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TRADE UNION PANEL

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Page 2

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TRADE UNION PANEL

1973 SWP Convention

I. Introduction

The reports and discussion at this panel will review some of our work during the past year in the trade-union movement.

We will attempt to describe and define the present state of the union movement.

We hope to project some specific tasks in relation to this movement for the coming year. *These will relate to the three main campaigns we will undertake, as stated in our political resolution:* (1) the 1974 election campaign; (2) *The Militant* sales campaign; and (3) the campaign to defend the democratic rights of radical political parties—especially the SWP—growing out of the Watergate revelations.

We have scheduled separate meetings for our teachers fraction and for a report and discussion of our activities nationally to support the striking United Farm Workers.

There will be an opportunity for comrades in particular unions from different branches around the country to meet separately, if they wish.

Comrades in welfare work and in social service unions from Cleveland, Chicago, and Los Angeles have requested such a meeting and they will be notified of the time and place.

Available at this meeting are copies of Internal Information Bulletin no. 4, 1972. This is the report of our panel last year. It should be useful to any of you here who did not previously get a copy, or who has misplaced it since last November when it was first mailed to the branches.

Also available here are copies of "Selected Documents on SWP Trade Union Policy." This selection was published in May 1972, issued by the National Education Department of the party.

Everyone, of course, knows that *Teamster Rebellion* and *Teamster Power*—the two books by Comrade Dobbs about the 1934 Minneapolis strikes and the subsequent transformation of the Teamsters union—are on sale here at the convention.

These two books are more than the story of the strike struggles and organizational expansion of the truck drivers in this country in the 1930s. They are handbooks for future work in the trade-union movement, and should be read and studied with that in mind.

It is possible now for us to begin to apply some of these lessons under present circumstances and in relation to the unfolding of new problems that have beset the working class and the trade-union movement today.

In this connection it is helpful to read what we said here last year.

At the class I gave on trade-union policy, I outlined what our strategic aim is in the union movement.

I listed some of the central propaganda demands we ought to raise, and tried to describe how we can recruit the forces for a viable left wing that will fight for our class struggle program.

During the past year the class struggle in this country has become sharper, more abrasive. The employing class has a big advantage, and is pushing its advantage.

1) The standard of living of the working class is under attack by the government wage-control policies. The real spendable earnings of workers are declining. Workers can buy less with their pay checks this week than last week.

2) Prices—especially food prices—are rising at unprecedented rates, and will continue to rise.

3) The conditions of work—in all industries—are under attack by the employers who are introducing new speed-up techniques and laying off workers.

4) Unemployment remains high—about 5 million—despite the increase in production and factory output and unemployment is expected to begin rising again before the year ends.

5) The unions—under a completely bankrupt leadership—appear to be in full retreat.

6) The unorganized workers—who are more than 70 percent of the almost 87-million workforce—are helpless unless they can organize. And there is no evidence of any drive by the major unions to "organize the unorganized"—the great rallying cry of the CIO movement of the 1930s.

7) The struggle for Black liberation—which encompasses a very sizeable and potentially powerful section of the working class (at least 15 percent of the total workforce)—is devoid of leadership.

Most workers are worse off today than they were this time last year.

II. The Reports

Under these conditions, it would be surprising if we did not have anything different or new to report about the growing ferment in the ranks of the working class.

It is not my purpose here this evening to anticipate all that will be reported, but I want to announce in advance of the reports that there are some encouraging developments which we have been connected with, which we seek to understand and explain, and which we believe will feed the growth and broaden the influence of the party in the coming year.

1) Several branches have reported that sales of *The Militant* at plant gates have been undertaken systematically, with good results.

2) Public meetings and study classes of the party are attended sometimes by young workers—some of them active in their unions—with whom we had no previous contact.

3) Branch forums for United Farm Workers representatives have been well attended and have served to introduce groups of workers—supporters of the grape boycott—to our ideas and our methods of work, and as we become more actively and directly involved in the boycott actions

we hope to develop further interest in our politics.

4) The teachers strikes last winter—in Chicago, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and Washington, D. C., showed that there is no lack of will and determination to struggle on the part of the ranks of the union movement.

Our comrades were active in these struggles of the teachers and are now organizing the unity movement of teachers and we hope to carry that movement a step further at the coming AFT convention in Washington.

5) The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists has called for mass demonstrations in Chicago and has announced the organization of CBTU locals in New York, Detroit, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. Our comrades in Chicago in unions there are helping to organize the demonstration against high prices and the government cutbacks in social welfare spending.

6) The union movement never gave up entirely its organizing efforts—but it has failed in recent years to launch any major organizing drives. At the present time it has nothing going even of the size and scope of the ALA drive to organize Atlanta in 1970. But there are some exceptions. The craft unions—out of desperation—have been driven in at least one instance to try to organize workers instead of the bosses. And to organize workers today requires an industrial form of organization.

The International Typographical Union is right now engaged in a drive to organize newspaper plants in Ohio and has called a strike at the Painsville Telegraph. We are completely in support of that strike, and we will hear a report on it here this evening.

7) *Women:* As you probably know, the number of women workers in the printing industry—as in most others—is increasing. And the activity of women is on the rise in the union movement.

The Cleveland Council of Union Women was organized last year, and was reported out at our panel discussion last year. This year a group of 200 women met in Chicago and declared their intention to organize the 30 million women workers in this country. We reported this in *The Militant*, and we will have a report here this evening on the Chicago meeting of union women and its meaning for our party.

We will also have reports from Houston on the activities of women in the Oil and Dow Chemical strikes there.

We thought it was an important sign of the new part women have in trade-union affairs when a woman was a serious candidate for the first time for president of one of the large Chicago steelworkers locals.

We were very actively supporting her campaign, and we are anxious to give the party a report of it here tonight. The election is over, but the campaign is not.

8) *Blacks:* I mentioned earlier that the struggle for Black liberation is devoid of leadership. Not entirely—the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists offers a leadership of sorts, closely tied to the trade-union bureaucracy.

But there are also signs that this Black movement—which appears to be dormant in the unions and the workplaces of this country—is very much alive and capable of producing able and imaginative leaders when circumstances dictate immediate action.

In Detroit recently—in one of the big Chrysler auto factories—a set of circumstances developed that required immediate and decisive action. Two Black workers—in col-

laboration with several thousand others (both Black and white)—closed the plant for a day, won their demands, and are heroes on the job.

We welcome actions of this kind. The workers who led this particular action spoke last week at the Friday night Socialist Forum in Detroit. We will have a report here of the action at Chrysler's Jefferson Avenue plant and our connection with it.

9) It's not only Black workers that show leadership talents and ability. Recently at Lordstown—at the GM Vega plant—the workers got fed up with the speedup and decided to close the plant for a day or so. In order to organize the shutdown they had to post some pickets at the gates and these pickets had to be protected against company reprisals—probably firing. The public press was unable to report whether those who drew the picket assignment were Black or white—they wore masks, and no one could tell.

We were not there. But we will have a report here of the significance of these and similar actions in Cleveland factories.

None of these things could have happened a year ago.

10) *In defense of the democratic rights of radical political parties:* Our campaign in defense of the democratic rights of radical political parties—especially the Socialist Workers Party—will seek support from the established union movement. This may seem like a far-fetched idea to some of you here. But we have organized very substantial support from the union movement before—under more difficult circumstances—and we are quite sure we can do it again. We want to have a brief report here about how it was done in the past and what we intend to do now.

Finally, we hope to conclude the meeting with a report about something that is happening in another land. We believe some workers in this country will be interested in the idea of workers' control of production without benefit of management supervision in the not too distant future; so we have a report on the Lip watch company strike or takeover in France.

