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# UAW PURGES MILITANTS

By Terry Shephard

On Thursday, August 16, UAW Secretary-Treasurer Emil Mazey declared war on radicals and union militants as the UAW leadership massed a thousand man goon squad outside the Chrysler Mack Avenue Stamping plant, breaking up a picket line that was keeping the plant closed.

Two days earlier William Gilbreth, a supporter of the Workers' Action Movement who had been fired after leading an attempted walkout, returned to the plant and sat on a conveyor line to protest working conditions. When plant guards roused him, he defended himself with a pipe, and sent two guards to the hospital.

The guards' attack sparked a sit-in, led by Gilbreth and other members of WAM, who occupied the plant with about 70 supporters throughout the night. They were only driven out the next morning after Gilbreth and a key supporter, Clinton Smith, had been arrested.

This action was the third in a series of actions which have closed individual Detroit Chrysler plants during August.

Earlier, two workers at the Chrysler Jefferson Assembly plant, Isaac Shorter and Larry Carter, seized a power cage and refused to leave

until (1) Chrysler fired a foreman who had been harassing workers with racist epithets and (2) the protesters were granted amnesty. The audacity and imagination shown by these two militant workers, forced into individual action by the do-nothing UAW bureaucracy, caught both the company and UAW hacks completely unaware.

Their victory, won with the help of hundreds of supporters who refused to allow the company or police to remove them from the power cage, provides a small glimpse of the tremendous potential contained in a national strike of the Big Three. Their action is only a tiny sample of the revolutionary energy and ini-

tiative suppressed by union tops, who fear class struggle like the plague.

Two weeks after the Jefferson take-over, a wildcat strike broke out at the Chrysler Forge plant in Detroit, triggered by unsafe working conditions, the firing of 12 workers, and the reinstatement of a foreman.

But by now the company and the union were prepared. Chrysler refused to meet the demands of the strikers and got a court injunction outlawing the strike.

Doug Fraser, UAW Vice President in charge of Chrysler operations, made a tour of the plant and discovered—surprise!—that it was

indeed filthy and unsafe to work in. "Unfortunately," he explained, he couldn't help the strikers because their action was 'unauthorized.' But he would be willing to authorize a strike for sometime in the future if only the workers would return to work now.

At a stormy special meeting of striking Local 47, the 500 workers present split nearly 50-50 over whether or not to go back to work. The strength of the pro-strike feeling there is all the more impressive since the meeting itself was rigged against the militants. Fraser held it, for example, at the hall of Local 212 to make it harder for the rest of Local 47's workers to be there.

But even safeguards like this weren't enough for Fraser, who wasn't about to accept the discipline of even a meeting which he had rigged himself. "You can't make an illegal strike legal," he arrogantly announced, "by just asking people whether or not they want to go back to work or not."

To make certain that the workers got his meaning, Fraser sent a UAW goon squad down to the plant gates the following morning to disperse the picket line and drive the strikers back to work. This action was a dress rehearsal for the gigantic club-wielding goon squad that descended on the Mack Avenue Stamping plant to break the strike and beat up dissident workers.

The 1000-thug squad used to smash the Mack Avenue sit-in, organized by Fraser and containing virtually every key member of the UAW leadership, got compliments from the commander of the local 5th Police Precinct, who declared, "I'm glad we're on the same side." Earlier, Dirty Doug the bosses' cop had loyally warned the company that, "If you surrender to this type of blackmail, there is no end to it." Now he quipped that Chrysler had "lost its manhood" in the earlier Jefferson takeover because the company had made concessions to the strikers there. "Manly" Doug Fraser, on the other hand, just whimpers and whines whenever the auto bosses stamp their feet! This cynical scab-protector of the bosses' interests—will bravely mass a thousand goons and thugs to break a workers' strike but is never quite "man" enough to fight for even the most basic needs of the union members.

To top off his sickening perform-

## Coalition For Jobs And Economic Justice

# LIBERAL HUCKSTERS STIR

By Brent Davis  
& Darryl Clark

As capitalism's decay accelerates, the U.S. ruling class is confronted with one burning question. What strategy will it use to make the working class pay the price of the decay? How can it make the working class sacrifice its own working and living conditions?

The "liberal" capitalists and their supporters have now laid out their strategy. You can see how it works by looking at the September 8 demonstration in Chicago organized by the "Coalition for Jobs and Economic Justice."

