. The backers of the referendum answer by combining the referendum slogan with other democratic demands, such as unlimited free access to union periodicals for opposition groups, etc.—but who is to say that these demands will be any safer under a different structure as long as the same bureaucracy is running headquarters?

The UNC should study the history of the referendum issue in the UAW; it was *precisely* through a *referendum* promise that Reuther got the 1944 convention to reverse itself and endorse the no-strike pledge! Once the convention was over nothing mattered—its will had been subverted and it was dis-

persed. A bureaucracy in power can manipulate a referendum system ten times more easily than it can dominate a rebellious convention. If adopted, the referendum system would immediately disarm the rank-and-file opposition by *separating* the *choosing of leaders* from the *making of decisions* at national conventions, thereby enabling a bureaucracy to remain in power through stalling, mobilizing backward elements, etc. Oppositionists should shun such gimmicks like the plague, and concentrate on the serious political work among the ranks required to get committed, principled delegates to the conventions.

Two Methods

The UNC on the referendum question is one example of orientation toward immediate advantage as opposed to a long-term struggle based on firm *principles*. Failure to make the right choice will lead the UNC into making a much more serious and costly mistake: opportunist adaptation to a wing of the reformist bureaucracy as against a serious anti-bureaucratic perspective, again, *based on principles*, not "tactical" advantage. Already the method of jaded ex-radicals such as Fox and his fake-left supporters in the International Socialists (IS) is clearly toward following rifts in the bureaucracy and seeking a broad, unprincipled bloc with one wing of a *deep* split in the UAW bureaucracy. Fox openly expresses (and the IS pants for) the possibility of a unification of the UNC with ex-Western Regional Director Paul Schrade and his supporters, who, according to the *Daily World* include Emil Mazey and other prominent members of the International leadership.

When a bureaucracy splits, both wings, especially those who are "out" and want to get back "in," try to appear to be to the left of the other, in order to gain or retain power. Schrade, dumped with Woodcock's blessings at the '72 convention, was always indistinguishable from the other bureaucrats on "trade-union" questions but active in the antiwar movement and generally a

liberal *outside* the union. Schrade had gone along with the rest of the bureaucracy in selling out the Aerospace workers, whose contract was scotched by the Pay Board upon which Woodcock continued to sit. Unfortunately for Schrade, most of the Aerospace workers happen to be in his region. Schrade furthermore made the mistake of not supporting Woodcock for president following Reuther's death. Therefore, ambitious bureaucrats from the apparatus

either wing of such a meaningless, bureaucratic split. The *Daily-World* (Communist Party) and the *Militant* (ex-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party) both tended to favor Schrade, since they are both primarily motivated by building popular-front coalitions of liberal capitalist politicians and "left" trade-union bureaucrats like Schrade who, they like to think, represent workers in the antiwar movement. Said the *Militant*, "The issue was right-wing

Supporters of sit-down strikers arrive from other auto and steel plants, 1937.



in Schrade's region were allowed to take over unhindered, accusing Schrade of "not paying enough attention to union issues," which was hardly the problem.

"Left" Circus on Schrade's Ouster

Schrade is no better or worse than his accusers; his liberalism has simply served for many years to help shroud with a thicker fog of Reutherite social demagogy the bureaucratic betrayals which he and the rest have jointly perpetrated on the workers. Yet the various fake-left organizations, in their grasping after straws for various self-serving and opportunist purposes, present a ludicrous example of the lengths to which one can go—and the depths to which one can sink—in tailing after

opposition to Schrade's positive role as an activist in social movements, not a militant opposition to his role as a bureaucrat" (12 May 1972).

The wretched "Workers" League, however, although it supports the pop front antiwar movement and blocs with the bourgeoisie to attack "Stalinism" in the movement, is more concerned than these others in going after the real source of bureaucratic power as rapidly as possible. The WL tended to support Whipple, who defeated Schrade, seeing a possible direct route to the core of the UAW leadership itself. Although it later declared that all parties concerned (Woodcock, Schrade, Whipple) were wings of the bureaucracy, the WL's initial reaction in the 1 May 1972 *Bulletin* was very emphatic: "UAW Rebels Dump Woodcock Man" screamed a front-page headline, over an article

calling Whipple's victory a "...rebellion [which] reflects a deep dissatisfaction among rank and file members. ..." The *Bulletin* neglected to mention that Whipple, too, was a "Woodcock man" (perhaps even more so than Schrade), and was a top member of the "Schrade team" itself until shortly before the "rebellion." The WL tails the UNC bandwagon in order to imply that its positions have influence there. The 1 May 1972 *Bulletin* printed an interview with a UNC member headlined, "UAW Ranks Speak Out on Labor Party—National Caucus Member: Bosses Control Democrats." Unfortunately, in small type in the body of the article is revealed the ambivalence characteristic of the UNC:

"*Bulletin*: Who do you think controls the Democratic and Republican parties?

"Maddox: I think big business does, but I think there should be a national caucus of the working people and give our vote to whatever party is going to do our bidding whether Republican or Democratic."

The WL is also more than eager to drop its erstwhile—and incorrect—characterization of all black caucuses as simply "reactionary," when organizational advantage beckons. Its 24 April *Bulletin* features prominently, and without criticism, an interview with Nat Mosley, chairman of the Black Caucus in Local 25, St. Louis, under the headline "Auto Worker Demands Labor Party!"

Sliding Scale of Social-Patriotism

Some UNC members seem to have learned literally nothing from either the history of past oppositions in the UAW or the whole development of "Reutherism." Reuther's chief method for holding power was to pass off his social-democratic and patriotic schemes for making capitalism work better ("serve the people") as a substitute for the working class struggling in its own name for its own interests.

One finds a remarkably close resemblance between Reutherite demagoguery and statements of supposedly "left" UNC leaders. Caucus Co-chairman Jordan Sims, a black Local 961 worker who was fired by Chrysler for his militancy, said, "...you recognize one thing: to make *your America* great, to make it *productive*, to make it serve you and benefit you—you're not going anyplace without me or someone like me" (*UNC*, April 1972, emphasis ours). This bit of social-patriotic demagoguery was not only featured prominently on

The Sliding Scale of Social-Patriotism

Reuther: "...America is a society...in which we do not have this rigid class structure.... Basically what we are trying to do is work within the two-party system of America..." (1955)

Woodcock: (on inflation) "...labor, fighting to recapture its eroded position, began to be part of the problem..." (1972)

Sims: (Co-chairman of United National Caucus) "...to make your America great, to make it productive...you're not going anyplace without me or someone like me." (1972)

Fox: (United National Caucus) "We are fighting to save our union, and, in a broader sense, to save our country." (1972)

the front page of the special convention issue of the Caucus paper, but was also picked up and quoted *without criticism* by the UNC's chief outside supporters, the IS, in *Workers' Power* No. 52. The IS has once more demonstrated the existence of a social-democratic *and patriotic* (and therefore anti-communist) continuum through which it, as the extreme left-wing representatives of this social democracy, is linked with an indissoluble political umbilical cord to the right-wing anti-communist social democrats such as the very heirs of Reuther. As it so easily sells out today to tail after the relative small fry like Fox and Sims, all the greater will be its betrayals tomorrow to the Schrades, Mazeys, Woodcocks and Reuthers.

As if this weren't enough, Fox added his bit to the social-patriotic, Reutherite bandwagon by pointing out quite seriously in the UNC caucus meeting at the '72 convention that, "We are fighting to save our union and, in a broader sense, to save our country." He has yet to find, in his search for any fake-left handle with which to smash every last shred of his radical background, the answer to the question: what is "ours" in the most powerful imperialism of the world?

The IS, which eagerly built public meetings for Fox in several cities, refrained as usual from attacking him for his wretched social-chauvinist remark or any other aspect of his opportunism, happy to present this cynical reformist in the role of working-class leader in exchange for a chance to brag about its informal ties to Fox—a

"real" (and "influential") "militant" worker!

Program and Party

The UNC cannot achieve its objectives—*even partially*—with a partial perspective. To defeat a well-entrenched bureaucracy, which well understands its central role of containing the class struggle within bounds acceptable to capitalism, requires a *full program of struggle against the system*, not just for "saving" the union or reforming the country. No aspiring "democratic" bureaucrats can provide a definitive programmatic break from all forms of labor-capital "partnership." Without such a break the most honest, decent and democratic oppositionist will be driven into the Reutherite swamp, whining over the lot of the wage slaves while supporting their slave-holders. To ensure that the programmatic requirements for achieving working-class power and not "partnership" are maintained, such caucuses must be linked to the revolutionary vanguard party, which struggles in all arenas of society for a revolutionary program leading to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of workers power. While the caucus cannot normally advance the full program of workers' revolution in its day-to-day work, *it must uncompromisingly carry out a transitional program which is fully consistent with the revolutionary goal*. It is such a party and such caucuses that the Spartacist League and its youth section, the Revolutionary Communist Youth, seek to build. ■

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard*
No. 9, June 1972

UAW Is Target in '73 Contract Battles

GMAD Rampage Continues

Woodcock Prepares Defeat for Auto Workers

In 1973 contracts for 4.1 million of the 10.6 million workers under major union agreements will expire. These contracts are in the most crucial capitalist industries: auto, railroad, rubber, electrical machinery, food, printing and publishing, gas and electric utilities, construction, trucking and airlines.

Thus the trade unions face a crucial battle in 1973. The U.S. capitalists, competing with each other and with the bourgeoisies of the other capitalist countries for profits and markets around the world, have already thrown down the gauntlet. Nixon has ominously warned that the "era of permissiveness" is at a close, and that he will not "indulge" his "children," the American people. In this he is joined by his liberal bourgeois colleagues in the Democratic Party, who will undoubtedly renew Nixon's authority to impose wage

controls, which expire on 30 April 1973.

Knowing Nixon will need their help to secure this renewal, the labor bureaucrats are already offering to make a deal. At the merest hint of cooperation from Nixon, George Meany led his AFL-CIO cronies back onto the National Productivity Commission, the business, government and "public" members of which are currently assessing opinion in the capitalist class to determine what form of controls can be gotten away with in the coming year to curb union demands. Meany and friends had walked off this Commission when they walked off the Pay Board. Now, in a private meeting at the White House, they have offered to end opposition to the controls in exchange for more "equity," i.e., a better show at "controlling" prices (*New York Times*, 21 December 1972).

As if to underline the point—in case anyone doubted—that there are no basic differences between liberal ex-pro-McGovern bureaucrats like Woodcock of the UAW and Nixon-backers like Meany, the UAW sent vice-president Greathouse to "represent" auto work-

ers at Meany's private White House meeting. Woodcock, in fact, is one of the few labor bureaucrats who never left the Productivity Commission, despite the UAW's pre-election pretense of militancy and opposition to the controls and the Pay Board (see *WV* No. 12)!

Under the so-called "wage-price" controls thus far, wage increases have been kept below the 5.5% annual limit, while food prices in particular have been allowed to soar to new heights, up 10% in 1972 alone. And if controls can't be maintained, the chief economist of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Carl H. Madden, warns that the government must be prepared to curb "monopoly labor power." Clearly the U.S. capitalist class is gearing up for a decisive confrontation to break the back of working-class resistance, and in this endeavor they have the complete cooperation of all the misleaders of labor!

Bureaucratic Response to GMAD

Crucial to the battle in 1973 is the contract of 750,000 auto workers in the UAW, which comes up for negotiation in July. Already in 1972, the UAW faced a determined assault led by the General Motors Assembly Division (GMAD). Aggressively pushing its policy of speedup and harrassment, GMAD provoked major strikes at Lordstown and Norwood, Ohio, by deliberately violating national and local contracts, laying off hundreds of workers and forcing the rest to work long hours of overtime at back-breaking speed. By focusing their attack on the workers in one plant at a time, the GMAD "efficiency experts" goaded them into isolated, demoralizing strikes, hoping to exhaust their morale and resources before the 1973 negotiations begin in earnest. The International played directly into this strategy, deliberately leaving the locals at Lordstown and Norwood unaided, in order to avoid a nationwide showdown with GM—they did not mobilize even as

little as one additional local to back up these strikes.