MIKE LUX:

I want to outline the work we have been doing on plant gate sales nationally and how we would like to systematically expand this work during the fall circulation campaign. I have been able to speak with the branches that have been the most successful in plant gates sales, and hopefully we can draw from this and take these lessons back to the branches and build these types of sales in the fall.

First on the circulation campaign for this fall, which will be mapped out in more detail in the sales panel on Thursday night. One of the major focal points of the fall circulation drive will be a single-copy sales campaign for 9,500 papers sold each week. This will be built upon the success of the spring sales campaign which we recently concluded for 7000 sales, which peaked during one week of the campaign at nearly 11,000 sold. An important part of this spring campaign was plant gate sales. These sales reached the highest success during the spring campaign. A few branches were scheduling regular sales at specific workplaces and sold from 30 to 150 papers each week on a consistent basis. Plant gate and workplace

sales will be a major part of our fall campaign.

We will also want to continue and improve sales at unemployment centers, union meetings and supermarkets.

The plant gate sales, by contrast, are sales to workers *on the job*. Recent experience has shown that workers will be interested in the type of news and analysis provided by *The Militant*. *The Militant* can provide the basis for conversations among the workers on the job and as a result we should be able to bring workers to the party, to forums, to educational and election campaign activities. We will be able to win workers to our party on the class-struggle program projected in the pages of *The Militant*.

We especially want to plan plant gate sales where comrades are working. That's a priority. We think the paper will help comrades in those plants to draw the more politically aware workers into discussions on issues related to the class-struggle left-wing perspective we have for the unions, including our program to fight inflation. These sales will help to identify our comrades as supporters of *The Militant* and of local socialist election campaigns. From these sales we will get some subscriptions to *The Militant* and the *ISR*, supporters of our campaign and recruits to our party and the YSA.

At plants where we don't have comrades working at this time we think a well organized and absolutely regular sales effort will mean that we can draw around us some serious political workers. *The Militant* helps us talk to these workers about socialist ideas and helps us test the general political mood of the workers. Plant gate sales should be an essential part of the branch sales picture and an integral part of the fall circulation drive. Each area will want to plan where to sell at plants.

Branches which have carried out regular and systematic plant gate sales such as Atlanta, Oakland-Berkeley, Houston, Cleveland and Chicago have learned a number of important lessons. Best results from these sales are achieved by selling to workers as they *enter* the plant. We want to relate *The Militant* to their thoughts and conversations on the job with coworkers. If they get the paper on the way home, the chances are it'll get tossed into the back seat and not be brought back to work the next day. We want to try and sell to workers as they go into the plant; also at the shift changes. We will get some going in and some coming out, but mainly we want to concentrate on those going in. The times for the shift changes and workers hours are often available from publications of the central labor council, available from their offices or the public library. Industries and their location are usually available from the local Chamber of Commerce. Every branch city has industries. A phone call or office visit is all that is needed in many cases to find out where they are.

Morning shift changes are generally early, between 6 and 8 AM. This means that most working comrades are available to sell as well as full-time or student comrades. When comrades are in a situation where they can sell at their place of employment without being harassed they should. But as a general rule comrades *should not* sell at their own jobs *outside the gate*. Other comrades should be organized to do this and the comrades working at that plant should be seen as buyers of *The Militant*. They should be encouraged to sell at nearby plants before

they go to their jobs if possible.

Experience has shown that a warm response is not always demonstrated when a new plant is selected for sales. We shouldn't expect to sell 20 or 30 papers the first time. However, regular and consistent efforts do pay off. If high sales don't occur immediately we want to keep at them.

In some cases such as in Oakland-Berkeley where the comrades sold during the picket activity of the Shell Oil workers strike, they find that they now sell 20 or 30 papers each week without fail. They even have a shop steward prepared to write articles for *The Militant* from one plant.

Workplaces which are on strike or have recently demonstrated militancy on picket lines are likely places to sell our press. Examples are the Mead strike in Atlanta and the oil workers in Houston and Oakland-Berkeley.

Union meetings are also a natural place to sell our press and should be incorporated into the regular weekly sign-out sheet. An exemplary model of plant gate sales is provided by the Oakland-Berkeley branch which has a well organized operation. They have found it essential to have a leading member of the exec assigned to organize plant gate sales. They have been able to project and sell 20 percent of their bundle of 500 at early morning plant gate sales.

In addition they are planning early morning YS sales at local high schools. Since this draws on the same layer of early morning risers, it is necessary to have it highly motivated and well organized.

This is a key problem that all branches should keep in mind. Oakland-Berkeley has been able to send an average of 20 comrades to 17 plant locations in the Bay Area each week and average 90 to 100 papers sold each week. The comrade who is in charge of these sales emphasizes the theme of regularity and organization. You should send the same comrades to the same plant at the same time and on the same day each week. Salespeople must be called the night before the sale and transportation to bus stops and to their jobs must be organized for those who work.

The fall circulation drive is a major propaganda offensive by the party, and plant gate sales are an integral part of the work of this sales campaign. The campaign will put special emphasis on four areas: first on campuses; second in the Black, Puerto Rican and Chicano communities; third at political meetings and events; and fourth at plant gates in larger numbers than ever before. We want to go back into the branches and begin the job of getting out our ideas, and our socialist program to workers on the job. We want to test the political mood of the workers, and become an important part of the political life of this key component of the current radicalization.

JANICE LYNN:

It should be very easy for us to point out the importance of fighting back against government Watergating and show how the types of police-state activities carried on against the SWP and YSA that we describe in our suit have been used and continue to be used against the organizations of the working class, the trade unions. We

can point out that just the fact that many labor leaders who dared to differ with Nixon were included on the White House "enemies" list, shows how the trade-union movement has been a target of government Watergate methods.

We can also point out how the history of the labor movement is filled with examples of Watergate methods in the use of government informers, agents-provocateurs, etc., and how Watergate-type activities pose a threat to the labor movement that all unionists should combat. We have numerous examples from the past of the kind of support we have solicited from the trade unions.

The case of Jimmy Kutcher and his fight to retain his job at the Veterans Administration is a model of how we can approach the trade unions. Despite the start of the cold war and the whole anticommunist witchhunt atmosphere, the Kutcher case was supported by hundreds of unions and union leaders across the country. Although, as Kutcher points out at the end of his new book, the union support was not universal and many union leaders refused to have anything to do with him, the aid he did receive from the unions was indispensable.

Given the political climate and the radicalization of the sixties, the contacts we have with the trade-union movement through our eight years of involvement in the antiwar movement, and the powerful effect the Watergate scandal itself has had on the masses of working people, we should be able to conduct an even larger defense campaign in relation to the trade unions than those that were conducted under adverse conditions. We should have no illusions, however, about the problems we will probably encounter from the bureaucratized and conservative layers of the organized labor movement. But with persistent work it is very likely we can make headway in the unions even under the present leadership and win support among large number of younger workers and progressive union leaders who have been affected by the radicalization.

Specifically, the kinds of activities in relation to the trade unions that we can carry out in the name of the Political Rights Defense Fund include a big campaign to obtain the sponsorship of individual union leaders, both nationally and locally. Initial sponsorship which we will seek from various union figures will provide an opening for approaching the unions themselves.

We can set up meetings for representatives of the PRDF to present the case to union membership meetings. We can appeal for unions to pass resolutions of support for the case and to vote contributions to help meet the high legal expenses involved. We can also take up collections where possible, as well as appeal for individual donations.

The PRDF will want to reprint some of the support resolutions that are passed by the unions. We can also ask many of the union leaders to write statements of support which can be quoted or used in our literature. Union leaders who become sponsors of the PRDF can be invited to speak at public meetings and fundraising events to express their support for the case. We can also approach unions to request articles in union papers and editorials, and write letters to the editor.

