

## labor movement

# Steel vote upsets Sadlowski group

**East Chicago, Ind.**—The Sadlowski-Balanoff machine in District 31 of the United Steelworkers Union, embracing steel mills from Chicago to Gary, Ind., came away from recent union elections badly shaken.

Growing dissatisfaction with both the Rank and File group, the caucus name of the Sadlowski-Balanoff group, and with the supporters of International president Lloyd McBride was reflected in the voting. Results also showed the growth in influence and organization of insurgents and independents.

A significant upset for the Sadlowski forces was the victory of independent Alice Peurala who defeated John Chico, incumbent president of Local 65, at U.S. Steel South Works. Peurala is a 25-year veteran of the mill, and is the first woman to ever win the presidency of a USWA local. Chico had the active backing of Ed Sadlowski.

The Sadlowski-Balanoff Rank and File group came to power in District 31, the larg-

est district in the Steelworkers union, several years ago on the coattails of rank-and-file opposition to I. W. Abel, the international president who negotiated the ENA or no-strike agreement with the steel industry. Using District 31 as his base, Ed Sadlowski then made his bid for international president when Abel retired, but lost to McBride. Sadlowski forces kept control of District 31, however, with the election of Jim Balanoff as District Director.

But rank-and-file discontent with the Sadlowski-Balanoff forces has grown in recent years with the impact of layoffs and inflation, the toll of injuries and deaths among the workers, the continued company discrimination campaigns, and the tie-up of grievances. Many steelworkers feel that the militant-sounding Rank and File group has failed the test. Sentiment was especially high against them when they conciliated with the McBride forces at the last union convention over the right of the

membership to ratify the contract.

With the international contract and basic steel conferences coming up next year, workers were seeking alternatives and a way to express their dissatisfaction. At the same time McBride waged a fierce campaign to try to regain a foothold in District 31.

As a result, the Rank and File group no longer showed the strength it once had. Aside from the upset in Local 65, their slate lost two locals and won at Local 1011 (Youngstown) by a narrow 200 vote margin as opposed to the comfortable 600-vote lead it enjoyed in the last election.

At Local 1010 at Inland Steel, the Rank and File slate's Bill Andrews, the only Black candidate for president of a major local in District 31, won by 700 votes as compared to the two to one victory margin they had in the last election. The Local 1010 election was the only major victory for Balanoff, whose home base is at Inland.

McBride did his best to win the election here, throwing several staffers into the campaign of Wally Hartman and convincing another candidate, John Hurley, to unite ranks behind Hartman. Allegedly, Hurley was won over with a promise of a staff job.

Hartman utilized several racist tactics to try to win the Local 1010 election, including a number of racist cartoons depicting Andrews as Balanoff's puppet.

The District 31 Committee for a Fighting Union (CFU), a rank-and-file organization, waged strong races for grievor and mill-wide office. The CFU candidates campaigned on the need to fight inflation, the ENA, the Weber case, and for union democracy and health and safety. CFU candidates also outlined plans for how the workers could step up the fight against the company.

Candidates Irene Young at Local 1033 and Jean Halawa at Local 65 scored impressive support, losing by only 11 votes and 30 votes respectively.

At Local 1011, Dennis Peskin ran for the executive board against mill-wide slates and received 927 votes, topping most of the candidates of former local president Alfaro's slate and gar-

nering 25% of the vote. Most of his support came from the coke plant, BOF, blast furnaces and other areas where either the CFU's local branch—the Fight for Jobs Committee—is well-known or where conditions are the worst for the workers.

In a campaign leaflet addressed especially to coke plant workers, Peskin—a coke plant worker himself—declared:

"We are harassed, reprimanded, fired and speeded up, and we work in deadly conditions of cancer-causing fumes and smoke. . . . The coke plant as well as the rest of the mill needs strong representation. [We must] take the offensive against company abuses."

These elections showed the deepening discontent with the rule of the Sadlowski-Balanoff forces in District 31. It also provided an opportunity for rank-and-file forces to popularize their programs.

With the upcoming contract and the Basic Steel Conference, and local steward and representative elections coming up, the insurgents' movement has the opportunity to strengthen its organization and ties and to have an even greater impact on the direction of the union.