The UAW leadership's behavior in these strikes is completely consistent with everything it stands for. These bureaucrats consider themselves in partnership with the giant corporations, not as representatives of the workers against the companies. Their concern is to *help* make U.S. industry more competitive on the world market so that workers, as well as the companies, will presumably receive a share of the "prosperity." But that is not the way it works in a system in which the interests of profit are necessarily counterposed to those of the workers. This was revealed in an interesting comment made by UAW vice-president Irving Bluestone in a *Newsweek* interview (23 October 1972) in which he conceded to GMAD the right to lay off workers, provided the bureaucrats were consulted first! "There's a certain amount of manpower they had a right to save. But this in effect was recanting what they had told us," said Bluestone. In a period of large-scale unemployment and foreign competition, the program of U.S. capitalism can only be more unemployment, more work from ever fewer people at as low wages as they can get away with paying. There can be no "partnership" with the imperialist bourgeoisie except that which is based on precisely this kind of betrayal in favor of all the essential interests of the bosses.

The strikes achieved nothing—even Woodcock was forced to admit that Norwood was at the same place it had been six months earlier. The UAW let Lordstown and Norwood become sacrificial lambs, patsies for GMAD's union-busting experiments. But around the country, militants at other GMAD plants came up against the same company tactics. Moreover, plants such as those in Mansfield, Ohio and St. Louis, which were getting restless to go on strike themselves, would have been much more likely to cripple all of GM in a long strike. The bureaucrats needed new tactics to prevent such a

confrontation while creating an illusion of militancy.

"Apache Strategy"

Local bureaucrats, including many committeemen (plant floor representatives), returned from meetings with the international misleaders in Detroit toward the end of the Norwood strike full of enthusiastic reports that a series of short mini-strikes, provided they were "legal" (according to the contract), would bring GMAD to its knees over Norwood, speedups, safety violations, and its disciplinary layoffs (DLO's) and firings. This "Apache strategy" was the best thing from the International in years, so they sang the song.

In fact, the Norwood workers were quickly and quietly sold out shortly afterwards. In its own terms, the "Apache strategy" was never carried out. Local leaderships called off strikes at the last minute, and only a few plants held short strikes. They returned to work with nothing settled, often in complete disregard of expressed desires to continue striking by the workers, as at St. Louis. GM was able to transfer work to other plants in the system by working them overtime. Sales and production are at record levels for GM, as they are throughout the auto industry. In spite of seven strikes, GM missed its October production goal of 497,000 cars by only 11,000—hardly a crippling blow.

But for Woodcock and his two-faced local minions, the "Apache strategy" was successful. Bluestone was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* (17 October) as saying that the strategy had probably "helped avert walkouts" at GM's Van Nuys and Flint Buick plants. Furthermore, it had the advantage of curbing the rising line of local militancy without dipping into the international strike fund, since no benefits are paid until after the first week of a strike. The "Apache" strikes were never intended to last longer than this, and to be sure that they didn't, the bureaucrats made clear in advance that they did not intend to have the strikes

arrive at any agreement with the company. Thus these "strikes" were designed to be completely demoralizing; simply consisting of loss of income for a pre-arranged total lack of accomplishments! This helped to make 1972 one of the most "peaceful" years in "labor relations" since 1946, and set GM workers up for acceptance of rotten terms in the 1973 contract, and without a strike, since the bureaucrats have decreed that it must be Ford's "turn" if there is a strike over the next contract.

"30 for 40" and the Contract

The UAW tops have begun to toss around the proposal for "36 for 40" as a sop to militants in the union, and to anyone who might be influenced by the outside petition campaign for "30 for 40" of Progressive Labor (PL). The bureaucracy's bastardized version of "30 for 40" is cynical rhetoric designed to cover up its intention to capitulate on whatever wage guidelines are set by Nixon's Pay Board and to continuing selling out the struggle against layoffs, unemployment and compulsory overtime. While the proposal for a shorter workweek is pointed to as a major aim in the Ford negotiations, the International has no real intention of fighting for it, as revealed by vice-president Bannon, who "outlined as one possibility for cutting work time, a 10% reduction in working hours, emphasizing that this was an idea for discussion and *not a collective bargaining proposal...*" (UAW *Solidarity*, November 1972, our emphasis).

The slogan "30 for 40" was originally raised by the Trotskyists as a concretization of the demand for a "sliding scale of hours," through which work would be divided evenly, the workers would benefit from improvements in productivity and unemployment would be eliminated, at the expense of the capitalists. Always trying to avoid a serious fight for this anti-capitalist demand, the UAW bureaucracy under Reuther counterposed the slogan of "Guaranteed Annual Wage" (GAW),

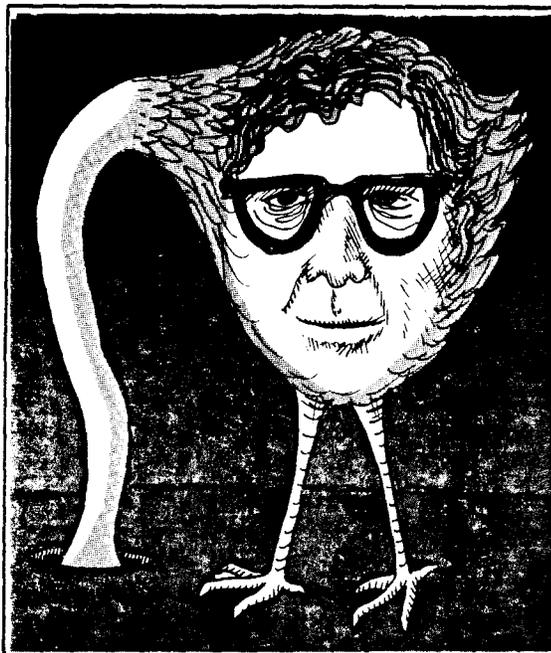
which in effect meant little more than glorified dole for everyone, and in practice meant only increased unemployment payments for auto workers (Supplementary Unemployment Benefits—SUB) and no real struggle at all against unemployment itself.

The struggle for a sliding scale of hours is fundamentally anti-capitalist, and raises revolutionary implications pointing towards a socialist reorganization of society, but only if it is linked to other essential corollaries and the demands of the transitional program. As proposed by the bureaucracy, "36 for 40" is simply a proposal for slightly altering the calculation of overtime pay, since it is not accompanied by a struggle against compulsory overtime. As proposed by PL, "30 for 40" is converted into a phony panacea through isolation from the broader program in which it was raised. For instance, every auto plant in the country has thousands of unresolved grievances, reflecting not only speedup but also the other results of capitalist exploitation of labor. Without the demand for workers control of production, beginning with a non-negotiable insistence that the speed of the line be in the contract, "30 for 40" is a reformist gimmick just one step removed from Woodcock's propaganda. PL has always insisted on raising only those demands it thinks can be won under capitalism, thereby rendering its verbal support of socialism a farce—completely abstracted from any real struggle to achieve it. It is thus reduced to enthusing over elemental militancy and winds up tail-ending the bureaucracy: playing advisor to local bureaucrats and begging Woodcock to make "30 for 40" a contract demand.

Economism of the CP/YWLL

Like ostriches, Woodcock and Co. bury their heads in the sand in the face of the coming attacks on labor, trying to call a ceasefire in the class struggle just as the capitalists are gearing up for the battle. And while they claim to provide alternative leadership, all the ostensibly revolutionary and socialist

groups in the U.S. wind up, like PL, with their heads up the tail of the Woodcock ostrich. The CP and its youth group, Young Workers Liberation League (YWLL) are particularly consistent in this respect, making little pretense of opposition to the bureaucracy. The CP's *Daily World* always plays up the phony tactics of the "liberal" labor fakers, advertising them as though they were genuine. "Hit-Run Strikes Meet Challenge of GM Speedup," proclaimed its 19 October headline. Similarly, the CP supports Woodcock's fake call for "industrial democracy" under the slogan, "humanize the production line." Woodcock's position is



The Woodcock ostrich.

simply a cover for union participation with management on such things as committees to control absenteeism, i.e., a pretense at workers' "participation" in the system of their own exploitation. This harks back to Walter Reuther's demands that the union bureaucracy have the right to participate in running war production so as to make prosecution of the imperialist World War II more efficient. In the context of support for Woodcock's strategy clearly expressed by the CP (see *Daily World*, 2 November 1972), "humanize working conditions" can only

mean a few reforms to make exploitation more tolerable. Such reforms cannot "solve" brutal and inhuman working conditions, since exploitation will remain, always intensifying.

The assembly line is inhuman not because the workers are psychologically "alienated," lacking a sense of participation or bored with the nature of the productive process. The workers' discontent reflects the actual power relationship—they are forced to sell their labor power and enter into bondage to the capitalist, hence the term "wage slavery." "Alienation" refers to the forcible expropriation by the capitalist of the fruits of the workers' labor. Even the most well-meaning capitalist is forced to "dehumanize" the work through speedups, lengthening the working day, etc., in order to maximize this expropriation and successfully compete with other capitalists.

The working class must struggle to wrest control over the entire production process from the hands of the exploiters under the slogan, "for workers control of production." But the demand for "workers control" is also completely useless to the workers, and serves only as a diversion to the struggle, unless it is part of a program to *expropriate* all of industry and put the working class in power, under the slogan for a "workers government." This perspective is never raised by the CP/YWLL. Instead, it restricts its work to pushing for narrow, piecemeal reforms, which never challenge the power of the capitalists. The YWLL strategy was summed up in its paper, *Young Worker* (March 1972):

"To gain the confidence of the workers...whether they are young, old, black, white or Spanish-speaking—one important thing is to give leadership on economic issues. That way you create a base to draw out the most advanced workers who are willing to move on political issues."

These latter-day Economists were answered long ago by Lenin, who pointed to:

"...the basic error that all Economists commit, namely, their conviction that it is possible to develop the class po-

litical consciousness of the workers *from within*, so to speak, from their economic struggle, i.e., by making this struggle the exclusive (or, at least, the main) starting point...Such a view is radically wrong."

Lenin attacked them for:

"...reducing the working-class movement and the class struggle to narrow trade-unionism and to a 'realistic' struggle for petty, gradual reforms... in practice it meant a striving to convert the nascent working-class movement into an appendage of the liberals."

— *What Is to Be Done?*

The "Dump Nixon" campaign and the CP's open support for McGovern in the last election were just the most recent manifestations of this betrayal Lenin pointed to. And it continues to involve virtually uncritical endorsement of the Woodcock liberals in the labor movement; presumably these are what the same issue of *Young Worker* defends, in a polemic against "Trotskyite" criticism, as "...those few labor leaders who do want to fight back"!

The ostensibly Trotskyist Workers League (WL) has such a deep opportunist orientation toward the trade union bureaucracy that it is completely divorced from virtually any political consistency. Thus during the last election, the WL tried to orient toward both the pro-Nixon and pro-McGovern wings of the split labor "leadership." Hailing Meany's neutrality statement as a break from capitalist coalition politics, the WL criticised the CP and the liberal bureaucrats for trying to maintain the link with the Democratic Party, ignoring the real racist and pro-war motives of Meany's disguised support to Nixon. However, the WL also echoed the CP's concentration on Nixon as labor's "main enemy," going easy on the Democratic Party by not mentioning it.

This is now reflected in the way the WL raises the demand for a labor party, which, for the WL, is never a tactic of the revolutionary vanguard party, but always a part of the real interests of the trade union bureaucracy, which it is the duty of the WL to push the bureaucrats into adopting. The WL's *Bulletin* (11

December 1972) reprinted without criticism the following motion adopted recently at the UAW local at the Southgate GMAD plant in Los Angeles:

"Therefore be it resolved that we call on leaders of the American trade unions, the AFL-CIO, Teamsters, UAW and Independents, to immediately convene a Congress of Labor to formulate policy and program in order to prepare to answer Nixon's anti-union program... This Congress of Labor must begin right now the organization of a labor party using all the resources of the unions for the next election... Be it finally resolved that you Brother Woodcock and the entire International executive board of the UAW use the prestige of your office to call for a Congress of Labor..."

Now that Nixon has just been elected to a second term promising to lead a vicious, all-out assault on labor, such talk of a "labor party" is cheap, and could be rhetorically adopted by the extreme left wing of the bureaucracy without much difficulty. Already the CP, wincing at the miserable showing of its former hero, McGovern, is daring to engage in a little self-criticism of its own role in the election and call for a more "independent" stance. This WL-backed plea to Woodcock, whom the WL formerly attacked as worse than Meany, is thus the most dangerous sort of opportunism. Woodcock actually must base his very strong ambitions in capitalist politics on pseudo-leftism and the appearance of militancy. Such a labor party, formed by a section of the present labor bureaucracy, *on the basis of its pro-capitalist program*, could only serve to tie the workers more firmly to class-collaborationist politics.