Once we have made a certain headway in obtaining endorsements from unions and individual sponsorship from various union leaders, we can and should try to attend various conventions of the union movement. At the very least we should be able to distribute literature

on the case or set up a table with information about the Political Rights Defense Fund and obtain additional sponsorship. At best, we would have the opportunity to address the convention and urge passage of a resolution of support.

I'm sure comrades in trade unions will have some concrete ideas about the types of additional activities that could be carried out in relation to this suit—such as the possibility of establishing groups of supporters in shops or workplaces. Tours of PRDF national representatives will be projected for the fall to provide a focus around which support activities will be carried out and we will want to get these representatives to speak before as many union meetings as possible.

FRED HALSTEAD:

This is a report on the farmworkers strike and what trade unionists, comrades who are in other trade unions, can do to help win that strike.

A few words on the strike itself and its general nature. This is the first union that has succeeded in actually getting contracts in American agribusiness. They had about 50,000 workers under contract last year. Their struggle begun in 1963 and utilized the boycott as one of its major weapons—the boycott of grapes—which coincided with the upsurge of the Black struggle, the student protests and the antiwar movement. This made it possible for the United Farm Workers to put itself on the map.

The UFW is now fighting for its very existence, its very life. Of the 50,000 workers under contract, only 5,000 are left. That is, the contracts covering about 5,000 workers is all the UFW has left. The rest of them are no longer represented by the UFW because the growers have signed sweetheart contracts with the Teamsters. It should be clear, of course, that this is not a jurisdictional dispute, but a simple use by the growers of the Teamsters as strikebreakers.

There are a number of important implications involved here for the trade-union movement. One is that win, lose or draw, this is going to be a very long struggle. Even if the union should win the strike in the grape fields tomorrow, it would only have a very small percentage of agribusiness organized and would have to go on to other crops and other fields. It's not likely it's going to win immediately. It's much more likely it's going to be a standoff in which the growers lose some money but are subsidized by others and the union will continue to fight, probably for years, to extend its influence here. That means that it's going to be a long-term issue with the rest of the union movement.

The AFL-CIO is officially endorsing this strike and giving money to César Chávez and the farmworkers. The strike began in Coachella, a valley about 120 miles outside of Los Angeles. That picking is now over and now it's in the Great Central Valley. And it will be going on after school is open. They'll still be picking grapes through September and October and even after it's over in the southern part of the Central Valley, it will still be going on later. The union has called a national grape boycott and a boycott against Safeway and A&P stores and that's the key for us.

Anybody who is in a union anywhere can try to get

that union to do something in support of this grape boycott and Safeway-A&P boycott and generally in support of the farmworkers. It can be explained to unionists everywhere that this strike is of historic importance. Getting a foothold in agribusiness, the last major industry in the country that remains unorganized, is a big gain for the union movement.

In those unions in the Southwest, or anyplace else like Chicago for example, with a significant membership of Chicanos or Spanish-speaking people, this farmworkers strike assumes an even greater importance. Because it's very clear that this is the only union in the country that is led by Chicanos. The only one. This is resented and it's one of the reasons for Fitzsimmons' move here. It is a gut issue in the Chicano community. What is going to win this strike in the long run because the relationship of forces is such in the fields that it cannot be won there without help. That's only part of the struggle.

There's no way that the union can bring enough power to bear in the fields to stop production totally. It must light a fire elsewhere in the Chicano community, and in general in the rest of the labor movement to make the boycott effective.

We found that it's a relatively easy issue to take up. Workers are interested in it. Even union officials are interested in it. It's a legitimate issue. Except within the Teamsters union. And even then, it has all sorts of ramifications, because there are oppositions of various sorts throughout the Teamsters union. All of these opposition groups tend to agree on this point. All of them that are worth anything at all agree on this. One knowledgeable source in the Teamsters union told me that he considers this to be Fitzsimmons' Watergate. It could be.

But specifically for us, and for what we can do, it's a natural. For a long time, many of our comrades in the unions wondered, "Well, what can I do in this union? Very few workers attend meetings. If I do something, nothing really happens. There's not much going on." And so on.

Here is an important issue that you can take up. You can go to your union meeting. You can talk to workers about it. You can sell *The Militant* to your fellow workers on this issue, because *The Militant* has excellent coverage of this strike, better than you can get in any other paper in the country. Even better than the farmworkers paper itself. Although on some specific incidents they will, of course, have more complete coverage.

You can sell *The Militant* to workers. You can raise the question of supporting the boycott in the union meetings. You can raise it with other workers. You can try to get the union itself, the local union, to set up a farmworkers support committee. And what does that committee do? What are the people who are interested in activity, even if you're in Chicago or New York or wherever you are, going to do? Take a trip out to Coachella or the Great Central Valley? Hardly. Go down to the local Safeway or A&P and picket and tell people not to buy anything at Safeway or A&P and not to buy grapes at any other store!

This kind of activity, we know, is going on and we're developing it all over the country. But it's a real opportunity to get these committees going in every local union

where we have people. If it's not a special committee, it can be an informal one. It's an obvious natural for doing work.

These people who are attracted to this are the genuine militants. They will be drawn together around this issue.

There is no reason why union officials shouldn't be approached with a specific plan for support of the farmworkers. There's no reason why the banner, for example, of the major union bodies in a city shouldn't be present at the picket lines at the local grocery stores asking people not to buy grapes or not to buy at Safeway. That's just a very small thing, but it's an important thing.

We have been able to get actions, in some places, from central labor councils or county labor federations, because it is official AFL-CIO policy.

Also, in talking to some old friends who are now AFL-CIO officials, asking them to do something here and there, I have found that, while for many years all they would give me would be the time of day and some personal conversation about old times, on this matter of supporting the farmworkers they want to sit down and talk. They are concerned about several things, not the least of which is that they are a little bit worried about what can happen to them and to their unions if the Teamsters get away with this. Some of them complain about this or that mistake that Chávez might have made or that Chávez's own rank-and-file has complaints against him, and that that's why in some cases the Teamsters are able to get away with this. That's nonsense, of course, total nonsense. But I turned to a person like this and said, "How many complaints does your rank-and-file have against you?" If they get away with it here, they'll try it on you. Don't think they won't."

That's about the size of it.

JEFF MACKLER:

Comrades, I'm going briefly to touch on several points. We have a teachers' meeting later and we'll be discussing there in detail many of the points I raise here.

First, I would like to mention that I reported last year at this time about our preparations for the AFT national convention, where we had some 12 comrades in what I consider magnificent participation in that convention. We established at that time the AFT Vietnam Caucus and we thought for the first time in AFT history to pass a clear and powerful resolution calling on the United States to immediately withdraw all forces from Vietnam and Southeast Asia. We conducted a serious debate at that convention for the entire duration. And, as you read in *The Militant* and the articles that came out in our discussion bulletins, we were successful, won over the great bulk of the delegates at the convention, despite the opposition of Albert Shanker, who has consistently and tenaciously opposed the antiwar position. Our comrades led that caucus, put out a tremendous amount of material and met many people.

In California, our state federation passed a powerful resolution on the farmworkers. I haven't seen any resolution in any state to compare to it. We supported that resolution and we moved to implement it.

A couple of weeks ago, a number of the labor councils in the Bay Area called a mass demonstration in Delano in support of the farmworkers. The head of the

delegation from Contra Costa Labor Council asked me to help mobilize teachers from the East Bay and to do what I could to get teachers from the rest of California. That resolution of the California teachers was helpful and in a couple of weeks time we had the demonstration. The teachers were the largest contingent there. Representatives from 32 AFT locals, about 150-200 teachers showed up in support of the farmworkers in Delano and contributed \$400 towards their demonstration. I was asked to bring the greetings from the teachers unions in California.