The Coalition is a new organization. It was pasted together by a number of union chiefs and "civil rights leaders" who are firmly tied to the capitalist Democratic Party.

Its "stars" include Leonard Woodcock of the UAW, and Jesse "Black Capitalism" Jackson of Operation PUSH. The supporting cast includes Jerry Wurf of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees; Patrick Gorman, secretary-treasurer of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters; John Coleman, president of the Building Service Workers Union; and Albert Fitzgerald, head of the United Elec-

tricalworkers (UE).

The Chicago demonstration was based on a handful of safely vague slogans: "Immediate Tax Reform," "Peace and a Peacetime Economy," "Jobs and Job Training," and "Halt Inflationary Prices." The demonstration received the seal of approval from such loyal champions of capitalism as the Urban League and the NAACP.

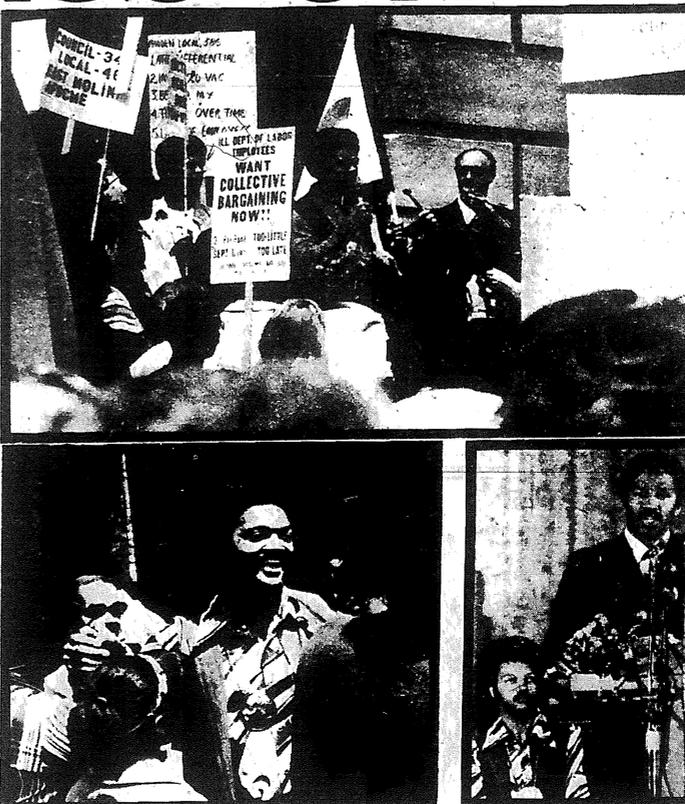
This demonstration comes as capitalism's attack on the working class reaches a new stage. Inflation long ago ceased being a "problem" of capitalism. It is now the cutting edge of capitalism's assault on the proletariat.

According to the Department of Agriculture, for example, food prices rose fifteen per cent between June 1972 and June 1973. After July 18th, when the government's freeze on most food items was lifted, prices shot up another 60 per cent! Nixon's "Phase Four" promises many more such gouges like this to come.

As prices have shot skyward, total wage and benefit increases delivered by union tops are down compared to last year. The settlements negotiated so far in 1973 have averaged increases of only 7.4 per cent. The average increase in 1972 was 8.4 per cent—one cent more for every dollar last year than this year.

Meanwhile, the "boom" econo-

cont'd. pg. 2



Jackson on the hustle. In lower right with Rep. Conyers, Michigan Democrat.

cont'd. pg. 3

→ Where We Stand ←

## THE RISING VANGUARD

Capitalism is desperately, critically sick. The symptoms are everywhere. Capitalism's physicians—the professional economists—throw up their hands. Nothing in their training has prepared them for their patient's feverish condition.

But illness is not yet death: Far from it! As the spectre of death approaches, the bourgeoisie becomes more ferocious than ever. It instinctively knows only one "cure"—to prolong its own life by feasting on the life-blood of the working class.

For this reason, the struggle against capitalism today is literally a life or death question for the proletariat. And in the United States, this is truest of all for the black workers.

Black workers in this country stand at the center of the class struggle. They have always been the chief victims of capitalist plunder. In capitalism's mounting assaults on the working class as a whole, black workers have always borne the brunt of the attack.