BWC Pushes "Third World" Bureaucrats

The demise of the Panthers as an ostensibly revolutionary organization, and the shrinking into right-wing nationalist irrelevance of DRUM and other League of Revolutionary Black Workers caucuses in the UAW in Detroit, left a gap which James Forman's

Black Workers Congress (BWC) is attempting to fill (see *WV* No. 10, July-August 1972). The BWC's eclectic inability to break from myopic black nationalism, despite a pretense of pro-working-class "socialist" politics, however, prevents them from clearly perceiving even what it is they are struggling against. Thus, the BWC-backed United Black Workers (UBW) caucus at the Ford plant in Mahwah, New Jersey gave blanket, uncritical support in the last local union elections to "most Third World and black candidates," as their paper, *Black Voice*, explained. Confusing the workers' class enemy with the more backward, racist sections of the working class itself, the UBW chose to ignore the fact that the black and Spanish-speaking candidates, as well as the whites, completely lacked a working-class analysis and program around which to fight.

After helping to elect the new set of officers, the UBW openly admitted that "90% of these officials have betrayed the trust of the people..." (*Black Voice*, November 1972). But the UBW, still blinded by color, proffers these bureaucrats another chance to betray the workers they represent: "Those of you who wish to clean up your s--t and start doing the job you were elected to do have a little time to start T.C.B." Rather than counterposing a revolutionary alternative to the reformist, racist trade union bureaucracy, the BWC/UBW program is merely a cover for the incorporation of more black faces into that bureaucracy.

The UBW made a similar error in giving credit to Imamu Baraka (formerly Leroi Jones) for "providing the black community of Newark with an *alternative* to the hopelessness it was feeling," i.e., black Mayor Gibson. This was the same "brother" Baraka and Mayor Gibson who tried to bust the Newark Teachers strike by breaking the union with vicious race-baiting and goon-squad attacks against the strikers. At a recent meeting organized by the Newark Teachers Union (NTU) to build support against a new round of union-busting attacks, for which

Baraka's Newark Community Coalition is being used as the "community" cover, the UBW expressed "neutrality" in the NTU-Baraka conflict. This position did not prevent them from co-sponsoring a forum of black solidarity and education with Baraka's group, thus giving back-handed support to the attacks on the union and violating elementary workers' solidarity in the name of the "community." Baraka has been well paid by ruling-class agencies such as the Ford Foundation to sell the black workers of Newark the idea that since he's black he's got the answers they need. Baraka's job is to pacify the black workers with lies about "community" with the black petty-bourgeoisie and bourgeois agents so that they can be pitted against their black and white brothers in the teachers union and the rest of labor.

Like the CP, the BWC uses a version of Stalinism as a "socialist" cover for its opportunist appetites, although its more eclectic approach is openly based on the "wisdom" of bourgeois nationalists such as Nkrumah and Fanon, giving them equal authority with Marx and Lenin. Its theoretical hodge-podge is designed to incorporate any bourgeois or opportunist impulse under the rubric of "revolutionary" politics. It should come as no surprise that pro-working-class rhetoric surrounding its initiation immediately became combined with such unashamed bureaucratic careerism as exemplified by the UBW.

Attempts to pressure the union bu-

reaucracy to take up a political struggle are necessarily a fraud. Even honest militancy based on a simple trade unionist perspective, however vigorous and "left-wing," is also hopeless in the present epoch of imperialist degeneration. Trade unionism inevitably leads to subordination of the workers to the imperialist state unless transcended through revolutionary leadership based on a full working-class program—the transitional program. The Spartacist League calls for the formation of caucuses in the unions with such a program as the only basis for an alternative leadership capable of uprooting the present reformist bureaucracy. Such a caucus in auto must fight against nationalism as well as all forms of discrimination against blacks, other minorities and women and all attempts by the company or bureaucrats to pit these groups against one another; it must call for complete workers control of production, a sliding scale of wages and hours, no compulsory overtime, opening the books of the corporations, expropriation of major industry, and an end to the wage freeze, Pay Board, and all labor cooperation with such capitalist schemes; it would support the revolutionary struggle of the Vietnamese workers and peasants as opposed to the sellout deals of the Stalinists with U.S. imperialism; and it would call for the formation of a labor party based on a full working-class program to struggle for a workers government. ■

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard*
No. 15, January 1973

Opposition in the UAW— UNC: Reutherism Revived

The fundamental question facing the labor movement today is a crisis of leadership. Already thousands of workers are expressing their discontent with the hidebound bureaucracy that runs the unions, through wildcat strikes and growing support for opposition caucuses. Already the need to go beyond bread-and-butter business unionism is posed sharply by Nixon's "Phase III" program, which can only be answered by a *political* alternative to the rule of the capitalist parties. But the question remains whether the Meany-Woodcock gang are to be replaced by a new leadership fighting in the interests of the entire working class, or simply by a new group of slicker, more militant-talking careerists, as in the recent election of Arnold Miller as a "reform" president of the United Mine Workers.

Phase III—Return of the Bureaucrats

Nixon's announcement last month of the Phase III program is an open challenge to American workers. Most corporations no longer are even required to go through the motions of filing price reports, and the meaningless "profit rate ceilings" are raised, thus

giving official sanction to a new round of price increases. Union contracts can't be disguised, however, and thus labor is still subject to the same tight controls, under new guidelines to be worked out by a "labor-management advisory committee." This is no accident as the government gears up to deal with the contract negotiations affecting nearly 5 million workers in 1973 (almost double last year's number).

One of Nixon's biggest weapons in this battle will be the promise of cooperation of the labor bureaucrats with his new model Pay Board. Woodcock, the "progressive" Democrat, again joins the "neutral" Meany and the openly pro-Nixon Fitzsimmons on this control arm of the capitalist government. It is these same "leaders" of the workers who are primarily responsible for making the wage controls work in the first place, by refusing to mobilize the labor movement directly in strikes against the wage freeze, and using the "guidelines" as excuses to limit bargaining demands. Meany and Co.'s grand protest of walking off the Pay Board last year, far from hindering wage controls simply helped them work more smoothly! The UAW's Woodcock,

who along with Meany has always supported wage controls in principle, stayed on Nixon's Productivity Commission the whole time.

The UAW leadership has clearly shown that it is incapable of defending even past gains. Under Woodcock the bureaucracy claims to be fighting for many of the same demands they *gave away* under Reuther, such as non-compulsory overtime, cost-of-living escalator clause, etc. The bureaucracy's new goals, such as "30 and out" are just sops to cover the abysmal situation in the plants, which is approaching pre-union conditions of unlimited management prerogatives, uncontrollable speedup, etc. But now it is the union structure, dominated by an entrenched, pro-company bureaucracy, which serves as the company's back-up in disciplining the workers.

This bureaucracy is characterized by its complete identification with the survival and fundamental aims of capitalism, including the imperialist designs of the government. Woodcock opposes outright protectionism, but instead imposes "non-inflationary" contracts on the workers in order to preserve the competitive position of U.S. corporations. But after signing such a "responsible" agreement with GM in 1970, the UAW machine had to spend the next two years devising new ways to prevent a mass walkout by auto workers. Woodcock claims jobs as his key concern, yet refuses to strike against layoffs and runaway plants, and opposes the demand for a 30-hour week because workers might get out of control and "hold two jobs"! (*New York Times Magazine*, interview, 27 September 1970).

Roots of Betrayal

Sellouts by the bureaucracy have certainly caused mass discontent in the ranks, but its ability to discipline the work force for the bosses will remain intact until there is a real alternative leadership. The close identification of the trade union leadership with the enemy in the class struggle does not flow from a simple lack of trade union

militancy. Rather, it flows from a perspective based *only* on trade union militancy. All trade union leaders must base their careers, at least in the beginning, on some pretense of militancy. Once in office they become agents of the capitalist system because it is not possible to counterpose the workers to capitalism on the basis of trade unionism.

In the imperialist epoch, when the bourgeoisie depends primarily on reformist labor leaders to keep the workers in check, simple trade unionism can only mean class collaboration by reformist bureaucracies headed by the likes of Woodcock and Meany, or some left-talking replacements. The only real alternative is a revolutionary leadership conscious of its role as *part* of the struggle for socialist revolution. For the latter to be accomplished it is necessary that the bureaucracy be destroyed (not just replacing the current fakers with new ones) under the leadership of a *vanguard party*, and that the program of the party, the Trotskyist Transitional Program, become the program of the trade unions.

The most vital task confronting workers today is the construction of such a leadership and party, the real alternative to the Woodcock/Meany machines. However, "alternatives" to the bureaucracy abound in many hues, and most of them on close examination bear a striking resemblance to the bread-and-butter unionists they seek to replace. The United National Caucus (UNC), the only visible national opposition in the UAW, is such an "alternative."

\$1.00 an Hour

The UNC grew out of the movement for a \$1.00-an-hour increase in the skilled trades in 1966-67. The Dollar An Hour Now Committee, taking advantage of a reactionary craft union's attempt to pull dissatisfied tradesmen out of the auto union, mobilized thousands of skilled workers in the UAW behind demands reflecting their particular interests. It won concessions from Reuther, such as the right to

separately veto contracts (the International, naturally, retaining the power to order all workers back whether they approve a contract or not).

The special interests of skilled workers were and are real—against management attempts to farm out work to non-union shops, "stretching out" lines of demarcation (job categories), etc., and against the UAW leadership's policy of limiting contract demands in order to preserve the competitive position of the union job shops. This self-defeating policy simply prevents the organizing of the unorganized by eliminating the advantages of union conditions. The logical conclusion is inevitably a policy of wage cuts to keep "union" shops in business, as has occurred in the Rubber Workers.

However, throughout labor history, divisions within the class (such as between skilled and unskilled workers particularly) have constantly plagued—and been maintained by—the trade unions. The craft unions incorporated these divisions, allowing employers to play one craft off against another. In the U.S., where skilled trades were largely older, white, native workers, craft unionism fostered racial and national divisions. The rise of industrial unions tended to cut across craft distinctions by organizing all the workers in an industry into one union.

Although reduced in significance, these craft distinctions did not disappear. The Dollar An Hour Committee, in orienting toward this relatively privileged sector, was not fighting a struggle of all the workers against the companies, but simply protecting short-term interests of skilled workers. So it inevitably fell into the trap set for it by capitalism of competing against other workers for a limited amount of concessions. As the Democratic Caucus, led by Charles Dewey and part of the \$1.00-an-hour movement, at a Detroit job shop local wrote:

"Our present wage scales do not reflect the proper differential between skilled and production workers necessary to compensate for wage losses suffered by skilled members during

long years of apprenticeship and training."

—"For the Biggest Gains Ever—
A Program for the Job Shops,"
undated brochure, Democratic
Caucus of UAW Local 155

This particularism only aggravated the animosity and suspicion between skilled and unskilled workers. The inability of blacks to penetrate the job-trusted skilled trades was a major impetus in the rise of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) and other black caucuses in Detroit auto plants in the late sixties. DRUM emphasized a black nationalist orientation instead of class struggle, and wrongly rejected integrated struggle within the union. Art Fox, one of the leaders of the skilled trades movement in Ford Local 600, and presently a leader of the UNC, now somewhat jocularly describes his past role in the union as opportunist and white chauvinist. He finds this admission convenient today only because his opportunism has found new outlets.

Today Dewey and Fox continue the policy of simple trade unionism reflected by the \$1.00-an-hour movement in the form of the United National Caucus. Dewey closes an article in the December 1972 UNC with the hope ("Something is in the air!") that U.S. trade deals with the Soviet Union, sponsored by Woodcock's recent East European tour (which Dewey endorses), will lead to more jobs for American skilled tradesmen. This is exactly the reasoning of the bureaucracy itself! Dewey (and the UNC with him) is perfectly interchangeable with Woodcock: Woodcock would adopt Dewey's militancy on trade union issues were he out of office, and Dewey would adopt Woodcock's betrayals were he in.

IS Supports Careerism

Instead of developing a program and leadership to counterpose to the business unionism and treachery of the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class," the UNC leaders, and their principal outside supporters, the International Socialists (IS), propose simply

a revamped trade unionism through greater shop floor militancy and a syndicalist bringing together of the rank and file through organizational proposals—such as the permanent production workers council and reliance on shop stewards. What this ignores is what leadership these bodies will have, on the basis of what program. The IS particularly looks to England, where there is a powerful and militant shop stewards movement. This does not substitute for revolutionary leadership, however, as was demonstrated when the shop stewards, under the influence of the misleaders of the Communist Party, allowed the trade union tops to push through their sellout of the dock workers struggle last summer without a fight (see *WV* No. 12, October 1972).