As you know from our press, we have a campaign to secure ballot status in California. California has the most reactionary legislation, requiring approximately 667,000 signatures to get on the ballot. The Committee for Democratic Election Laws (CoDEL) has brought suit and the executive board of the California Federation of Teachers has passed a strong resolution in support of CoDEL. At press conferences a couple of weeks ago, held simultaneously in San Francisco and Los Angeles, the state president of the AFT spoke at the L.A. conference and the senior vice-president of the CFT spoke at the San Francisco press conference supporting the CoDEL suit.

You know the old saying, "when you live right good things happen." When I went to the teachers convention in Los Angeles on Memorial Day and I was sitting there, the president said that he had a few announcements to make. He then described the case of a professor at the University of Arizona who was a member of the Socialist Workers Party. And he told us—and I had no idea it was true—that the CFT had been supporting this case and that the case was victorious and that there was going to be a big cocktail party at which the entire convention was welcome. He went on to say the professor was Morris Starsky and he gave the directions and the turn-off routes and so on about how to go to the party in honor of Starsky. Of course, I applauded heartily for that announcement. I think we need more like it at AFT conventions.

A number of our teacher comrades have been doing excellent work across the country in their locals. I won't go into all of them, other than to mention that they have been doing consistent work in relation to their own locals, state federations, developments in the state and at the national convention. In Washington, D.C., the teachers local passed a resolution for the removal of all U.S. troops, and to stop the bombing in Southeast Asia. That resolution is submitted to the AFT national convention, which is taking place in Washington, D.C., August 20-24. We expect to have several comrades there.

In addition, the Washington, D.C., local and the California State Federation both passed resolutions calling on the AFT to encourage its affiliate locals to run teacher-sponsored and teacher-initiated candidates for local school boards. That is, we sought to bring the question of independent political action to the AFT convention, and that resolution is already submitted. The kind of reception it will get remains to be seen, but the resolution was drafted and passed at a time when there were several examples of teachers moving toward independent political action.

The teachers in Philadelphia, supported by the AFL-

CIO central labor council, threatened a general strike. That was a form of independent political action that we had not seen for a very long time. The Philadelphia central labor council actually set the date for a general strike, and that saved the strike and kept the Philadelphia teachers union from being smashed.

We saw also an unprecedented example of the alliance that the Chicago teachers union formed with the Black community, which saved their strike too.

Teachers strikes have increased across the country. There were about 145 this past year, which is a significant increase, especially considering that according to the statistics of the government, there has been a marked decline in the number of industrial strikes. The total number of strikes reached a 10-year low point these last nine months. Teachers strikes are on the rise.

The main issues that confront teachers are unemployment—there are approximately 354,000 unemployed teachers—and inflation. In the face of 8 percent inflation, national average per teacher salary adjustments was 4 percent. So there was a real loss.

When I reported on my first experience with the California AFT at the 1971 convention, I reported that I was elected at a very unusual meeting of about 7 teachers to be the vice-president of our CFT chapter, which had a total of 23 members. Each convention I report how the CFT has grown, including my chapter. I'm proud to say that, despite the warnings of the various leaders of the AFT that if the union gets political you can't recruit members, it hasn't worked out that way. My local introduced resolutions on the Vietnam war, including the resolution that passed the national convention last year. It went from the local to the state to the national convention. On the farmworkers union, on escalator clauses, on independent political action, on a statewide congress of labor (which passed the state convention and a state committee has been set up to work on it), the initiation of school board candidates (AFT school board candidates), over the past several years. My AFT chapter now is the eighth largest AFT local in the state, which is a very significant factor. It has grown. It's still a small local with some 300 teachers. It participates in mass demonstrations, wins people to its ranks, and at the same time it is introducing to teachers in a slow and a patient way the ideas that we're going to have to fight on. The coming year, inflation is going to be a major issue, and one of the key bargaining demands that we're introducing is the escalator clause. That will be submitted for endorsement to our state convention this coming summer.

Finally, on the question of *Militant* subs, some 40 teachers in one district have *Militant* subs as well as a number of teachers throughout the state of California and I find—and I think that all the comrades would agree—that the consistent coverage of activity in the labor movement by *The Militant* is certainly helpful. Teachers in my area have found that *The Militant* is an excellent paper. It's a source of conversation. It's a source of bringing people around us. And it's the best way to get our ideas out to large numbers of people.

JEAN TUSSEY:

Today is the thirty-third day of a strike at *The Tele-*

graph, a small daily newspaper with a circulation of 21,000 published in Painesville, Ohio, which is about thirty miles east of Cleveland. If you have read the "National Picket Line" column in *The Militant* of August 6, the guest column by Eileen Berlow, you have some factual background about the unique features of this strike.

You can get other background material in copies of the *Forum Adviser*, which is a journal published in Ash-tabula County by a young man with very similar back-ground to the reporters who are on strike at *The Tele-graph*. He did a long in-depth article, "Anatomy of a Strike," which describes both the factual information and some of the flavor and impressions that he got by partic-ipating in the picket line, attending strike meetings and staying at the strike headquarters for a number of days and interviewing strikers.

The strike is the culmination of an unprecedented year's effort by Cleveland Typographical Union local 53 to organize the unorganized men and women in the print-ing establishments in Northeast Ohio. I want to empha-size that this was initiated and is being conducted by the local union without having sought the usual formal au-thorization from the international union.

We launched the drive early in 1972 because we de-cided that the way to defend ourselves against the wage freeze, the rising prices and the technological changes in the printing industry aimed at cutting labor costs was to strengthen our union. We knew that if we, the orga-nized workers in a relatively privileged craft union were hurting, the unorganized workers were hurting even more and would be receptive to union organization, so this was the time for our local to give top priority to an or-ganizing drive.

Funds and personnel were allocated. The business union methods of the past were discarded and we set out to or-ganize the unorganized by any means necessary.

Experience proved very quickly that organizing *on an industrial union basis is the only effective way to organize today*, uniting all the workers in the plants who are ready to fight together against the employer.

We won a majority at *The Telegraph* and a core of union members in the four other dailies and two week-lies owned by the same publisher, within a radius of 60 miles of *The Telegraph*. *The Telegraph*, however, is the key to organizing the unorganized printing establishments in the three-county area in Northeast Ohio. It's the largest and most profitable of the papers of this chain.

On June 19 in a secret ballot vote the editorial, circu-lation and composing departments at the Painesville *Telegraph* rejected the company's contract proposal that would have perpetuated their substandard wages and working conditions, and they authorized the negotiating committee to call a strike if necessary. The wage offer that the workers rejected was a company proposal for a starting rate of \$105 a week to reporters with journalism degrees, \$90 a week to reporters with other degrees, \$110 to circulation managers, and the federal minimum of \$1.60 an hour to all other employees as a starting rate.

This is in an industrial northern state, not in an area like El Paso where the Farah pants workers are fighting for a starting wage better than \$1.70 an hour. The wage

offer of the company was accompanied by contemptuous references to the tape punchers (the lower paid workers in the composing room, young women, 18 years old or a little more, some just out of high school), referring to them as "peasants" who aren't worth any more than \$1.60 an hour. What the employer representative for-got was that the representative of the "peasants" was right there in the negotiating committee and reported back to the membership on the employer's attitude.

The company's final position in the last negotiating session at which representatives of the editorial and cir-culation departments were also present was that they did not intend to budge on their wage offer because "we have had no problem in staffing the paper at these rates." The workers got the message. The company had had no trou-ble before in staffing the paper at those rates, but they were going to have trouble.