But the class struggle has two sides. The proletariat does not concede defeat without a struggle. And in recent years, the black proletariat has fought back with more courage and more determination than any other section of the U.S. working class. This, despite its miserable sell-out leaderships.

For the ruling class, this calls for desperate measures. At all costs, the capitalists must prevent the black proletariat from leading the entire working class—black and white—in a full-scale counter-attack against capitalism. Black workers must be isolated from the rest of their class and broken, tamed. The youthful bourgeoisie's idealistic cry was "Liberty! Equality! Brotherhood!" Today's bourgeoisie believes only one cynical slogan: "Divide and conquer!"

Determined to victimize black workers, the ruling class today thinks over the different tactics open to it.

First, there is the "liberal" plan. The liberal capitalists rely on their quick wits and quicker tongues. They promise black workers "improvement," "advancement." In return, black workers need only give capitalism and pro-capitalist demagogues their undying loyalty.

Behind the honeyed words and black masks stand the bitter reality. The liberal capitalists have nothing in store for black workers but treachery. "Divide and conquer" remains the key. They put the black jobless to work—as slave labor! In New York, black welfare victims are forced to work without union membership at sub-union wages in union shops—to drive down the pay and conditions of the unionized. The liberals shed crocodile tears for inner-city blacks whenever city workers (like teachers) go on strike—so the capitalists' well-paid black agents can mobilize the confused and misled against the striking unions.

And as black workers are reduced by their liberal "friends" to a sub-human existence, the Jesse Jacksons march them up and down Chicago's streets under empty slogans, hoping to keep black anger under control.

### liberals stir...

my produces less and less. Shortages are notorious in basic food items, raw materials, and other goods. City governments are now finding they cannot locate anyone to manufacture chlorine for their water! And the banks are clamping down on credit because, they say, the economy is producing too much!

This is the price which we are paying to keep a rotting capitalism alive. And while the bourgeois economists and newspapers confess they understand none of it, they predict worse and worse ahead.

The Woodcock/Jackson Coalition for Jobs and Economic Justice was supposedly launched to fight against the economic crisis and the government's anti-working class policies. In fact, the real target of the Coalition is not capitalism or

capitalist politics. The Coalition's slogans and the rhetoric are aimed at weakening the workers—most importantly, the black workers and poor who suffer the most at capitalism's hands. The idea is to reach these workers, mislead them with promises of reform, head them off from a real attack on capitalism, and hook them up to a dog-leash held firmly by the Democratic Party.

Then, while the Woodcocks and Jacksons sing the workers sweet lullabies, the capitalist class and its state—commanded by then, the liberals hope, by someone like Edward Kennedy—will confidently proceed with the task at hand: cutting the workers' incomes, swelling the ranks of the unemployed, and doubling the work-load of those who are permitted to work for the capitalists.

Alongside the liberal plan stands another, the plan of the "conservatives."

The conservative capitalists do not believe that black workers can be successfully tamed and used with sweet promises. The conservatives prefer simply to terrorize the black proletariat by mobilizing against it a racist coalition of small businessmen and the most backward-minded white workers. Screaming about the "rights of the majority," the conservatives in the ruling class demand that welfare be scrapped, police forces "unleashed," and the ghettos by turned into true concentration camps.

Nixon is now testing the waters for this strategy. George Wallace is bolder and more frank. And in Cleveland, the shock troops necessary to carry out this plan are growing. The National Socialist (Nazi) White People's Party now openly marches the streets of Cleveland.

Those who believe that the liberals are somehow "better" or "closer to us" than the conservatives make the most dangerous mistake. Liberals and conservatives differ only over tactics. Their basic interests and loyalties are identical.

To raise the proletariat—and black workers in particular—out of its misery, capitalism must be destroyed throughout the world. Supporting one section of the ruling class against the other only plays into the hands of the oppressors.

More and more workers—especially black workers—are coming to understand this. The interview in this issue of *The Torch* with Detroit sit-down leaders Larry Carter and Isaac Shorter makes this clear.

To break out of capitalism's death trap, these revolutionary black workers must join with their brothers and sisters among the Spanish-speaking and young white workers. Through this alliance, black workers must take the lead in the struggle for the socialist revolution. They must become the firmest champions of a counter-attack aimed at the ruling class—a counter-attack which marshals the entire proletariat in its battalions. And this counter-attack the black workers must lead through to the end—until the capitalist class and its state machine are finally defeated and broken up.