Instead of struggling for a revolutionary program corresponding to the real interests of the working class, the UNC leadership prefers to pull together the broadest possible opposition grouping on the narrowest possible platform. This inevitably attracts demagogic careerist elements, which are rampant in the UNC. In an article on the 1972 UAW convention, UNC co-chairman Jordan Sims put these aspirations into words through a grotesque eulogy to the "sorely missed" Reuther: "The big red-haired brother of the podium (Brother Reuther) really had his thing together. It is a pleasure to watch a real professional doing what he knows best [i.e., "domination of the proceedings"]" (*UNC*, 25 September 1972).

Thus Sims glorifies Reuther and ignores his repeated attempts to smash wildcat strikes forced by speedup, company harrassment and oppressive working conditions, as well as ignoring his persecution of all serious oppositions to the bureaucracy. Rather than being "sorely missed," Reuther should have been dumped by the auto workers a long time before a plane crash ended his career of class collaboration. Sims, and the UNC and IS with him, follow in the footsteps of Reuther because they have nothing to offer except trade unionism covered over with social-democratic and social-patriotic

rhetoric. Thus Sims remarked at one point, "But you recognize one thing: to make your America great, to make it productive, to make it serve you and benefit you—you're not going anyplace without me or someone like me." The IS, which printed this quote without a word of criticism, responded, "Sims posed in the sharpest form the problem confronting the American working class today—to realize a unity of working people based on their common class struggle" (*Workers' Power*, 3-16 March 1972).

Sims is only one of many careerists in the UNC. A recent addition is Nathaniel Mosley of the Rank and File Caucus of Local 25, St. Louis GMAD, who was featured prominently and uncritically in a recent issue of the IS paper and is a scheduled speaker at the UNC production workers' conference in Detroit in early February. In 1972 Mosley won election to a post of District Committeeman on the basis of a program calling for 35 hours work for 40 hours pay, 25-and-out with \$750/month pension, and make Martin Luther King's birthday a national holiday for UAW members. This is simply a jazzed up version of the Woodcock program, with the addition of the word "more." From Samuel Gompers to George Meany, "more" has always been the official ideology of the labor bureaucracy. And since this accepts the framework of capitalism, "more" is easily turned into "less" when the bosses are hurting.

The UNC offers the perfect opportunity for the flowering opportunism of the IS, which has uncritically supported the UNC, confining itself to gentle pressure:

"Desperately needed in such a situation [GMAD crisis] is a conscious leadership with an understanding of how to fight. That the United National Caucus has not yet been able to provide this leadership is due in large part to its small size and organizational weakness.

"An aggressive organizing campaign around the demands in the UNC program could make the Caucus a powerful force in the rank and file struggle.

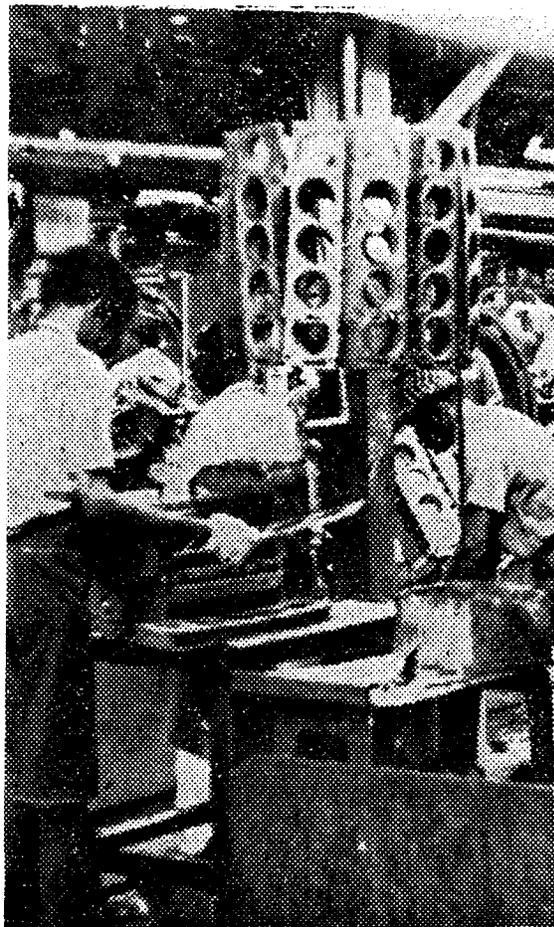
"The Production Workers Conference could be an important turning point, particularly if the UNC is able to attract rank and file leaders from around the country."

—*Workers' Power*, 24 November–7 December 1972

The IS denies that it adapts to trade unionism, yet it consciously separates the task of recruiting *individuals* to Marxism from the "duty" of supporting "broader" movements. This is a hallmark of opportunism, of which the reformist Communist Party, chief partner of the IS in supporting the UNC, is the master. Instead of struggling in the open for a revolutionary program, the opportunist raises his socialist program only in private (if then), publicly kowtowing to the broader formation in order to gain influence with the leadership.

The Basis of Reutherism

The IS road to trade union opportunism began with the early Shachtmanite movement. (Shachtman broke with Trotskyism by refusing to defend the Soviet Union against imperialist attack in World War II, an elementary duty in spite of the parasitic role of the Stalinist bureaucracy.) Shachtman did away with the concept of a vanguard which struggles in the class for its political program, and replaced it with a social-democratic organization geared to adulation of the present level of workers' struggles. In the UAW the Shachtmanites early on revealed their adaptationism by tailing after Walter Reuther, then a militant-talking oppositionist. More sophisticated than their present-day imitators of the IS, they began with real criticism: "Reuther is more concerned with building his own fences, with strengthening his own personal position in the UAW than he is with fighting for... a program of action" (*Labor Action*, 9 June 1947). They pointed out that Reuther remained silent on all the major questions facing labor (such as the union-busting Taft-Hartley Act), in order to garner right-wing support for his faction, including tacit support of CIO President Philip



NY TIMES

**Foundry at Ford River Rouge:
Conditions as bad as ever.**

Murray, who was breaking with the Communist Party as the Cold War witchhunt began. In spite of this criticism, the Shachtmanites supported "the progressive Reuther tendency" because his *base* was interested in moving to the left, i.e., because he was a better faker.

Reuther's "progressive" poses were always geared to the promotion of his personal career, but by 1947 this was no longer necessary and he relied openly on an unprincipled amalgam of left and reactionary forces united only by hatred of the CP. That Reuther could still be considered "leftist" was only due to the fact that the Communist Party had completely discredited itself by its rotten, opportunist role and patriotic virulence during World War II, making it easy to gather support against it on the basis of simple militant trade unionism. Though they formally denounced red-baiting, the

Shachtmanites thus became the most "left" expression of the bourgeois government's anti-communist witchhunt in the unions.

Suing the Union

The basis of the UNC's bureaucratic careerism lies in its program, particularly its call for suing the unions in the capitalist courts (over the retiree-voting issue) and the referendum election of officers.

Retiree voting is an obstacle to any militant opposition (it was a key tactic in frustrating the initial struggle of DRUM). Taking the union to court, however, can only benefit an opportunist office seeker, since it totally violates workers democracy. Even if some improvements are obtained, such as eliminating retiree voting (unlikely, but possible), the damage done through strengthening the basis for government interference in the unions will be qualitatively worse. The government will define the basis of union membership, eliminate rank-and-file ratification of union contracts (already agreed to by the Nixon toadies in the construction trades) and shore up cooperative bureaucrats. "Progressive" trade union oppositionists who sue the unions in the name of "democracy" in this period (e.g., Stan Weir in the ILWU, James Morrissey in the NMU, Arnold Miller in the UMW) will be the architects of completely government-dominated unions in the next.

Government court rulings aimed at "democratizing" the unions are a sophisticated mechanism for the maintenance of capitalism. They allow the bosses to anticipate a growing line of struggle and act to head it off by correcting less important abuses in return for stability. Rather than having to act through cooperative but sometimes unreliable or incompetent agents in union leaderships, the capitalist government has a chance to more directly influence the political course of events within the workers movement.

Perhaps the best example of this is the recent election in the United Mine Workers, which ousted long-time UMW

president Tony Boyle. On the invitation of the "reform" Miners for Democracy, the government was able to step into one of the hottest union situations in the country and take over the union, controlling the books, deciding elections and defusing the massive miners' movement led by the Black Lung Association. Naturally, the UNC endorsed Miller's election (*UNC*, December 1972).

UNC Referendum Position

The UNC also stands for referendum election of international officers as opposed to the present system of election at the regular delegated conventions. At the last convention, the UNC dropped its entire program in favor of making its big push on this demand. It formed a "league of caucuses" on the basis of this demand and the campaign to sue the union over the retiree voting issue, thus revealing the central place of these two points in the *real* politics of the UNC. It concentrated on the referendum point since this demand was backed by 13 locals, making it the most popular issue of the "militant" local bureaucrats.

Referendums cannot be used to make the basic decisions of a workers' organization, one of which is electing the leadership. Real decisions require discussion and political struggle between opposing tendencies. The leadership should be chosen on the outcome of this process, by delegates who must answer for their actions to the members who elected them, but who are nevertheless free to make their own decisions at the convention. A leadership elected by referendum would be able to defy the will of the convention, thereby rendering convention decisions irrelevant. A referendum forces the workers to decide crucial questions without the benefit of the political education and discussion required to separate the workers' consciousness of their own class interests from the influences of bourgeois society.

Reuther, who knew well what a referendum meant in practice, was

able to neatly sabotage the struggle against the wartime no-strike pledge at the 1944 convention of the UAW, by referring the issue to the membership where it was clearly defeated, due to patriotic propaganda and the lack of a means to educate the rank and file through open debate. Referendum votes have brought in some opposition leaders, such as I.W. Abel in the Steelworkers, and it could easily serve as a vehicle for a well-known dissident ex-bureaucrat (for example, Paul Schrade, former Western regional director of the UAW) careerist basing his campaign on a few militant slogans. But it can not aid a principled opposition based on the defense of a working class *program* of struggle, which can only win through open debate.

UNC Trade Unionism

The rest of the UNC program is simply militant trade unionism. Its chief contract demands before the 1970 GM strike were remarkably similar to the UAW bargaining "demands" themselves, just a little more of the same: "restore cost-of-living; 25 years and out; humanize working conditions; wage increase and revamp grievance procedure" (UNC, March 1970). Woodcock simply took over the heavy UNC emphasis on the demand for a wage increase over and above recapturing losses due to inflation, and also adopted the vague slogan, "humanize working conditions." Although it raised "30 for 40," *the UNC failed to include it as a contract demand*, thus anticipating the bureaucracy's handling of this point (the UAW has raised a watered-down version of "30 for 40" "for discussion" only; see WV No. 15, January 1973).

The 1972 program which emerged from the UNC Conference on Racism showed no improvement. The program called for proportional representation for racial minorities on leading bodies of the union. Even Reuther wisely opposed such a proposal in the 40's when it was put forward by the CP. Denouncing it as racist to institutionalize the election of representatives on

the basis of skin color, he won the point after initial unpopularity, thereby successfully positioning himself to the left of the CP on this issue. The program also called for proportional hiring by race, instead of strongly counterposing a demand for the end to all job and training discrimination and the opening of job opportunities at the expense of the capitalists, realizing such a program through demands such as a sliding scale of hours. Socialists oppose all hiring selection on the basis of race, since this inevitably tends to perpetuate racial divisions, whatever the original intent.

The program dealt with working conditions in a basically reformist fashion, failing to mention the goal of workers control of production. While it listed "a steward for every foreman," it left striking over grievances to a majority vote of the local instead of calling for shop-floor factory committees with the power to halt production over outstanding questions. It called for making line speed and other questions of production "negotiable issues"—and thereby good throwaway points for the International's bargaining "program"—instead of making a firm, non-negotiable insistence that the speed of the line be specified in the contract.

The January 1973 UNC special issue for building the February UNC production workers' conference reveals a decisive turn toward open reformism. An article on working conditions drops even the demand to make line speed "negotiable," leaving the program with no demand for combatting speedup whatsoever! Worse still, an article on the wage controls, which mentions the Democratic and Republican parties as being identical, not only completely fails to mention the UNC's supposed "position" for a labor party, but it contains the following as its only programmatic conclusion:

"Complete abolition of all pay controls should be the demand which the UAW chieftains make on labor's so-called friends in Congress.

"A massive labor lobby to Washington should be organized to publicize this

demand and to make it clear that labor's votes will no longer be available to politicians who pose as friends but whose actions proclaim them to be enemies."