On July 6 about 60 of the 100 employees involved—reporters, photographers, page editors, typesetters, page makeup workers, circulation department drivers, clerks, mail room employees, etc.—hit the bricks. Operating out of strike headquarters directly across the street from the plants, they have been picketing 24 hours a day, 7 days a week ever since. A strike kitchen has been set up in the head-quarters. The local union is paying strike benefits which it pledged a long time ago, in the course of the organizing effort, to these workers. The local unit has also set up a strikers' welfare fund to take care of the cost of main-taining the headquarters and also special needs of the strikers such as provisions for paying a babysitter for one of the young women so that she can do her strike duty.

Those of us who have gone through campaigns of the civil rights movement, the antiwar movement, the student movement, the women's liberation movement, etc., can appreciate some of the organizational tasks in maintain-ing unity and solidarity in such a situation.

We have not had a single defection, not one striker has returned to scab.

To understand the solidarity and the militancy of this group, it is important to understand the composition of the strikers. They are mostly young workers, and a mi-nority of older workers. They range in age from eighteen to fifty-eight. The oldest striker is a woman of fifty-eight who's been at the paper for forty years. She served in every capacity on the paper, including as editor during the war, only to be put back "in her place" after the war.

The experience and education of the reporters is com-parable to the experience and education of many of you who are here. Most of the reporters are young, under 30, college-educated, and have been involved in the past de-cade in most of the movements that many of you came out of.

The strike has also involved some of the older workers, in the composing room particularly, as well as a few in the editorial department, who remember a previous strike in 1947 that took place in the Painesville *Telegraph*, and they are able to make a very interesting comparison between the strike in 1947 and the strike today. In 1947 it was a strike of one isolated department on a craft union basis, the composing room, eighteen people. They all went

out for a three-month strike, but they were isolated and they were crushed.

Today we have the three departments combined, the three major producing departments of the paper. They are unified, they are struggling through one union for a common contract providing the same general benefits, fringes, and working conditions, with some distinction on wages, depending on particular classifications, but with grievance procedures that provide for some say in the interpretation of a union contract.

In addition, the older workers point out that another important difference is that today this strike has the support of the entire labor movement in Northeast Ohio. They have the official support of the Ashtabula County and Lake County AFL-CIO and the unofficial support of the Cleveland Central AFL-CIO. They have the support of every union in the Lake County area in or out of the AFL-CIO.

There are no jurisdictional issues involved and the whole tone and conduct of the strike has made the communities in Lake County more union conscious in the past year and particularly in the past thirty days than they have been in years. The accomplishments of the strike so far, in addition to winning of the support and enthusiasm of all the labor movement in the area, include some very basic things involved in trying to win:

The strike has crippled the production and distribution of *The Telegraph*. The quality of the paper, everyone recognizes, has deteriorated with the removal of the most competent workers. It is supposed to be a local paper, but it has practically no local news. They have to depend on the wire services because they don't have the forces to be able to cover the news. In addition some of the reporters prepared ahead of the strike by discussing their problems with their news sources and effectively drying up some of them for any possible scabs.

The paid circulation has been cut to about a third of normal and they are working on drying up the circulation completely. At the same time they're campaigning to have the advertisers discontinue their advertising as long as the strike exists on the basis that the advertisers pay for a certain amount of paid circulation and they certainly are not getting it during the strike.

Another important achievement was winning the undivided support of all the labor unions. A meeting was held at strike headquarters about two weeks after the strike began, which was a "summit meeting" of all the labor leaders in the area. It resulted in the presence and pledges of support from official representatives of the Steelworkers, the Auto Workers, the Rubber Workers, the Plumbers, Meat Cutters—practically any union that has a local in the area was present and participated—everybody from the Teamsters to the Farm Workers.

The United Farm Workers have sent a delegation down on a number of occasions to join our picketlines and support the strikers. One effect of their presence was to help the strikers look at their strike not just as a bread-and-butter issue but as a social cause.

One of the most important effects of the strike has been on the consciousness of the strikers. They have risen from elementary union consciousness to class consciousness in the course of the struggle. The struggle has cut

through the elitism of the reporters at the beginning of the strike who had difficulty adapting to the idea of being in one union with the workers in the back shop. And it has cut through the suspicions that the composing room employees had about working together in one union and their fear of being sold out by the higher paid and more educated reporters. The strike has unified the group and taught them to think in class terms.

I think one of the most vivid examples of where the strike is at now and what an education it's providing for the workers involved is the situation we have in Geneva, Ohio. The strike has broadened out to involve picketing at the Geneva and Chardon plants of the company, which have helped to provide supplies for the production of the scab newspaper. At the Geneva plant today the police, at the behest of the city manager and the company manager, attempted to restrict the picketing, to limit the forms in which the picketing could be conducted, on the basis of local ordinances.

The response of the strikers and union has been that they are not going to submit to this. They are going to challenge it. They are going to make an issue of it and get arrested if necessary because the principle of not permitting the company to use the local government in this classic form is too important. They propose to challenge it even if they all have to go to jail.

PEARL CHERTOV:

I'm reporting as a branch organizer about the campaign which was written in the June 22 issue of *The Militant*. It is the story on the Steelworkers election held at the Southworks Steel plant in Chicago.

There were two opposing slates. The slate for the incumbents was called the Membership Committee slate. The other slate, called Steelworkers for Change, was headed by a woman, Alice Peurala. The basic difference between the two slates was that the incumbent slate represented the force of the steel union bureaucrats. The Steelworkers for Change had a program that could return the union to the membership. The Steelworkers for Change, in general, had a program based upon transitional demands as applied for steelworkers.

Before going any further into the campaign, I just want to give you a little bit of a background as to why the party even thought of participating in the election at this time. In 1946, under Phillip Murray, the first president of the steel union, the union agreed to lengthen the duration of the steel contract from one to three years. There were a few steel strikes that took place when the contracts expired. Then, in 1959, when McDonald was president of the union, there was the longest steel strike, lasting four months. The companies decided to answer these strikes by stockpiling a few months before the expiration of the contracts. Stockpiling could be avoided by reducing the duration of the contract to one year. The rights and the privileges that steelworkers won in bloody battles against the steel barons in 1937, have been taken away over the years.

Just recently, this past spring, President Abel of the steelworkers, the international executive board and some

of the presidents of the local unions approved a no-strike plan for the 1974 contracts. The membership was sold down the river before the 1974 contract negotiations with big steel. This was the scenario in the Southworks plant when rank-and-file workers agreed that it was time to campaign for a change of union policy.

Alice Peurala has worked at Southworks Steel, a plant of 8,000, for 20 years. From reports at various times, we could feel the anger in the plants against this latest Abel move. The program we agreed to present to the caucus was around the right to vote on contracts, the right to vote on strikes, opposition to the productivity clause, 30-for-40. In other words, a program that could turn the union back to the membership, a program based on our ideas, the Transitional Program.

The executive committee further realized that the party could gain in this campaign, which was based upon the program of transitional demands. We felt that the party would be able to broaden its contacts with workers through this campaign. And in fact, one of the members of the slate did become a reader of *The Militant* and started to come around to farmworker meetings.

Another important thing for the branch is the increased knowledge that the branch gained about industry, about the area they are functioning in. And we felt that that was an important reason.

Another point is to have *The Militant* be able to present to the workers throughout this country and throughout the world, the inside story of what is going on inside the steel plants. The party was in contact with several militant steelworkers during the campaign and we offered to work with them wherever it was possible. We helped paste up campaign signs. Also, the national office provided the branch with 500 *Militants* which we distributed — the issue of the 22nd.