Every revolution has its vanguard, the most clear-eyed and courageous fighters. In the socialist revolution, that vanguard must be organized into a disciplined Leninist combat party, modeled on the Bolshevik Party which led the Russian Revolution of 1917. In the United States, black workers will make up a huge proportion of that party.

The Revolutionary Socialist League has one purpose: to raise up the banner of Leninism once again. In the U.S., we dedicate ourselves to building the Leninist party that is so urgently needed. And in the struggle to build that party, we recall the words of Leon Trotsky—written over forty years ago—and never more compelling than today:

To the black worker, Trotsky wrote, to capitalism's most brutally oppressed slave, "belongs the decisive word in the development of mankind."

Black workers will take the lead in the fight for the socialist revolution!

This is the steel fist which the velvet glove of the liberal rhetoric and slogans barely covers.

This strategy is not new. In Europe it is called the "Popular Front." In Chile, it is called "Popular Unity." Franklin Delano Roosevelt called it "The New Deal." Later on it became known as the "Negro - Liberal - Labor Alliance," and the Democratic Party was its home.

In recent years, the "Negro - Liberal - Labor Alliance" was virtually destroyed. As the pressure of capitalism's crisis increased, the different parts of this "Alliance" split up. The black population—especially black working-class youth—broke out of the Democratic Party's control and surged to the Left. Many white workers bolted for George Wallace on the Right. The collapse of the "Alliance" was sealed when the liberal politicians admitted that they had no answers at all to the economic and social rot.

So the ball passed to Richard Nixon's "conservative" wing of the ruling class. Nixon doesn't like velvet gloves. The naked steel fist is much more to his taste. His answer to capitalism's sickness is a straight-out, frontal attack on the working class, and especially upon black workers. Instead of liberal and civil-rights slogans, Nixon uses patriotic rhetoric and racist appeals to smooth his way.

But now Nixon too has dropped the ball. After Viet-Nam, patriotic blustering doesn't accomplish what, it used to. And caught with his

hand in the till and his ear to the wiretap, Nixon can't sell himself anymore as a noble defender of "the American way."

The end result is that Nixon and his gang have no authority at all in the working class and are therefore unable to ease through a successful attack on workers. The capitalists themselves understand this very well. Last month, the *New York Times* ran a poll of the top corporate executives of the country concerning Watergate. The ruling class chiefs told the poll-takers that their biggest worry was that it would make Nixon unable to put across his economic programs to the country.

With no one at the wheel, capitalism in America threatens to run off the road. A new driver is needed. And that is exactly the job which the liberal Democratic politicians are again applying for.

The "Coalition for Jobs and Economic Justice" acts as the agent of the liberals. The purpose of its demonstrations is to corral angry workers and herd them back into the Democratic fold. The rhetoric is "just for the suckers." Leonard Woodcock, for example, made clear once again last month just which master he serves when he threw a thousand goons against UAW members sitting-in at Chrysler's Mack Avenue Stamping plant in Detroit.

The Coalition has two more supporters: the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party. In many ways, these two groups are

more excited about the Woodcock-Jackson Coalition than anyone else involved. Because they style themselves "revolutionary," their enthusiasm will convince some that the Coalition is a very radical operation. And that is exactly the job of the CP and the SWP. Historically, the Communist Parties of the world—since their degeneration under Stalin—have been the biggest boosters in the labor movement of pro-capitalist Popular Fronts. The Socialist Workers Party has reached its present size precisely by serving as advance-man for Democratic Party politicians in the anti-war movement. Today these "enemies" are joining forces in a bigger and better campaign to bind and gag the American working class.

Beneath differences in rhetoric and style, both "liberal" and "conservative" capitalists have basically the same grim plans in store for the working class. Both wings of the ruling class aim at breaking the back of working class militancy and taking the price of capitalism's survival out of the backs of the workers. McGovern/Kennedy and Nixon/Wallace disagree only over how best to accomplish these plans. That is why Kennedy could hop down to Alabama in July and praise George Wallace as a brave defender of "democracy" without batting an eyelash.

Those in the labor and black movements who do the public relations work of the capitalists are the deadly enemies of the working class. The smoother they talk, the more dangerous they are. They must be exposed for what they are.

There is only one way which the working class can put an end to capitalism's crisis without attacking its own survival. *Capitalism itself must be smashed to splinters and replaced with the rule of the working class: socialism.* This can only be done by building a revolutionary party and then winning the working-class masses to that party's socialist program. The revolutionary workers, in short, must win the leadership of the working class for themselves.