This sneaky hint of things to come from the UNC, written, not surprisingly, by Dewey, is an admission that sections of its leadership, at least, are looking to establish working relations with capitalist politicians whom they will pass off as *real* friends who *don't* act against labor, etc. It opens a Pandora's box of class collaboration by dropping the labor party demand and any categorical ban on support for bourgeois politicians. These "political" points of the UNC program (labor party, opposition to the war) were never more than window dressing, completely subordinated to the real program of simple trade unionism. The UNC has always welcomed the worst opportunists into its ranks, such as Teresa Carpenter and Mike Singer, who had a special note attached to the 1972 program opposing inclusion of a demand for the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Southeast Asia. The January 1973 UNC doesn't even mention the war! This treacherous softening of their own program now, in order to attract large numbers of UAW "dissidents" to their conference, is a warning of the more serious betrayals the UNC would undertake once in office in order to gain influence within the limits of capitalism.

UNC—Potential Threat

At present the UNC is not a serious threat because it lacks the serious perspective of a drive for power in the union. This could be accomplished if it were to link up with a well-known careerist such as Paul Schrade, who has been directly and clearly invited to join the caucus on no other basis than the appearance of opposition to the bureaucracy.

Fake left groups such as the Communist Party and the IS see in the UNC the possible embryo for a more "pro-

gressive" union leadership. A bloc between such groups and the more farsighted of the UNC's aspiring careerists could result in driving away the blatant right-wing opportunists such as Dewey, Carpenter and Singer (after all, even Woodcock is willing to verbally oppose the Vietnam war) in order to emerge with a more "militant" facade and pseudo-radical rhetoric to cover over the same trade unionism. Freed of archaic conservatism and rabid anti-communism, and able to disassociate itself from the past policies of the Woodcock machine, such a revitalized bureaucracy could be more flexible than its predecessor, and thereby better able to contain a mass upsurge of the workers and keep it within the bounds acceptable to the capitalists.

A successful power fight by the "transformed" UNC forces against the entrenched Woodcock machine would require the mobilization of the union ranks. The fake lefts like the CP and IS, who are eagerly seeking to create the illusion in the minds of the workers that such a new leadership means the end of the old sellout policies, are actually helping to block the forging of a real alternative leadership—based on a perspective of revolutionary class struggle rather than reformist class collaboration—by the auto workers. For the enormous shake-up in the UAW required to oust the incumbents will not be easily duplicated. If the struggle to replace the entrenched bureaucracy results only in the establishment of another, qualitatively identical bureaucracy, it will be some time before the ranks overcome their disillusionment and demoralization at this new betrayal and again launch a new round of struggles against the capitalists and their labor lieutenants.

Of course, the UNC could also go out of existence in a year through demoralization at its failure to achieve expected rapid growth, or some other reason. One thing, however, is certain: no revolutionary leadership can be built in the UAW at this time except on the basis of implacable struggle to expose

and politically destroy the UNC and the "militant" trade unionism upon which it is based. This requires the development of caucuses which are sharply counterposed on all questions not just to the present bureaucracy, but to the trade union-oriented politics and methods of struggle which recreate bureaucracy anew. Only through a struggle for a hard, consistent program, resting on the foundation of the international struggle of the working class, transcending all racial, national, section and trade union boundaries can this be achieved.

Thus a principled caucus must begin with uncompromising opposition to the UAW bureaucracy's support for U.S. imperialism. It must combat protectionism and oppose all wars and imperialist ventures of the U.S. government, not as an expendable afterthought, but as a central core of the program. Nowhere, for instance, has the UNC ever identified its interests with those of the laboring masses of Vietnam in achieving a military victory over U.S. imperialism—an elementary act of basic international class solidarity, despite the politically unsupportable and treacherous NLF/Hanoi

leadership.

A revolutionary leadership genuinely seeking to replace trade unionism and the bureaucratism it engenders must also counterpose a political struggle for a workers government to the bureaucracy's support for one wing or another of the capitalist political spectrum. It is not enough to call for a labor party, although the UNC is completely unserious even about this. The program and aims of the labor party must be fundamentally anti-capitalist.

By struggling for a new leadership on the basis of such a program, the struggle within the union will transcend simple trade unionism politically, and give support, through the actions resulting from the general thrust of its program, to the struggle to build a Leninist vanguard party of the working class. The building of such a party is a strategic necessity in order to bring about the seizure of power by the workers, which can alone destroy capitalist exploitation and replace it with socialism. Without such a perspective, opposition to the servile, traitorous union bureaucracy is futile, and inevitably serves only to bring it forth anew. ■

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard*
No. 16, February 1973

UAW Bargaining: Woodcock Gears Up No-Strike Offensive

The auto companies and the UAW are conducting their final maneuvers and firming up their positions for the 1973 contract negotiations. Special contract meetings have been held in UAW locals, as well as delegated production and skilled workers conferences and a special bargaining convention of the entire union in Detroit. The meetings reflect the pressure which local leaders are under to produce some real gains and reverse Woodcock's galloping retreat before the capitalist offensive.

Woodcock, however, is concentrating all his energies on preventing a strike when the present contract expires next fall, hardly bothering even to present a militant face to the companies. Verbally at least, the companies are reciprocating Woodcock's amiable attitude, in order to disarm the militants. GM Board Chairman Gerstenberg announced in a friendly tone just before the bargaining convention that GM *probably* would not raise prices for the rest of the 1973 model

year—a "concession" serving to provide his friend Woodcock with an argument against wage demands in excess of Nixon's 5.5% wage guideline, which is still in force. Warmly greeting the pro-company grovelling of the bureaucrats, Gerstenberg said:

"We in General Motors agree fully with Mr. Woodcock that there is no need for a strike in 1973...."

"I now suggest that we have come to a time when we can acknowledge that we have so far more in common than in conflict, when we can jointly pay our respects to the buried animosities of the past.... These differences have no place in our country today: they have gone the way of the sweatshop."

—*New York Times*, 20 March 1973

He also described as "another welcome indicator" a letter by the UAW's Blue-stone to all locals urging them to press for better quality production (*Wall Street Journal*, 20 March)!

The strongest point of Woodcock's ruling bureaucracy is its ability to provide a pressure release valve for

the seething discontent of the membership, in the best Reutherite tradition. This technique was demonstrated at the recent production workers' conference in Atlanta this February where local officers were allowed to blow off steam in a giant encounter group session designed to prepare them for next fall's capitulation. The International leadership responded to the legitimate anger and impatience of the assembly workers with calls for such class-collaborationist panaceas as profit-sharing (a reactionary plan to tie the workers to the "profitability" of their exploiters), productivity bonuses (a regressive measure in the direction of piece-work) and finally, the promise that the next production workers' conference would include a Resolutions Committee—thus openly admitting that the Atlanta conference, unlike the Skilled Trades Sub-council, was never intended to have any decision-making powers at all!

The real negotiating demands were to be determined at the Detroit special bargaining convention, where Woodcock carefully maintained control by presenting a laundry list of promises which reflected the pressure of all sectors of the union on the leadership, but contained nothing new. As usual, most of it will be dropped in bargaining. Calling his critics "fools and liars" and "enemies of this union" Woodcock successfully co-opted the disgruntled local leaders and outmaneuvered the UNC opposition. None of these elements transcended the reformist trade unionism upon which Woodcock's demagoguery was based.

A good example of the worthlessness of the spontaneous "militant" leadership was provided by Gary Bryner, Local president and "hero" of the Lordstown strike. Bryner's speech lauding the International bureaucracy which sold out the Lordstown workers provided the most disgusting example of the subservience of the local UAW bureaucracy to the class-collaborationist leadership of Solidarity House.

Under the guise of setting up unas-

sailable security for the union against union-busting, the bureaucracy's collective bargaining resolution contained the most blatant statement of its class collaborationism in its history:

"...the growth and success of the company are of direct interest to the workers and their union, and success of the union is of direct interest to the company... each party therefore pledges... that it will not, in any way, impede the growth or success of the other."

The virtually unanimous passage of this resolution codified what has been the policy of the UAW bureaucracy since its inception.

The United National Caucus managed to attract some sections of the left-leaning bureaucracy to a speech given at its public meeting by ex-Western Region Director Paul Schrade. Schrade argued for not pointing the finger of blame at anyone in particular (i.e., Woodcock or himself) for past failures such as the 1970 GM contract (which he supported). He carried this out by refusing to speak in opposition to the bureaucracy on the floor of the convention. At the UNC meeting, one speaker generally reflecting the views of IS—the UNC's chief outside supporters—challenged Schrade to adopt a caucus orientation, which could only mean joining the UNC. There is nothing in either the UNC's or IS' programs which would prevent a complete subordination of both groups to the bureaucratic aspirations of a purely self-serving careerist such as Schrade.

Real Issues Buried

Behind this facade of a labor-management love affair lie the real issues. Woodcock and the entire UAW International bureaucracy, supported by the local officials, are consciously defending the interests of the companies for higher "productivity" with fewer workers on the basis of the false notion that the success of American capitalism will somehow benefit American working people. Especially impor-

tant is success over foreign competition, so that American jobs are protected. Lay-offs, however, are required in order to achieve this!

Because of Woodcock's brand of labor "leadership"—the class-collaborationist result of reformist trade unionism—the companies are assured that there will be no hard UAW demand for fully voluntary overtime, no effort to curtail the speedup and overwork upon which the "productivity" drive depends, nor any attempt to defeat the wage guidelines enforced by Nixon's "advisory committee," upon which Woodcock sits. Thus for the UAW tops there is "no need" for a strike, since Woodcock has already surrendered!

Until the reformist bureaucracy is replaced with revolutionary leadership, the UAW will continue to sell out on job conditions, layoffs, etc., in exchange for small increases in wages and benefits, or, if the bosses come upon hard times, for nothing at all. The interests of the workers, however, call for a drastically different policy, beginning with international working-class solidarity against capitalism of all nations and embracing full workers control of production, including line speed; a shorter work week at no loss in pay to end unemployment; and preparation of the struggle for political power through the call for a workers party based on the trade unions and the demand for a workers government.

It is on such a program, representing the historic interests of the international working class, that a real opposition in the unions must be built. Various fake-left tendencies act as if such a program is fine for lipservice by them, but "too advanced" for the workers. "Stick to the immediate issues—wages and hours," they say. They are only playing Woodcock's game. As long as "revolutionaries" restrict themselves to simple trade unionism, it is the real trade unionists who will ultimately win out. Internationalism, workers control of produc-

tion, a workers party and a workers government: *these* are burning issues of the day.

The UAW's position on internationalism and the shorter workweek makes this clear. Said Woodcock:

"If we're going to move to a shorter workweek—say a four-day week—and then have that capital equipment lying idle for three days every week, costs are going to skyrocket, and we do have to be concerned with the import problem in our domestic market."

—*U.S. News and World Report*,
12 February 1973

He makes no secret of the fact that his concern is for the maintenance of American capitalism's dominance of the world market, in spite of all his pious speeches in favor of international workers solidarity at meetings of the International Metalworkers Federation.

The 1971 British Ford strike provided a clear example of the cynicism with which the union tops view their participation in the IMF: soon after declarations of solidarity were passed at the London IMF conference in support of the strike, the company was able to successfully route shipments of crankshafts to the Cologne, Germany plant through their Canadian plant in Windsor, Ontario, with the full knowledge of the union leaders.

The bureaucracies of the national unions are well aware of the threat to them represented by any manifestation of real workers solidarity across national boundaries—a truly international union could not be contained within the bounds of narrow patriotism and loyalty to a particular national bourgeoisie. Thus, in 1963, when the workers of UAW Local 600 offered money to the English stewards at the Dagenham Ford complex to aid them in organizing a union of auto and ancillary trade workers, Reuther threatened the Detroit workers with an injunction, while his British counterpart Carron threatened with expulsion

those members of the engineers union involved in the negotiations.

"Left" Echo

Capitulating to Woodcock's social-democratic trade unionism, the "revolutionaries" supporting the United National Caucus (UNC) fail to take a firm stand against the national chauvinism so prevalent among American workers. At the rare times when they actually refer to an issue beyond their typically opportunist scope, such as their sporadic opposition to the Vietnamese war, they can only echo the social-patriotism of the Woodcock bureaucracy. The November 1969 issue of *UNC* uncritically quoted the Alliance for Labor Action (ALA) statement

against the war, which attacked "the reprehensible activities of a small minority who burn the American flag and equate Anti-Americanism with Anti-War."