Let me read from the branch report that was given by our steelworker comrades, since they are unable to be here for this session. I will just try to give you a feel for the campaign and for some of the problems these workers face. They are describing the people they work with most closely:

"There were five of us at the first meeting. We met weekly for the next few weeks and finally decided to run a campaign. We had gotten a favorable response from many of our fellow workers and felt it was possible to get a campaign together. This was near the end of April and our biggest problem was time, as the election was June 27 and we had only two months to do it. Despite that, and after a full discussion of all the problems we faced, having no money and having to begin to build a new organization, and knowing that the opposition had united all the forces in the union that had fought each other for the last three elections, that most of them were paid full-time. Five out of ten of the workers for the opposition campaign were either officers or grievors who could get time off. So we had a number of distinct disadvantages."

Then they describe the local union politics:

"The key, most vocal Black member of our caucus had a great amount of pressure applied to him to drop out of the campaign. He was offered a three-day-a-week job in Springfield as a union legislative representative, all expenses and lost time paid. He turned it down. And

he was offered many other goodies — all failed — and was finally actually told to watch himself. Of course he countered with Frank [that's the union president], 'Are you telling me you are going to make me an offer I can't refuse?' We then referred to our president as the Godfather.

"Then he called Alice Peurala who was the most likely candidate for president to run against him and suggested a talk. Since all the groups had opposed each other in the past, perhaps there would be some way he and she could get together. After a two-hour conversation in which he tried to convince her that 8000 steelworkers were not going to vote for a female for their president, that she was living in a dream world, that perhaps a can factory which employed women might elect her, she told him he would just have to wait and see. After his soft-sell, he tried to threaten her with a red-baiting campaign.

"Steelworkers for change managed to rent a store-front headquarters about the middle of May through June, which is very conveniently located a block from one of the plant gates. One of our great problems was the shift work, since planning a distribution at six plant gates meant a maximum of our forces had to be utilized. During the campaign we put out a total of eight leaflets. Our money came from the sale of raffle tickets and personal donations and a party which was socially successful, but not financially. The entire campaign cost about \$1000 and we came out of it about even. All of our forces were voluntary. And this has to be compared with the incumbents who had all the time in the world with, as you know, five full-time exec people working on the campaign, with a chairman of the campaign and grievors. All of our people worked full-time, but the three candidates did each take a week off to campaign."

We sell *Militants* at this plant every single week. Depending upon how many comrades can go to sell, we sell anywhere between 14 and 30. The result of this campaign is that a lot of disaffection in district 31 of the United Steelworkers has found authentic representatives. This is the largest steel district in the area, and a rank-and-file committee has been established to fight the no-strike pact for 1974. The slate that ran a woman for president of the local is a part of the broader Right to Strike Caucus. This means the party will be gaining more experience and more members in the Steelworkers Union.

The results of the vote were 1516 for the incumbents, and 575 for Alice Peurala. This is the first time to our knowledge that a group of steelworkers has selected a woman to run for president of their local. They deserve our support on that account alone. It is something new. And for a first campaign in less than two months, it did well.

A quarter of the vote is probably more than they expected. The fact that one of every four steelworkers who voted in the local 65 election cast a ballot for Alice Peurala shows that change in this local, and is part of a bigger change in the Steelworkers Union.

DERRELL MYERS:

I'm a member of Painters local 4 in San Francisco. One of the, or maybe the only organized response so far to the worsening economic situation, to Nixon's attack on the living standards of the American people,

was organized in San Francisco in early March with a demonstration on April 28 in opposition to the wage freeze, to inflation, unemployment and to the social service cutbacks. I'm going to cover just what I think are the most educational aspects of that development. There are a lot of interesting details, but because of the time I'm going to limit it to a few important lessons.

First let me outline what happened for those who aren't familiar. Some ex-radical and trade-union leaders in the Bay Area got together and decided that it was necessary to have some kind of organized response to Nixon's economic policies. Their approach was to go to the organized trade-union movement, the officials of the movement, and see if they could convince them to organize some kind of a response. They were successful in doing that and convincing six of the Bay Area central labor councils—I think six out of seven—to organize a demonstration at the Civic Center in San Francisco around the issues I mentioned.

What was new and important about this action, as most of the comrades know and read in *The Militant*, was that this is a departure from the traditional methods of dealing with these kinds of problems by the American labor bureaucracy. Outside of strikes, for example, in trying to deal with any political problems, their methods have been to rely on the Democratic and/or Republican parties. This was new in that they looked to the mobilization of the ranks of the trade-union movement, and actually beyond the ranks of the trade-union movement, to organize them into independent mass action in direct opposition to government policies.

They invited all the unions—all the AFL-CIO unions, the Teamsters, the longshore unions, and the auto workers—to participate in it. That also is new, and a very important concept as comrades know, in the labor movement. They went beyond their local limitations, or their craft limitations, and attempted and actually did organize a very broad layer of the trade-union movement.

But they went even beyond that, which is an indication of the effect of the radicalization we've seen so far and how it affects the trade-union movement. These movements are not isolated from each other, but have very real organic links in a million different ways. The organizers of this April 28 demonstration wanted to reach beyond organized labor and beyond the employed workers. They tried to bring into the demonstration people on welfare, consumers in general, and the unemployed. They made it very clear from the beginning that this was not simply a demonstration for trade-union members, but was a demonstration for all people affected adversely by Nixon's economic policies. That also was new, and a new lack of sectarianism on the part of the labor movement.

They welcomed the National Peace Action Coalition, that is the Bay Area branch of it, to participate and help build the demonstration. One of the reasons, as one union official explained to another, was what NPAC stood for. They couldn't remember exactly what the letters were. "PNAC, or something like that," he said. "I don't know. But anyway, they're the people who organized the massive antiwar demonstrations. By the way, they say they're going to pass out 50,000 leaflets and I know because

I was in their marches that they're going to do that and they're going to be a big help." That was very positive, of course, and an indication of the many things our antiwar work accomplished. We have yet to discover all the changes the antiwar movement brought on. There are lots of people who we haven't heard from who noticed that movement, who noticed its tactics and its successes and who learned from it.

The organizers urged that open meetings be held every Saturday, open to everybody who was interested in working on the demonstration. Although these weren't really decision-making meetings as the organizers had a steering committee of trade-union officials, they were necessary organizing meetings that attempted to involve the rank-and-file of the union movement in the building of this action. And those meetings were big, between 125 and 160 people on three successive Saturdays leading up to the demonstration. We naturally participated in these meetings and we found out that here was a real opportunity for us to make contacts in the labor movement and to help promote what we think has to be done in response to the economic problem affecting the entire working class in this country.

Some of the comrades, one who was unemployed at the time and able to work on a full-time basis in the offices of the department store employees where the demonstration was being organized, worked primarily in the organization of this demonstration. That gave us an opportunity to learn the politics of these people, who was involved, what they were really looking for, how serious they were about it. In other words, to work with and further assess these union people, find out where they were going and what they thought of our politics. This proved to be very helpful. Other comrades, of course, came to the union headquarters, organized sound trucks that hadn't been used since the campaign when the Seafarer's Union used them to support Richard Nixon. They donated two fully equipped sound trucks to the United Labor Action Committee to build the demonstration.

We also organized, consulted with the leadership of this action, and organized a community support group which gave us the opportunity to involve the consumer groups, students, and the National Peace Action Coalition. The meeting that we organized for this had about 150 people and organized the distribution of 50,000 leaflets. That was in addition to 200,000 leaflets being passed out by the unions.

Other comrades went to their union locals and got support for this action. Other comrades passed out leaflets on their job or in the downtown area and were able to introduce themselves in some cases as people who were doing something about Nixon's economic policy.

We also extended our contacts with trade-union officials who had been supporters of the antiwar movement and, as comrades understand, it's important to have those kinds of contacts in the trade-union movement, even if we don't of course orient to these types. Those who read *Teamster Rebellion* see the importance of having contacts and the cooperation of some of the trade-union officials.

Our comrades who were most active in this became known as SWP members and the party was given credit for that work.