Freeing the working class from capitalism's misery means freeing the workers from capitalism's hucksters.

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#### No. 1

## Showdown...

into a network and elect a central leadership body to coordinate the working-class offensive.

Victory will not be won until capitalism and the capitalist state are smashed — until the network of workers' committees, under the leadership of a revolutionary party, gathers all political and economic power into its own hands and constitutes itself a workers' and peasants' government.

A revolutionary program is not drawn up or carried out by reformists. Despite his rhetoric, Allende is the sincerest friend of Chilean capitalism. He dares not take serious measures against it. When he is finally forced to choose between capitalist "law and order" and workers' revolution, he will knife his working-class supporters in the back. This is even clearer in Argentina, where the "reformist" is Peron himself, the organizer of the fascist battalions!

No better can be expected from the Communists. Argentina's Communist Party has always tagged loyally after the "liberal" bourgeoisie. During the 1940s, it sat cozily inside a capitalist anti-Peron coalition which had been called into existence by the U.S. ambassador. Now that the "liberal" bourgeoisie supports Peron, the CP, too, has "critically" entered Peron's camp.

In Chile, the CP is Allende's most conscious and most militant police agent. It has enthusiastically joined in the police raids on peasant squatter communities. It led the recent attack on the miners' strike at *El Teniente*, denouncing the strikers themselves as "traitors."

The performance of the Uruguayan CP during the recent military coup in that country says all that is necessary about the future role of the Stalinists in Chile and Argentina. When the fascist-military

cutthroats strike, the CP will again lead its followers to slaughter in a peaceful protest strike!

There are no revolutionary parties in Chile and Argentina. That is the tragedy. Those parties who claim to be "truly revolutionary" in fact hold out no hope to the working class. Indeed, these fake revolutionary groups pose the greatest danger, for while they appeal to the revolutionary aspirations of workers, they use those aspirations to lead their working-class supporters away from a real revolutionary strategy.

In Argentina, two political groups are supported by warring sections of the so-called "Fourth International (United Secretariat)," an unstable, unprincipled bloc between the Socialist Workers Party (USA) and Ernest Mandel and his international supporters. Both of the Argentine groups involved reflect the bankruptcy of their international allies.

The People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), the sometime darling of the Mandel forces, is the guerrilla group responsible for several kidnappings and raids. To Mandel's acute embarrassment, the ERP leaders recently declared that "the ERP is not Trotskyist. It has an anti-imperialist and socialist program, and includes Marxists, Peronists, and Christians."

The ERP is correct, of course. It is not a Trotskyist party, whatever Mandel may wish. It is a petty-bourgeois band with a populist program. It does not understand the central role of the proletariat in the socialist revolution. It has no conception at all of the need for a revolutionary party based on a Marxist program.

The ERP's response to Peron's demagogic call for a "social truce" makes clear its own value in the coming civil war: "The ERP will not attack the government unless the government attacks the people

or represses the guerrillas. But our organization will continue its hostilities against foreign and Argentine companies and the counter-revolutionary armed forces." And then, in the same breath, the ERP promised to cease its attacks on the police! Peron's Minister of the Interior had to explain personally that no distinction was possible between the Peronist police and the rest of the capitalist state!

The second "Trotskyist" party in Argentina is the *Partido Socialista Trabajadores* (PST), supported by the SWP of the United States. Its record is as miserable as that of the ERP.

The PST orients to the advanced workers of Cordoba. But for the PST, this means merely adapting to and reinforcing all the reformist illusions which are still rife in Cordoba. Not long ago the PST leadership sat down with the bourgeois parties to "discuss the future of the country." At this gathering, the PST applauded Peron's "promises" to restore political democracy. This was less "adventurist," of course, than openly exposing the hypocrisy of those promises by pointing to the growing government repression! Within the labor movement in Cordoba, the PST acts as a cheerleader for the left-Peronist "rebel" union chiefs who reinforce the workers' illusions in Peron himself and stand in the way of a real class-struggle strategy.

Essentially, in short, the PST reflects the outlook of the SWP in the United States — prostrating itself in front of reformist and Stalinist currents.