The opportunists of the UNC appear to be vying with Woodcock for the favors of the imperialist rulers. Last spring's UAW Constitutional Convention endorsed a proposal to seek national legislation requiring federal licensing of multi-national corporations seeking to export capital. At its recent conference in Detroit, the official spokesman for the UNC on unemployment, MacFadden, called for the same thing: "restrictions on the export of capital" (See *WV* No. 17, March 1973). According to the UAW formula, such a license to export capital would be



FOCUS

Fremont, Calif. auto workers on eve of 1970 GM strike move to prevent a shipment of trucks. "Radical" Paul Schrade, then West Coast UAW director, denounced action as work of students, formed liaison committee with cops against "outside agitators," set up goon squad and called tactical police to prevent rally called by oppositionist United Action Caucus.

issued only if the corporation could prove that the projected export was "in the national interest of the U.S." (*Monthly Labor Review*, July 1972).

Defense of "the national interest of the U.S." means nothing other than defense of the interests of the U.S. ruling class. The American workers have no stake in furthering the imperial aims of these parasites—the multinational corporations must be fought with international proletarian solidarity, not with narrow nationalist protectionism. Without an effective organization which unites in a single force the workers of every country, the capitalists will continue to pit one group of workers against another, using the threat of runaway factories to defeat those struggles which remain limited within a single nation (a technique used successfully by Ford to win strikes in Argentina in 1966 and in Belgium in 1968).

Similarly, the American auto workers are doomed to failure unless they recognize the necessity of forging bonds with their brothers and sisters across the world, through international strike solidarity, a truly international metalworkers union with uniformly high wage scales and a program of international class struggle.

"Opposition" is Cheap

Opposition to the openly defeatist policies of the International leadership costs little these days. A militant, anti-Woodcock posture is the minimum needed for any UAW local leader to maintain credibility today among the union ranks. Every ambitious careerist desiring higher office in the union is leaping onto the "critical" bandwagon, and loyally tagging along behind are his "socialist" covers—one or another allegedly revolutionary group to protect his flank from attack as he prepares to lead the workers into yet another reformist dead-end.

A case in point: A certain Bob Carter at the Jefferson Chrysler plant in Detroit was elected to the Executive

Board of Local 7 with the support of the United Justice Caucus, an IS-supported local caucus affiliated to UNC. Carter then promptly turned around and quit the caucus. He had apparently decided that the caucus would alienate the workers by attacking the International leadership instead of devoting itself exclusively to the problems of Local 7. The plaintive query of the UJC: "Why does he suddenly discover a need to resign now?" is left unanswered (*United Justice Train*, January 1973). There is a moral in this for those who are willing to learn: if you grovel at the feet of an opportunist, he is quite likely to use you as a stepladder to power. The IS will never learn from this, since the lesson destroys its entire basis of existence.

Faced with ripening opportunities for political activity in the UAW, almost every fake-left organization now has supporters in this union. Yet not one of them calls for a *communist* policy in the unions. Stalinist, social-democrat, Maoist, pseudo-Trotskyist—every self-styled "Marxist" tendency on the American left is following a deliberate and consistent policy of explicit reformism in the trade unions. Having abandoned any prospect of winning the working class to an internationalist, revolutionary consciousness, these universally opportunist formations are competing with one another to see how fast they can dissolve themselves into the UNC and the "rank and file."

Typical of "radical" programs to be advanced for the 1973 contract battles are those proposed by supporters of the Communist Party (CP), International Socialists (IS) and the Workers League (WL). One is struck by an amazing similarity between these programs, which share a number of elements: higher wages, shorter hours, the right to strike, a range of minor reforms and the complete absence of anything that would qualitatively distinguish them from old-fashioned, "pure-

and-simple" reformist trade unionism.

The Question of Power

Nowhere do any of these groups pose the necessity for a struggle for *power*, the need to organize the working class to extend the endless skirmishes for partial demands into an all-out battle for the expropriation of the capitalists, the overthrow of their government and the establishment of a socialist society under the rule of a workers state. Instead, the long-range goal is always separated from, and subordinate to, the immediate economic demands of the next set of contract negotiations.

All these ostensibly revolutionary groups reveal an opportunist adaptation to the present backwardness of the masses instead of a commitment to building the revolutionary vanguard through raising the level of consciousness of the class. Certainly it is essential for revolutionists to participate in the everyday struggles of the workers over wages, hours and working conditions in order to ensure the closest contact between the class and the party—to establish its authority and legitimacy in the eyes of the workers by demonstrating in practice that the communists are the most militant, far-sighted and consistent defenders of the interests of the class. This does not mean, however, that we attempt to win leadership as simple trade unionists, within the framework established by capitalism and its defenders in the labor bureaucracy.

We aspire to lead the class as *communists*, which will often necessarily entail counterposing the historic, world-wide interests of the proletariat to its immediate consciousness. In fact, except during periods of revolutionary upheaval, during which the class leaps ahead to transcend its traditional patterns, the consciousness of the working class will generally reflect the dominant ideology, the ideas which serve the interests of bourgeois society. Capitalism is seen as perma-

nent and omnipotent; struggle against it, as futile and utopian. If the continued existence of the capitalist system is taken as the framework, the only struggle possible is simple trade unionism—the fight to sell one's labor power at the highest price; to make exploitation more expensive, but never to abolish it altogether. The ideology of trade unionism is bourgeois ideology, as Lenin insisted in *What is to Be Done?*, the classic attack on trade-union reformism and economism, a work which has lost none of its polemical relevance.

How then is it possible to win the working masses to a truly revolutionary perspective, to an understanding of the need to overthrow capitalism and replace it with the dictatorship of the proletariat? It was the third, Communist International, while it was still the world party of Lenin and Trotsky, which first clearly posed the answer:

"The Communist Parties must put forward demands, and they must fight with the masses for their fulfillment, regardless of whether they are in keeping with the profit system of the capitalist class or not. What the Communist Parties have to consider is not whether capitalist industry is able to continue to exist and compete, but rather whether the proletariat has reached the limit of its endurance.... *The alternative offered by the Communist International in place of the minimum program of the reformists and centrists is: the struggle for the concrete needs of the proletariat and demands, which, in their application, undermine the power of the bourgeoisie, organize the proletariat, form the transition to proletarian dictatorship, even if the latter have not yet grasped the meaning of such proletarian dictatorship.* As the struggle for these demands embraces ever-growing masses, as the needs of the masses clash with the needs of capitalist society, the workers will realize that capitalism must die if they are to live." [emphasis in original]

—*Theses and Resolutions adopted at the Third World Congress of the Communist International, "Theses on Tactics," June-July 1921*



THE UAW IN PICTURES

Detroit Chrysler sit-down strikers in March 1937 respond to court injunction ordering them out of the plant.

The American section of the Comintern carried out work in the unions based on these guidelines, by calling for a "united front of the revolutionary and progressive elements in the labor unions...through the Trade Union Educational League." Unlike the "united fronts" based on minimal reformist programs so common today, the TUEL was based on a full program which clearly distinguished it from the reformist "socialists" and trade-union bureaucrats:

"This organization is carrying on an aggressive campaign in favor of the program of the Red International of Labor Unions, including a policy of aggressive class struggle instead of class collaboration, the workers' republic, independent working-class political action, affiliation with the Moscow International, the general strike, support of the Russian Revolution, industrial unionism through amalgamation, etc."

—*The Labor Herald*, February 1923

This was the tradition which Trotsky developed a step further with the Transitional Program of 1938, the founding document of the Fourth International. The transitional program is necessary to bridge the gap between the existing consciousness of the class and revolutionary class-consciousness, i.e., communism. It does not represent an abstract list of slogans to ensure one's revolutionary purity; the transitional program embodies a *strategy* of concrete struggles, by posing the real solutions to the oppression of the working masses—solutions which fundamentally challenge the survival of outmoded capitalism and point to international socialist revolution as the only possible answer to the needs of the masses.

Pseudo-Trotskyists like the Workers League and International Socialists reject the Transitional Program as artificial, sectarian and irrelevant to

the needs of the workers in this period. By abandoning a principled program based on the *objective* needs of the working class for the role of left-wing of bourgeois trade unionism, they are condemning themselves to historical irrelevance.

The Spartacist League consistently defends a program for the unions which reflects the lessons learned by the communist movement; thus the SL only supports caucuses which represent a qualitative break with reformist union-

ism and seek to provide an alternative leadership on the basis of principled revolutionary politics instead of opportunist adaptationism and reformist panaceas. Because of this, the SL will be a real force in developing revolutionary consciousness through the development of a solid core of communist cadre in the unions, capable of exerting independent and revolutionary leadership, long after the other tendencies have thoroughly betrayed the revolutionary aspirations and goals of the working class. ■

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard*
No. 18, April 1973

Which Program for Auto Workers?

Business Unionism vs. Class Struggle

Faced with a deteriorating competitive position internationally, the auto companies have been attempting to boost their profit margins through productivity drives combining fantastic speedup, long overtime hours and increased layoffs, further aided by the capitalist government's wage-freezing policies. Recent statements by various UAW officers, pledging "reasonable" bargaining and urging voluntary wage-price restraints for the upcoming contract, have the clear purpose of shackling auto workers to the companies' steamroller profit drive.

Woodcock's Bargaining Program: Don't Tie Me Down

The Collective Bargaining Program, passed with only scattered opposition at the 22-23 March Detroit Bargaining Convention, pleads with management to agree with a "harmony clause" which defines the supposed identity of interests shared by the companies and the union. Despite its 43-page length, the

program fails to include *any* hard bargaining proposals, leaving Woodcock and friends plenty of room to maneuver and sell out, as the bargaining proceeds.

On speedup, the program vaguely pledges to seek "further protection" in line with the UAW's "historic opposition to any attempt to speedup." This "historic opposition" is a complete fabrication since the UAW bureaucracy has consistently over the years allowed the companies total control over line speed, layoffs and working conditions, in exchange for a few cents an hour wage increase.

On overtime, the bureaucrats make a concession to the ranks by declaring that "what workers really want is that overtime be voluntary and not compulsory"—but then leave the backdoor open by emphasizing increased overtime rates, thus suggesting a settlement in which overtime would just cost the companies a bit more.

On wages, the program does not reject the UAW's traditional acceptance of company policies of tying wages to productivity increases plus cost of liv-

ing raises, and simply suggests that current arithmetic in determining these factors may need "adjustment." Nowhere in this program does the Woodcock regime oppose the government's wage freeze (still in effect, even though price controls have been abolished), much less call for a struggle to break the controls. How could they, with Woodcock himself on the advisory board (and now the parallel board on National Industrial Peace, a polite phrase for strikebreaking and union-busting)?

On working conditions, which are so rapidly deteriorating, the program contains not *one* single demand, but instead vaguely calls for "management and the union to embark on a joint, cooperative endeavor in which they seek out and mutually implement the ways and means to achieve this next step in the democratization of the workplace—creating job satisfaction for the individual worker, to enhance the quality of work life and give it deeper meaning and significance"!

The whole program of the bureaucrats is summed up neatly in their own words that "we will not go to the bargaining table in 1973 looking for a fight." This sweet talk for the companies means a sure sellout for auto workers.

Class Struggle vs. Sellout

While UAW leaders prepare their cozy deals with the companies, auto-workers must face the rapidly deteriorating working conditions in the plants, the murderous speedup and compulsory overtime, the galloping inflation and the threat of unemployment in the recession already being predicted for the coming fall. No cozy deals for the ranks! For the mass of the working class the *only* alternative to the sellout policies of the labor bureaucracy is a program of revolutionary struggle.

The conditions in the auto shops spontaneously throw up a number of demands as an instinctive reaction of self-defense. These include, for instance, strikes against the wage freeze, 30 hours work for 40 hours pay, voluntary overtime, rapid settlement of griev-

ances, lowering the line speed and including it in the contract and international strike action by autoworkers. In different combinations, such demands constitute the program of practically every opposition group in the UAW.