I just want to end by saying that the demonstration was smaller than we expected—about 3,000 people—but it represented broad layers of the labor movement. The theme of the speakers was quite militant, proposed unity, and proposed continuation of this fight. There was a meeting last Saturday of about 55 officials and they voted to organize a conference to continue and discuss further action in the near future.

EILEEN BERLOW:

The feminist movement has begun to have an impact on the trade-union movement. Women now comprise 40 percent of the workforce and 20 percent of organized labor. They are beginning to penetrate many occupations that were formerly reserved for men—although this is still on a token basis. A few women have managed to rise in the labor bureaucracy, but these women can go so far and no further. In Washington, D. C., a group of women who are on the staffs of their international unions have formed a coalition to deal with their problems as women in unions. Other union women have organized groups in Chicago, Cleveland, and on the West Coast.

On June 29-30, there was a Midwest Conference of Union Women Leaders in Chicago. This was organized by women in the UAW and staff members of other unions. It was not well publicized but over two hundred women attended. They represented twenty different unions in eighteen states. Half of the women were in the UAW. AFSCME and AFT had the next largest turnout with twenty-one and sixteen respectively. The conference was run democratically, allowing many women to speak. It was evident from the discussion that a lot of women in the unions are feminists, even though they may dislike that label. They raised such issues as "the right to control our own bodies," childcare, the ERA, and organizing the unorganized. The leaders of the conference, Olga Madar of the UAW, Catherine Conroy of CWA and Addie Wyatt of the Meat Cutters said that they had been influenced by the feminist movement. They raised the perspective of organizing a national women's caucus in the trade unions which would be part of the women's liberation movement. The conference did not adopt any positions, but did organize committees with democratically elected coordinators of states and unions to plan a national conference sometime next year. Whether this conference will actually take place and how far these women will go in opposition to their bureaucracies is not certain at this point. Many of these women have led struggles in their own unions for support to the ERA and the establishment of women's committees.

Besides women who are on the union staffs, there is a growing layer of young women who have been radicalized during their student years and who are now entering the work force. These young women tend to be feminists and trade-union militants and they are open to our ideas. *I know because we are recruiting women in AFSCME and other unions in Cleveland.* Most of these women are in the AFSCME women's rights committee and the Cleveland Council of Union Women. The former was started in April 1972 primarily around the abortion issue. We managed to bring women to WONAAC conferences and local meetings and after the Supreme Court decision we

have done some work on the ERA.

The Cleveland Council of Union Women was formed about a year ago by women from NOW and the Newspaper Guild Women's Rights Committee. Jean Tussey has been the main organizer of the group and was recently elected president. The main purpose of the CCUW is to get women involved in their unions and to get our unions involved in the struggle for women's liberation. A year ago, we had twelve women from eight different unions. Now we have a mailing list of over fifty women in the Cleveland area from fifteen different unions and about a dozen contacts in other Ohio cities, including the president of the Toledo Council of Union Women. Our largest meeting was the first annual meeting held on June 24, 1973, which was attended by twenty-three women from eleven different unions. The unions represented in our group are AFSCME, the Newspaper Guild, the Cleveland Typographical Union, the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks (BRAC), the Meatcutters Union, the Garment Workers (ILGWU), the Farmworkers (UFW), the United Auto Workers (UAW), Communication Workers (CWA), Teachers (AFT), Catholic Elementary Lay Teachers Association (CELTA), Electrical Workers (IUE), Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW), Hotel and Restaurant Workers, and the American Greeting Card Association.

Our main focus has been the ERA, but we have taken positions in support of the farmworkers, the May 5 demonstration against high prices, and local union struggles. These include the strike against the Painesville *Telegraph*, and the struggle by CELTA for union recognition, which the vice-president of CCUW is organizing. Comrades can read about the Painesville strike in *The Militant* of August 3 and in the *Forum Advisor*, which is available by the literature table.

The most important contribution which the CCUW has made is our propaganda campaign for the ERA. We have been publicizing the fact that several unions *do* support the ERA, and we have raised the issue in our local unions and in the Cleveland Central Labor Council.

The Ohio AFL-CIO and its head, Frank King, has been the most important opponents of the ERA in Ohio. The Cleveland AFL-CIO refused to even discuss the matter unless the state and national bodies change their position. But four local unions, the Guild, AFSCME, CTU, and BRAC, adopted resolutions of support for the ERA.

When the Ohio legislature held hearings on the ERA, more than a thousand women came to Columbus from all over the state to show their support for the ERA. Several members of CCUW went there also. Both Jean and I were able to testify before the committees. Jean was asked to speak to a statewide NOW conference on employment. She chaired the workshop on women in the unions. And cited several articles, including Diane Feeley's article on the ERA. We sold copies of that issue of the *ISR*. I spoke to fifty women at a NOW program meeting on Women and Poverty, which was held in Columbus. We have had speakers from CCUW at every women's conference and demonstration in Cleveland. We have had interviews on radio stations and articles in the two major papers in Cleveland.

The Midwest Conference, which I described earlier, helped

us to expand our membership list by making contacts with other women who were interested in our group. The conference also helped recruit a young woman from AFSCME who came with me to the conference. Previously, she had come to forums, bought a subscription to *The Militant*, and endorsed our campaign. The conference, especially the eight-hour bus trip, gave me a chance to talk to her in great detail about our politics.

Recruitment is the most important aspect of any work that we do and particularly in the trade unions. Comrades can participate in the trade unions, if the situation is favorable, with all aspects of party work. In the trade-union panel last year, we described how in AFSCME Local 1746 a peace committee and a women's rights committee got started. In the union we sold *Militant* subscriptions and obtained campaign endorsers. We have since sold more subscriptions and launched a farmworkers support committee. We are even more open about our views. For example, I have several political posters up in my office including a Scherr for mayor poster. Other women from the Women's Rights Committee have posters and leaflets up about the ERA demonstration and international women's day. We post forum leaflets on the bulletin boards, and pass them out to our contacts.

Most comrades do not have such a favorable situation but they can sell our press, talk about our campaign, and discuss our entire program with young and not-so-young workers on the job. And we can recruit them to our movement.

MACEO DIXON:

Two young Black workers, Issac Shorter and Larry Carter, occupied the Chrysler Jefferson plant Tuesday, July 24, to force management to fire a racist white supervisor. The two Blacks had entered the cage that contained the power switch of the assembly line and they cut off the energy of the plant. But they were supported by other workers and community people along with that. From 2-300 workers actively supported them by surrounding the cage and protecting them against plant guards who were ordered to get them out.

There were white workers (both old and young white workers) actively supporting them. Women, as well as 11 out of the 15 Arab workers in the plant, also actively supported the power cut-off.

After about 13 hours of occupation of the plant, the demands were met. The racist supervisor was fired. The two brothers got total amnesty and all workers were paid four hours for the day.

Two, three or four years ago, this type of thing just would not have happened. I worked for about three years in the auto plants in Detroit, both at Chrysler and at Cadillac, including the Chrysler plant at Jefferson Avenue. And this type of stuff just didn't occur then. It didn't happen for two reasons. First because of the way the company would use, for instance, the cops to break up organized activities of workers. Back in '68 and '69 during the height of popularity of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement, DRUM, the police would actively try to break the back of this Black caucus. I was never in DRUM but I was closely associated with them and supported most of their actions. In '68 and '69 there were

union elections and DRUM would actively campaign for its program in a massive way to organize workers to support their slates. On the day of the elections the cops did two things. They helped the union officialdom get as many retired white workers as possible to come to the union hall to vote for the candidates of the union bureaucracy. These retired workers still had the right to vote within the union. Transportation was organized for them by the police as well as the union officialdom to have a maximum turn-out.