In Chile, the party occupying the most "left-wing" position is the Movement for a Revolutionary Left (MIR). Once a student-based guerrilla group, the MIR has now entered the working class only to function as a left-wing supporter of the Allende regime. The MIR deserves the same label which Trot-

sky applied to the POUM: "the greatest roadblock" against forming a real revolutionary party.

Workers in Chile and Argentina have displayed unbelievable courage and fighting spirit in the face of the mounting capitalist offensive. They have thrown themselves into struggle time and again despite rotten leaders who betray them at every turn.

## Leninism...

The Spartacists' solution? Simple. They strap themselves down! They live in a prison made of rigid "do and don't" rules and regulations. These are labeled "principled strategy and tactics." None of these rules, of course, can be found in the works of Lenin and Trotsky. Those men, after all, were not children but fighters. Strapped down in solitary confinement, you can shout until you're hoarse about the revolutionary program. But you can't wage much of a fight for it.

But the Spartacist method does accomplish its intended purpose. It keeps the Spartacists safely away from the class struggle. And that is one way of avoiding betrayal!

Interestingly enough, the Spartacist attack on the Revolutionary Socialist-League employs many of the same slanders cooked up by the I.S.'s Geier-Mackenzie leadership. Stripped of its democratic rights and railroaded out of the I.S., the Revolutionary Tendency is charged with the main responsibility for the I.S. split!

For the rest, it is enough to note that the Spartacist League defends Shachtman's Workers' Party of the 1940s against our charges of adaptationism, claiming that Shachtman's degeneration stemmed from his false position on Stalinism rather than from a more basic adaptation to narrow-minded petty-bourgeois

The life-or-death task of crushing the fascists and destroying capitalism once and for all cannot be delayed for a moment. What Trotsky counselled Spanish revolutionaries in 1936 is equally relevant for workers in Chile and Argentina today:

"For a successful solution of all these tasks, three conditions are required: a party; once more a party; again a party!"

politics in general and a failure to understand the revolutionary program.

Thus, behind the Spartacists' tactical rigidity lies the papered-over Shachtmanism of their own past, opportunism waiting for an opportunity. In the struggle for a genuine, principled international regroupment toward reconstructing the Fourth International—the Spartacist League will be only an obstacle.

Already, however, a significant step toward such a principled regroupment was made in the course of the fight in the I.S. The Revolutionary Tendency united with the Communist Tendency, which had entered the I.S. a year earlier to fight for a Trotskyist program. Though small in numbers, the Communist Tendency had a great significance as the only principled opposition tendency in years to have emerged from the decrepit Socialist Workers Party.

But the unity between the CT and RT was of even greater significance. Despite theoretical differences over the nature of Stalinism, yet unity was made possible by a common understanding of method, program, and tactics, of the nature of the present epoch and period of capitalism and of the international tasks flowing from it. The comrades of the former Communist Tendency today take their places as leading members of the League.

## interview...

workers. From just that.

We—as revolutionaries—our main job is to organize the revolution. We'll be playing the leading role in the proletariat—the leading role. But we need a vanguard party in this country.

If we had a vanguard party we could teach the workers, based on things that happened at Mack Stamping plant, or at Lynch Road or even Vietnam for the past ten years. We as revolutionaries must gain from the struggles against the oppressors by educating the people, showing them how the capitalist system is against them. That is the contradiction: the capitalist system is against the masses of people.

Don: *Auto workers have not only now but in the past proven to be among that section of the working class that was most advanced, most ready to fight back in its interests and more open to revolutionary ideas. Today, auto workers are playing a leading role in the working class as a whole. Their struggle against speed-up, for example, is one of the beginning phases in a struggle against the capitalist offensive as a whole. Other workers have looked at it and are taking in the lessons.*

But auto workers must become conscious of the fact that they are a leading element in their class and they must consciously try to

give a lead to the rest of the class. The question is, how do we as revolutionaries go about bringing that lesson home?

Shorter: The majority of the workers don't understand that this is a class society. We got to make that distinction. Let them know they are workers. They are proletarians. They are the most oppressed class.

The petty bourgeois classes are not exploited as much as we are. The lumpen proletarian class oppresses the proletarian class. The bourgeois class oppresses all the other classes.

We, the proletarian class, we're the majority in terms of masses of people. This is the biggest class, right here, the proletarian class. And we also got to make it understood who controls all the classes.

The bourgeois class controls all the classes. A small number of people controls all these classes. We got to make the workers understand that.