It is the duty of every class-conscious militant to resolutely lead the fight against the capitalists in strikes called on the basis of even such limited class demands. But as communists we must also explain that these demands are by themselves insufficient. Even with speeded-up grievance procedures, for instance, the ultimate power still remains with the company, which means constant harrassment by foremen, attempts to increase the speed of production, arbitrary firings, etc. The situation urgently calls for raising the demand of *workers control of production* and the formation of *factory committees* to fight for this demand. Even "30 for 40" is only a concrete application of the demand for *no layoffs*, a *sliding scale of wages and hours* to provide work for all. Since the capitalists will naturally claim bankruptcy when faced with such demands, it is necessary to call for *opening the books* and for *expropriation of the auto companies without compensation*. Clearly such far-reaching demands cannot be won simply by militant plant struggles, and thus it is imperative to take the fight to the political level, by calling for a *workers party* based on the trade unions and for a *workers government* to implement such a program. All of these *transitional* demands start from the immediate conditions facing the workers in the shops, but point to the inescapable conclusion that to change the present dehumanizing conditions it is necessary to change the whole system under which we live. While supporting struggles around even the most minimal class demands, it is the duty of communists to widen the struggle, to raise transitional demands which lead to the achievement of the *real* answer to workers exploitation—socialist revolution. A trade-union program limited to simple trade-union demands, in contrast, is necessarily a reformist pro-

gram, a program which in this epoch can only lead to *defeat* for the class.

The response of the American left to the crushing defeat planned for auto workers by the Big 3 and the UAW tops is virtually uniform. From the Stalinist CP, to the Maoists, to the social-democratic International Socialists, to the pseudo-Trotskyist Workers League there exists a remarkable consensus: Now is "not the time" for resolutely advancing a program of revolutionary transitional demands designed to break the auto ranks from their treacherous misleaders and prepare them for battle against both their employers and the capitalist state; rather, it is time to string together a hodge-podge of reformist demands restricted firmly *within* the framework of capitalism. This logic prepares virtually every left organization for capitulation to one or another wing of the trade-union bureaucracy or its would-be, look-alike replacements.

The trade-union work of any working-class tendency is a revealing index of its real character: Not only is it here that self-avowed revolutionary organizations present their face directly to the organized working class, but also it is here that the day-to-day pressures toward accommodation and reformism are greatest. Particularly at contract time, pressures mount enormously "to fight for something we can win *now*." Most of the American left has predictably caved in to these pressures in the current UAW-Big 3 bargaining maneuvers.

United National Caucus

The only visible national grouping inside the UAW aspiring to "dissident" status, the United National Caucus (UNC), proved itself to be completely impotent in the face of Woodcock's laundry list of ambiguous proposals. UNC co-chairman Pete Kelly spoke from the convention floor noting the "many good things in the bargaining resolution" but expressing skepticism that they would be won. He proceeded

to key in on the blatantly class-collaborationist "harmony clause." In effect, Kelly attempted to shame the leaders and delegates into opposing this clause, hinting how difficult it would be to defend it before the ranks, while ignoring the fact that it precisely defined the existing relationship between bureaucracy and company.

Edith Fox was the only other prominent UNC member to speak on the floor. She gave the typical "trade-union militant" speech, predicting a sellout in the bargaining process and calling for "workers control" over conditions. But an examination of what the UNC means by "workers control" is just one illustration of how radical phraseology receives reformist content in the mouths of opportunists.

Writing in 1931, Trotsky explained the revolutionary content of this demand:

"Workers control through factory councils is conceivable only on the basis of sharp class struggle, not collaboration. But this really means dual power in the enterprises, in the trusts, in all branches of industry, in the whole economy."

—*The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*

The UNC transforms "workers control" from a demand linked inextricably to the call for expropriation of industry and the construction of a workers government into a formal contractual reform, to be negotiated and enforced as if it were a pension proposal!

Thus both Kelly and Fox continued the UNC's apolitical brand of "militant trade unionism." Even the call for a congress of labor to build a labor party (albeit a proposal with no programmatic content aside from the UNC's reformist pabulum), passed at the UNC's February Production Workers' Conference, was not mentioned at the UAW Bargaining Convention. Just as at the 1972 UAW Convention, when the UNC submerged its "politics" (the call for a labor party and nominal opposition to the Vietnam war) in favor of a bloc with other caucuses to push for referendum election of International

officers, the UNC again demonstrated its gross opportunism.

International Socialists Support Aspiring Bureaucrats

The left social-democratic International Socialists (IS) is the most important "left" cover for the UNC. Having accomplished a turn from New Left middle-class radicalism, the IS is now the foremost bearer of "radical work-erism," a more proletarian-tinted version of its previous opportunist politics. Based on the belief that repeated struggle around shop-floor issues will lead the working class to socialist consciousness while simultaneously assuring its organization a "working-class character," the IS's theories comprise a contemporary re-creation of the revisionist theories of spontaneity, economism and trade-union reformism that the Marxist movement has continually been forced to struggle against.

Indeed, to discuss the UNC's reformist program is to describe the IS's, for the IS raises no independent positions and limits its public differences with the UNC to tactful advice and polite criticism. Thus, *Workers' Power* No. 75 (30 March-12 April), reporting on the UAW Bargaining Convention, noted the UNC's "excellent alternative program of contract demands" but sighed that the UNC leadership was "unprepared" and without a "clear strategy for a fight against Woodcock."

Communist Party and Progressive Labor

The Communist Party's approach to the UAW is characterized by a cringing cowardliness even surpassing the UNC and IS. Concerned lest it appear a counterposed leadership, the CP's reportage of events in the UAW varies from slight criticism of Woodcock to glowing reports of his latest proposals to this or that Congressional Committee, masterfully transforming "objective reporting" into tacit approval.

The CP's specific program for the upcoming contract was outlined in the 13 February *Daily World*. The only real points of note were the call for a permanent production workers council and the call for an end to overtime with 30 hours work for 40 hours pay.

The proposal for a permanent production workers council (also supported by the UNC and IS) is clearly meaningless without a struggle for an alternative UAW leadership based on a revolutionary program. The discovery of the "30 for 40" demand is relatively new for the CP. But with the incredible speedup and overtime in the auto plants, and with rising unemployment, the CP was forced to include this demand in its grab-bag, but only at the expense of robbing it of its essential revolutionary thrust, and turning it into a presumably "winnable" reform.

This course is perfectly in line with the CP's "anti-monopoly coalition" strategy: a strategy based on pressuring the liberal wing of the ruling class for a more peaceful, "kind," domesticated imperialism. The CP's recent "left turn" away from overt support to the Democratic Party is only a tactical ploy designed to increase its *own* role in managing a more "liberal" capitalist order. Its work in the trade unions continues to serve its real appetites: blocs with liberal bureaucrats and capitalists for the preservation of "peacefully coexisting" international capitalism.

The Progressive Labor Party (PL), caught in a period of organizational disintegration and rapid rightward retreat, has also latched onto "30 for 40" as a cure-all for the working class. The 22 March *Challenge* lists a multitude of issues confronting the auto workers on the eve of the Detroit Bargaining Convention (layoffs, speedup, inflation, working conditions, etc.) and proudly proclaims: "the answer to ALL these problems? UAW members in Workers Action Movement had one—Thirty Hours Work for Forty Hours Pay."

Like the CP, PL for years opposed the call for "30 for 40" as "Trotskyite" and "utopian." But seeking a single-

issue gimmick to arouse its demoralized and confused members, who have been leaving PL in droves, it has now decided that this demand is really only a reform demand—the best reform demand. PL continually stresses that "30 for 40" is "possible" under capitalism, that some unions already have a shorter work week and that the capitalists could still make plenty of profits. Consequently, PL's supporters in the unions say they are for "32 for 40" or "36 for 40" as well; there is no real difference to them.

Workers League Defends Simple Trade Unionism

In contrast to the previously mentioned groups, the Workers League sports a facade of Trotskyism but only as a cover for its consistently opportunist appetites. Thus the WL calls for a labor party, but proposes that it be built by the present trade-union bureaucracy! Likewise it calls for a Marxist opposition in the unions, while at the same time proclaiming that the key issue is a 20% wage increase.

Earlier this year the WL set up the "Trade Union Alliance for a Labor Party" as a vehicle to coordinate its relatively sparse trade-union work. By its name the TUALP brings to mind the ill-fated "Trade Unionists for a Labor Party," set up by the WL in 1967. At that time, these "Trotskyists" vigorously opposed adopting motions (offered by the Spartacist League) which would give a revolutionary programmatic content to the call for a labor party. (The WL explicitly refused to include in the program any mention of opposition to racial oppression or the imperialist Vietnam war.)

True to form, at the February TUALP conference a program was adopted for a "National Auto Caucus" which contains *not one single demand going beyond simple trade unionism*. Some "Marxist opposition" this, which finds it impossible to mention international working-class solidarity, oppo-

sition to racial and sexual discrimination, workers control of production, expropriation of the auto industry without compensation—omitting even the call for a labor party and a workers government! Instead they concentrate on issues such as "30 and out," increased vacations and a 20 percent wage increase (*Bulletin*, 26 March 1973).

In the same issue, the *Bulletin* publishes an "Open Letter to the United National Caucus" by Rudy Sulenta, a supporter of TUALP. Introducing the letter, it writes that "A very important step was taken to build a national caucus in the UAW with a campaign for a 20 percent increase in pay." Sulenta makes it even more explicit, declaring that "contrary to what Woodcock says, the central issue in the upcoming contract is the fight over wage increases....It is the fight for a 20 percent wage increase...that the political fight is raised." Sulenta rightly accuses the UNC leadership of reducing the struggle to simple trade union policies and ignoring its own demand for a labor party. But then that is precisely what the TUALP auto caucus program does as well!

In short the WL has capitulated to the pressures for a "here and now" program of contract demands, separated from any kind of revolutionary perspective. Moreover, it plays directly into the bureaucracy's hands by proclaiming the wage struggle the "central issue" of the 1973 contract. For years the UAW tops have sold out on working conditions and local grievances in exchange for some limited wage gains.

Well aware of the opportunist implications of the TUALP auto caucus program, and feeling rather unprotected on its left flank, the *Bulletin* took the unusual step of actually replying to an article in the last issue of *Workers Vanguard* on the auto negotiations. According to the WL's front page editorial: "Spartacist says essentially the following about the struggle in auto. Wages, line speed, job security, grievances and the right to strike are all trade union demands. But Marxists,

at least according to Spartacist, are for revolution as opposed to winning these 'reformist' demands. Spartacist therefore concludes that the basic demand that must be made is: 'Communism'." Wohlforth is a past master at polemic by non-quotation, a method which permits him the liberty of freely distorting his opponents' arguments out of all recognition. Let us see what the *WV* article actually said:

"One is struck by an amazing similarity between these programs [of the CP, IS and WL], which share a number of elements: higher wages, shorter hours, the right to strike, a range of minor reforms and the complete absence of anything that would qualitatively distinguish them from old-fashioned, 'pure-and-simple' reformist trade unionism.

"Nowhere do any of these groups pose the necessity for a struggle for *power*. ... Instead, the long-range goal is always separated from, and subordinate to, the immediate economic demands of the next set of contract negotiations. ... Certainly it is essential for revolutionists to participate in the everyday struggles of the workers over wages, hours and working conditions in order to ensure the closest contact between the class and the party. ... This does not mean, however, that we attempt to win leadership as simple trade unionists. ... We aspire to lead the class as *communists*, which will often necessarily entail counterposing the historic world-wide interests of the proletariat to its immediate consciousness."

Where in this do you read the Spartacist League opposes winning reform demands, Brother Wohlforth? You can indeed read that we oppose merely raising contract reform demands in separation from the overall revolutionary program. You can read in our press that the SL, together with Trotsky, believes that the transitional program is the program for struggle in the unions, not bits and pieces of the program, or simple trade union reform demands. And it is this which grates on the WL, for it is precisely trade-union reformism which is the

methodology of the TUALP auto caucus program and this *Bulletin* editorial.

Wohlforth Repudiates Transitional Program

The *Bulletin* article goes on to dot the "i's" and cross the "t's" of its opportunism, declaring that "the point is that trade union questions are becoming revolutionary issues.... But the fact is that the fundamental contradiction within capitalism, suppressed for an entire historical period through wild inflation [!], is radically transforming the relations between classes.... That is why simple trade union demands are so profoundly revolutionary today."

This nonsense clearly reveals the objectivism which lies at the heart of Wohlforth's "dialectics." In this anti-Marxist view, the objective factors completely dominate social struggles and the struggle for the revolutionary program is therefore irrelevant. Earlier, the transitional program was, for Wohlforth, inapplicable because the fundamental contradiction of capitalism was "suppressed for an entire historical period" (shades of Mandel's "neocapitalism"?). And today it has become superfluous; now even simple trade union demands are revolutionary. Thus the WL now formalizes its repudiation of the transitional program.