Don: *How do the lumpen and petty bourgeois classes oppress the working class?*

Shorter: OK: take the lumpen proletariat. The lumpen proletarian don't work, in terms of working in the plant. The lumpen proletarian, he hustles. Who does he hustle off of? He hustles off of us. He could be a con man, he could go

down the streets and con a lady out of her money or go down there and snatch a wallet, or he could be out in the community pushing dope on the proletariat. This man down here at the local supermarket is selling food at skyrocket prices. If you go down to another store, this other man is selling his food at lower prices. But his food is different—he's selling the workers rotten food. And on and on.

Jim: *A lot of people feel you have to organize black workers separate from whites. The Revolutionary Socialist League thinks that the only way we are going to end racism is to organize the working class as a whole for a socialist revolution. How do you feel about that?*

Shorter: Well, I have to go along with that. If we isolate ourselves from white workers, automatically there would be a racial issue there, a conflict. In order for us to carry on the revolutionary struggle, we're going to have to go to all workers regardless of their color.

A good example is what we did at Jefferson. The majority of the people in the plant is black. The white workers knew they were in a minority but they supported what was going on because they saw it as a workers' struggle—which it was, a workers' struggle.

They understood we were socialists. They came to the fence and talked to us. We let them know where we was coming from. And they were right there supporting us. They didn't consider that the black

people were trying to take over. They considered it to be a workers' struggle, and this is how we been organizing. Not by saying, "We black workers, we'll get together and forget the white workers and the Arab workers." We didn't organize like that.

Don (to Carter): *What's your opinion of that?*

Carter: Just like Isaac said, we ain't organizing just the black workers, we're organizing together. They knew we were social revolutionaries.

Shorter: You learn from other people's practice. We've been studying other struggles at the same time that we're organizing. Like the DRUM [Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement] struggle. DRUM was isolated from the white workers. That was their mistake. We learned from that and we corrected that over here at the Jefferson Assembly plant.

Jim: *Because of the specially*

oppressed conditions of black workers, do you think they're going to take the lead in the revolutionary struggle? In a united black and white working-class movement won't black workers, who are generally more oppressed, going to be the leading element?

Shorter: Yes. Look at the condition of black workers in this country. Black workers are in the minority, but the majority of the revolutionaries in this country are black, and that's the way I see it as being. We are the most oppressed. We're going to wake up first. We'll be in the leading part in the vanguard party.

(In the next issue of *The Torch*: Shorter and Carter discuss revolutionary strategy in the unions, the question of a national opposition in the UAW, and the political role of black leaders like Jesse Jackson. Don't miss it!)

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## exclusive interview

# BLACK SIT-DOWN LEADERS SPEAK

*Editor's note:* On July 24, UAW members Isaac Shorter and Larry Carter led a takeover by Chrysler workers of Chrysler's Jefferson Avenue plant in Detroit. The takeover was a success. Chrysler was forced to fire the racist foreman Tom Woolsey, against whom the workers' action was immediately directed.

Two reporters for *The Torch*—Don Cane and Jim Baskin—talked with Carter and Shorter a few days later. Below we print the first half of that interview, abridged for publication. The second half of the interview will appear in the next issue of *The Torch*.

As we go to press, we learn that Chrysler has just fired Isaac Shorter after maneuvering him into an elaborate and carefully prepared set-up. This is only the latest stage in the purge and witch-hunt now going on in the auto plants in Detroit, fueled by Red-baiting newspapers and cheered on by the UAW leadership.

not say anything to him. Before he got the pin, we had had a few words, so he went and got this pin off the car, wrapped a little paper around it and escorted me to the other job.

**Don:** *What were you trying to accomplish with the petition?*

**Shorter:** The main purpose of the petition was to bring the consciousness of the workers up. We talked about Woolsey, the conditions in the plant, Chrysler being capitalist, how the community is, how this country is becoming more of a fascist country. We talked about what's happening in the world, the struggles going on in Vietnam, how the United States is over there helping the South Vietnam government, the Saigon government. Just relating things, not only things there at the Jefferson plant.

And it worked. The petition did bring the consciousness of the workers up: 75 per cent of the workers supported what we did



Isaac Shorter and Larry Carter after leading a successful sit-down action at Chrysler's Jefferson Avenue plant.

*"...our main job is to organize the revolution. But we need a vanguard party in this country."*

**Don:** *According to the newspapers, the Jefferson take-over stemmed from a petition drive to fire a racist foreman. Is this true? If so, what was the nature of this campaign and how much support did you have?*

**Carter:** We put out a petition to get rid of a foreman named Woolsey. We passed the petition around and got 214 names in the department.

**Shorter:** Woolsey was superintendent. That means he isn't supposed to go direct to the workers and tell the workers what to do. He's supposed to go to the foremen and tell the foremen what to do. Woolsey was doing such things as going direct to the workers, cursing the workers out, standing over the workers, telling them what to do. Workers who were two or three minutes late in the morning time—he would write them up. He'd write them up, whereas the foremen was supposed to do it. And he'd lay them off—give them three days off, five days off, ten days off, or fine them.

He even threatened me with a float pin. I'd say it weighed about a pound, and it's steel. One day he escorted me to another job with that pin and told me that I'd better

in the takeover. It was Larry and I who pushed the button, but after we pushed the button it was the workers who supported it. It became a workers' thing. All the workers supported it, not just the black workers, but white workers too. People with 25 years in and people with only two or three months. They stayed there in the plant until we came out of the cage.

**Don:** *The Jefferson action was better planned and timed than other recent rank-and-file actions in Detroit. Yours ended in victory, also unlike others. Do you think the victory of the Jefferson action will teach militants in the plants the need for organized conscious planning and timing?*

**Shorter:** Yes. Yes, I do. A good example would be the sit-in at Mack Stamping plant. The leadership there didn't do their job as far as organizing. The mass of workers really didn't know what was going on. If the leaders had raised their consciousness to a higher level, there wouldn't have been any problems. When they came out of the plant, they would have had their demands met. Instead, there was constant conflict among the workers. That could have been

avoided if they had had the necessary political consciousness.

**Jim:** *Did you do anything inside the plant aside from the petition previous to the takeover to prepare the workers for the action?*

**Shorter:** Oh, yes. See, from the time we've been at the Jefferson Assembly plant, we've been organizing the rest of the workers. Last year, when Chrysler had us assembling the station wagon at the Jefferson Assembly plant, we forced them to move the station wagon to another plant. When they wanted us to work nine hours, nine-and-a-half, or ten hours, we refused and worked only for eight. We have refused to do other jobs.

**Don:** *A takeover of a plant—or a sit-in—is something pretty new to most young workers, and it's also something that carries a lot more threat to the property of the capitalists than a simple walkout.*

**Shorter:** Right.

**Don:** *On that basis, what kind of reaction do you think most other workers as well as capitalists would have to your actions?*

**Shorter:** See, when you take control of any plant like we took control of Jefferson Assembly plant the company has to pay the workers. This time Chrysler had to pay the workers, say, four hours, on both shifts. Whereas when there was a simple wildcat strike, when the workers simply walked out and didn't take control of the plant, Chrysler didn't have to pay the workers. And during the simple walkout, also, some workers didn't join in. They stayed in the plant and carried on production.

**Carter:** Right. When you have walkout, a simple wildcat strike, there'd always be some workers who would come in to work.

**Shorter:** I as an individual prefer taking control of the plant. Not just the type of action we took—there are other means and ways that you can take over an assembly plant. Of course, if the workers supported a wildcat strike, I'll support it. But as far as me suggesting a wildcat strike, a walkout, I wouldn't do that.

**Jim:** *Isaac, how did you become a socialist?*

**Shorter:** Five or six years ago, I didn't know what class I was in. I didn't realize there was a class struggle. I felt that one day I might be a petty bourgeois or even a bourgeois. But as the days passed by, I began understanding what was going on in the world.

As I read, as I started checking out the conditions in the plant, I saw that if I got over it and all the workers in the country got over it, what is Chrysler going to do? I saw that it would be impossible for all

of us to get over, for all of us to have a nice house, a nice ride, all of us having food.

I started seeing that this would be impossible because of the way this capitalist system is built up, with a few people controlling everything. If everybody in this country had the same as Rockefeller or any other capitalist, then this wouldn't be no capitalist country. This would be a socialist country. So that's the position I had to take—to be a socialist.

**Don:** *How can those workers in the plants that consider themselves revolutionaries go about building a leadership in the plants?*

**Shorter:** Well, I think they should do more or less like we did. You have to relate what's going on in the plant with what's going on in the country and deal with that, deal with the community. I think from just that you can organize the

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