The WL's logic is that the final "crisis" of capitalism (whose imminent arrival the WL has been heralding since 1962 or so) is now so grave that consistent reformist struggle—e.g., for wage increases—becomes inherently revolutionary. This exactly parallels the petty-bourgeois line of the SWP that "consistent nationalism" (or "consistent feminism," for that matter) is socialism. The purpose of the WL's endless crisis-mongering is to justify an openly reformist program. The WL reasons that trade-union bureaucrats can be forced into building a labor party and aspiring bureaucrats can be supported because they will inevitably be forced to fight for the interests of the working class. This was precisely

the logic of Pabloism, the post-war revisionism which shattered the Fourth International: that Stalinists and social-democrats could be forced to lead the proletarian revolution under the pressure of the "objective situation."

Certainly it is true that reform struggles have revolutionary implications. The link is this: In the epoch of declining capitalism (imperialism) it is not possible to win systematic reforms which qualitatively improve the conditions of the working class without destroying the capitalist system itself. Therefore, in fighting for reform demands it is absolutely essential that revolutionaries concretely link these struggles to the fight for socialism. To fight simply for trade-union demands, as the WL does, leaves the class unprepared for the battle necessary to win them, and implies a utopia in which auto workers will have "30 for 40," \$650/month pensions after 30 years, 20 percent wage increases and the like—without smashing capitalism. Transitional demands begin with the concrete needs of the class (for instance, a struggle against the killing overtime, unemployment, inflation and dangerous working conditions), and formulate an alternative which *directly* leads to an attack on the system itself (sliding scale of wages and hours, workers control of production), linking

this explicitly to the struggle for power (workers party and workers government). But to the "Marxists" of the Workers League, the struggle for this program is "abstract propaganda" as opposed to their own, very concrete agitation—for a few more crumbs.

Wohlforth's "theories" were answered some 70 years ago by Lenin in *What Is to Be Done?*:

"The economic struggle merely 'impels' the workers to realize the government's attitude towards the working class. Consequently, however much we may try to 'lend the economic struggle itself a political character,' we shall never be able to develop the political consciousness of the workers (to the level of social-democratic political consciousness) by keeping within the framework of the economic struggle, for that framework is too narrow."

It is not enough to simply have the largest list of demands at contract time, nor to ask for the "most" in the collective bargaining relationship. It is necessary to transcend the strictly economic relation of capitalist to worker to lead to the understanding of the nature of the capitalist order as a whole, and the need for the independent mobilization of the working class to destroy it. This is the approach of the Spartacist League, the Marxist approach, to work in the trade unions. ■

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard*
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Out-Bureaucrats Seek to Co-opt Angry Ranks in Fremont UAW Elections

OAKLAND, Calif.—Election time in a local union often brings with it the sudden development of caucuses which are for militant struggle against the company and "membership control" of the union, and which are particularly good at denouncing each other's various crimes, especially the crimes of an incumbent leadership or ex-leadership. Such caucuses come and go very easily. Invariably, they serve only to install new leaders who pursue the same rotten policies and sellouts as the old leaders. The membership can only lose in such a contest.

This is the situation facing auto workers in UAW Local 1364 at the Fremont, Calif., GM plant in upcoming local elections in June. The popular "Brotherhood Caucus" has absolutely nothing more to offer than the rotten, incumbent "Unity" group led by John "Chief" Herrera. This point was strongly underlined by the recent en-

dorsement of the Brotherhood by the "Blue Slate"—the caucus of the deservedly discredited *previous* local leadership! In a completely demagogic posture of militancy, these out-bureaucrats, who for years did nothing for the membership, put out a leaflet appropriately entitled "Time for a Change," saying "we (the Blue Slate) have decided to join the Brotherhood to eliminate the stranglehold on our local union. . . . With PEOPLE POWER we can overcome the dictatorial leadership that now exists."

New Skirmish, Old Feud

The feud between Herrera's "Unity" clique and the clique around Floyd Bueno and the "Blue Slate" goes back about a decade, when the present Local 1364 was formed by a fusion of Locals 333 and 1031, in response to GM's opening of the Fremont plant to replace the old Fisher Body and Chevy plants

in Oakland. The two old bureaucracies of Bueno and Herrera have been fighting for control ever since, to the detriment of the membership.

After dumping Bueno and riding into power in 1969 on the back of the "Headlighter Caucus," Herrera immediately began to line up with the International leadership and adopt all the policies which had built up tremendous bitterness against Bueno's gang. He sat on overwork grievances, suppressed all discussion of the union's demands during the 1970 GM strike and even called the police to suppress an opposition-backed strike rally at the plant, blaming "outside agitators" (see *WV* No. 12, October 1972).

Now the Brotherhood has appeared, organized by, among others, one Earlie Mays, who has been accused of conniving with company officials during the 1970 strike. Although the Brotherhood Caucus claims to have recruited 1500 local members since November 1972, there was no way for the membership to tell what the Brotherhood stood for until December, when the caucus finally issued a statement of purpose. This statement was based on generalities such as, "The Brotherhood Caucus is a coalition of other caucuses and concerned brothers and sisters uniting to stop the atrocious, and capricious crimes against the membership." Exactly *how* this was to be done was left unsaid.

Gradually the caucus has found issues to use against the corrupt incumbents: a Brotherhood leaflet in February boasted about exposing the "exploitation" of union funds and winning "the right to check the financial secretary's books or have the Federal Government do it." This threat to have the bosses' government intervene in a workers' organization, if carried out, is no different than Herrera's use of the cops against strike militants. The capitalist government intervenes in workers organizations only to weaken or destroy the workers' ability to struggle against the capitalists. Use of the police, courts, etc., within the labor movement is the method of bureaucrats

or would-be bureaucrats, whose power rests largely on intimidation, graft and alliances with sections of the bourgeoisie.

Brotherhood Caucus Stalls on Company Firings

This issue has become important at Fremont, where in the past six months GM has launched a conscious drive to eliminate known militants, radicals and "communists" from the plant, in an attempt to intimidate the workers and prevent a strike at the contract expiration date in September. Especially after the recent witchhunt against the Maoist "Venceremos" group in the Bay Area, numerous people have been fired at Fremont for "falsification" of employment applications. One of those fired issued a leaflet documenting how he had managed to see his personnel file, which contained a report from the House Internal Security Committee identifying him as a member of the Revolutionary Union. When the issue of these obviously government-backed political firings was raised at the 25 February local meeting, the Herrera regime, backed by International Rep. Harold Dunne, defended their current policy, which has allowed the firings to proceed.

On this important issue, the Brotherhood has stalled for months and has consistently shrunk from organizing united action to defend *all* those fired for alleged "falsification." On 10 May, the Brotherhood finally took the step of holding a rally (which was attended by less than one tenth of the caucus' claimed "membership") to announce the filing of a suit against GM with the NLRB. A Brotherhood leaflet to the workers explained that the action was to defend "*any and every*" person who was fired, but the press release to the bourgeois media (distributors refused to give it to a *WV* reporter!) stated that the purpose of the case was to stop GM's "attempt to obstruct the Brotherhood from organizing itself as a union caucus." The Brotherhood's only concern is for the firing of their

own organizers, such as Pat Klonsky; they do nothing for a united *class* defense of the victimized militants.

"Revolutionary" Cover for Opportunism

The so-called "revolutionary" groups who have uncritically cheered the Brotherhood in their press must themselves take responsibility for the lack of a determined, *unified* working-class defense against the capitalist repression and for the lack of a genuine working-class political alternative in the election. The October League (OL), which arose with the New Left's turn to Maoism, fails to call for united working-class struggle, instead proclaiming vaguely "People of the World Unite!" In the unions, instead of putting forward a definite class program, it calls for "practicing the mass line, that is, gathering the unsystematic and spontaneous ideas of the masses and formalizing them into demands, programs and actions" (*The Call*, January 1973). This vagueness has, however, a very specific purpose; namely it is a cover for teaming up with operators like the leadership of the Brotherhood Caucus, and through them with a section of

the bureaucracy itself (the "Blue Slate").

Similarly, the Maoist Revolutionary Union also tails after the Brotherhood uncritically. Worried about having their rank opportunism exposed before the working class, RUers have taken to using the bureaucrats' own gangster tactics against *Workers Vanguard* salesmen outside the plant. The simple appearance of an apolitical opposition caucus, like the Brotherhood, seems to draw out the opportunists of every stripe, even sucking in the fake-Trotskyist Workers League. "The formation of the Brotherhood Caucus reflects the enormous anger of the ranks and their determination to build a new leadership in the UAW," wrote the *Bulletin* (11 December 1972). The WL has now withdrawn its enthusiastic endorsement of the Brotherhood only in order to push its *own* reformist auto program, whose central demand is a 20 percent wage increase.

Faced with an array of bureaucratic cliques and opportunist caucuses, militants in the UAW have only one choice: to unite in a class-struggle caucus basing itself on a program of working-class struggle against capitalism, the Trotskyist transitional program. ■

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard*
No. 21, 25 May 1973

Witchhunt in Jersey Auto

In a pre-strike political purge now underway at the Mahwah, N.J. assembly division, Ford has fired three leaders of oppositional caucuses in UAW Local 906 and given disciplinary layoffs to several more. The company is also cracking down on distribution of political literature, searching individuals and rifling lockers for "evidence" in the critical months before the contract expires on September 14.

The first victim in the recent rash of firings was Wilbur Haddock, a member of the United Black Workers (UBW) who had been the only remaining leader of the April 1969 Mahwah strike which shut down the night shift for several days. Next fired was Paul Levin, for getting only verbal, not written, permission to skip work to serve on jury duty. He was followed by Ricky Eisenberg, suspended indefinitely for handing out unauthorized literature and subsequently fired for absenteeism. Levin and Eisenberg, both members of the Local's United Rank and File Committee, were fired shortly after a smear leaflet signed by a so-called "Mahwah branch of the Anti-Communist Coalition" had red-baited them.

URFC members Pedro Rentas and Harry Mullen received disciplinary layoffs after being accused of distrib-

uting "illegal" literature. The URFC is supported by El Comité (a Puerto Rican nationalist group), the International Socialists and the CP. The CP's *Daily World*, however, has not had a word to say about the victimizations. About the same time Larry Goldbetter was suspended after ten copies of a socialist paper and other pamphlets were found in his locker during a company search.

Most of the firings and suspensions followed a walkout three weeks ago in Commercial (the truck department) over speedup and overwork. Eighty-four participants received suspensions which the Local 906 Reilly leadership claims to have been unable to reverse. Dissatisfaction of the rank and file has also been building over the issues of the leadership's failure to fight the elimination of committeemen; of the joint union-company "harmony clause"; and the betrayal of a struggle to fire a foreman, who was caught undoing the work of a man on the line in order to frame him. (The foreman had received his promotion from the ranks when he made an efficiency suggestion which eliminated eight jobs.) After promising to get the foreman fired, the union settled to have him merely busted back to the line, and thus reinstated in the union!

While claiming they were unable to throw this company fink out of the union, the bureaucracy now is obviously stalling while Ford purges the plant of many of its militant fighters. Reilly, a Woodcock loyalist, is trying to ensure that the upcoming negotiations will come off without any annoying objections from the ranks.

The response to Ford's move to smash all potentially militant currents during the combustible pre-contract period is an acid test to separate those in the unions who fight for the working class from those who reduce the slogan "an injury to one is an injury to all" to hollow demagoguery. Both wings of the Local 906 leadership, supporting President Joe Reilly or Vice President Dave Gardner respectively, are using the mishandling of the defense cases as a political football to attack each other. Gardner recently accused Reilly of playing politics with the firings and trying to bargain away Levin's job in exchange for other concessions. In recent leaflets the leadership has openly lent its support to the "anonymous" red-baiting campaign accompanying Ford's crackdown by blaming disunity in the union on "outside forces."

Despite this, apparently none of the fired workers, nor any of the oppositional caucuses under attack took the floor at the April union meeting to demand that the leadership fight to defend its members. All the caucuses have missed the glaring need for a united class defense against the witchhunt. A Workers' Action Movement leaflet recently distributed called only for the black worker to be rehired, ignoring the two fired whites! PL in typical sectarian fashion called only for defense of its own supporter, while stupidly fingering him by identifying him in a leaflet as a member of Progressive Labor. The UBW, which has criticized the bureaucracy in leaflets for failing to defend all those fired, has never in the union meetings called for defense of any but their own members.

At the May meeting, Reilly dodged a demand, which had been gaining momentum, for the union to go on record for a united defense of all those fired, saying it was unnecessary since he had already pledged himself to this goal in his oath of office. Thus an opportunity to confront the company with a strong statement of determination was missed. ■

—reprinted from Workers Vanguard
No. 21, 25 May 1973

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