The other thing the cops did was intimidate Blacks. Most of the Black workers were voting, because Dodge main was mostly Black, usually right after work or during lunchtime. The cops came in on them while they were in the union hall, busting them on their heads, arresting them. This happened several times, using terror and intimidation against them, using this type of tactics. They used the pretense, given by the union officials, that they were disrupting things. This was the role of the police.

The second reason why such things as cutting off the power in an auto plant wouldn't have happened two or three years ago is because of the attitude of the workers themselves, both Black and white. If that had occurred earlier, the same workers who supported the brothers just two weeks ago would have themselves gone into that cage and dragged the brothers out and said things like, "You're messing with my work time. People are trying to work." They'd tell them to get out of there. People wanted to have a lot of overtime to keep up with the living standards. Many people even had two jobs.

But things are changing, and attitudes are changing. That's why the occupation was so successful. They had that active support. They had support among the workers. And because of that, Chrysler didn't use the police to come in and break things up, because it might have even escalated things.

Chrysler, if this had happened some time ago, would have fired people on the spot. But because of the active support they didn't do that. What happened was a definite precedent. It may not be felt immediately, but that example will be absorbed for the future struggles the workers will be carrying out.

Even Douglas Fraser, the United Auto Workers head of the Chrysler division, said in an underhanded attack against the two brothers, "This is the first plant hijacking of my experience. They get an A for ingenuity."

What actually sparked the occupation was that one day this racist supervisor removed all the chairs that were alongside the assembly line and put them back in the cafeteria, broke these chairs up. These chairs were used by workers when they go on relief or things of that nature to rest right near the work spot. The two workers, Isaac and Larry, went to their stewards to complain, but they got no results.

Next there was a spontaneous walkout against this supervisor, and many people had disciplinary actions taken against them. Still the racist supervisor was not removed.

Next, the two young brothers began a petition drive within their own department to remove this supervisor. Out of their department of 250 people, 214 signed the petitions. They explained that they didn't get more to

sign the petitions because many of the rest of the workers said that the petitions wouldn't get rid of the supervisor. They weren't opposed to the petition, but they felt some more militant type of an action had to be carried out. The petitions were turned in to their union representatives, but again nothing was done.

As the two brothers explained to me, after that had happened they had to carry the struggle to a higher level. The proletarian methods of struggle that they used, and tactics, are quite significant. For instance, just to give you an example, they refused to negotiate behind closed doors with management, or even to allow the union bureaucracy to represent them. They forced the representatives of the capitalists to come down in the open to negotiate. While the brothers were in the cage, the workers who were around the cage set up tables and chairs right there in front of them and forced the capitalist representatives to sit down and negotiate right out in front.

At one time during the 13-hour occupation, two tradesmen came down to cut the chains on the cage to bring them out but their hearts were not in that job and it wouldn't have mattered anyway because the production workers wouldn't let them get close to the power cage.

Isaac and Larry were supposed to be here tonight, but they were unable to make it. The reason is because two days ago, while the UAW was negotiating, the president of local 212 at the Chrysler stamping plant rushed into the negotiations office and explained to the union officialdom that the workers at his plant were going to go on strike because of grievances at the local plant. He was afraid of that. Isaac had been asked by the workers at this plant to come there and help organize their particular walkout. They're presently organizing at a different plant in defense of other workers at the Chrysler stamping plant.

After this occupation had occurred, there was a victory rally held for them by a number of caucuses all across the city—the United National Caucus, United Justice Caucus, and so forth—to gather up people to begin to organize some type of citywide action or demonstration. About 125 people turned out, the media came, and the brothers came out and spoke. It was at that particular time that the media found out that the two brothers were very conscious socialists.

They have a very conscious attitude about reaching out to the rest of the city. This is what they've been doing ever since the occupation. That particular plant, by the way, is right now in changeover. They don't have to work. So what they're doing is going all around the city to radio programs, TV shows, or whatever, to get out and explain the need for workers control and so forth, what they did, etc. This past Friday they both gave talks at the Militant Labor Forum and I interviewed them for *The Militant* and brought out the things that they did and why they did them. This explains their methods and the role of the union bureaucracy and so forth. In conclusion, I'll quote Isaac Shorter: "Our primary objective as Blacks should be Africa because we come from Africa. And then the proletariat should control the world. We must have the proletarian dictatorship of the world."

WALTER LIPPMANN:

I'm active in Social Services Union local 535 which organizes welfare workers in some 15 California counties. And I'm a member of the state executive board of that union and have been for the past several years.

Over the years in Los Angeles, as comrades should know, the Socialist Workers Party headquarters has been attacked by *gusanos* on several different occasions. On one occasion when the headquarters was almost totally destroyed, the officials of local 535 authorized the use of the union's facilities for branch meetings, for the SWP, for the YSA and for a state election campaign meeting that was held on that particular weekend. As a result of that and other endorsements and activities of the local, we think it's possible to get—and in fact, quite likely—endorsement from the local's executive board for the Political Rights Defense Fund and its lawsuit.

This spring, the Los Angeles branch decided to run a full slate of candidates in the city municipal campaign. One of those candidates was myself for the L.A. city school board. At the state executive board of the local, a motion was introduced to endorse my campaign. That was passed unanimously by the executive board. To my knowledge, that's the only time that a trade union has endorsed an SWP candidate for public office. That campaign went on for several months. The union had also previously endorsed CoDEL and had sent a representative down to participate in the press conference over the ballot fight we had this spring for the city election against the filing fees and residency requirements. We won part of it and we lost part of it. One of the parts that we lost was the filing fee for certain of the candidates, such as myself, because I'm employed at a regular job. So one of the union's business agents paid the filing fee out of her own pocket. She later came and spoke in support of my campaign at the party's campaign banquet.

One of the other things we were able to do to a limited extent was to go out and speak at other union meetings in an attempt to secure other unions' endorsements. We did not get any.

Finally, we've regularly sold *Militants* at the union membership meetings and executive board meetings over the years and we sell 20-25 or 30 or so copies at each of these board meetings, which are held every six weeks.

There was an article which appeared in the *ISR* in May about welfare which I co-authored and during that month I was able to sell 80 copies of the *ISR* to various people at work. The overall reaction was very good, even from people who were very conservative politically. People who don't even belong to the union, because you don't have to where I work, thought the article was good and appreciated it.

Our local has been involved in a coalition that was formed in Los Angeles to support the United Farm Workers. The union's offices serve this coalition to get out leaflets and literature and to hold meetings for the UFW. The coalition that the union is part of also organized a good-sized demonstration a couple weeks ago in Los Angeles—several hundred came out—to build the boycott at Safeway and to raise funds for the United Farm Workers.

It's possible to get endorsements for these kinds of cam-

paigns and other campaigns that the party supports, and I think other local unions will also endorse these campaigns.

Other kinds of resolutions that we've adopted include one against the Rodino bill (official AFL-CIO union policy supports the Rodino bill against immigrant undocumented workers), calling on the AFL-CIO to drop its support of this bill.

Many unions today will initiate or endorse the kinds of actions that we welcome. This is different from a few years ago, and we should help along this process wherever possible.

HERMAN KIRSCH:

I want to relate to you in a few minutes several personal experiences at the Lordstown plant in Ohio and a GE plant in Cleveland where I'm presently working. These experiences may help us appreciate the changes that are taking place in industry today.

The Lordstown plant recently celebrated its one-millionth car off the assembly line. That's one car every 38 seconds. As a reporter for *The Militant*, I had an opportunity to interview quite a few workers in the last couple of years in that plant. Many of them were Vietnam veterans and many of them were Black.

General Motors assembly division is never satisfied with the speed of the assembly line. They often lay off workers — sometimes 200, 300, 400 — and expect the remaining workers to do double duty while they're running up and down the assembly line. If these workers lag, or if they miss a few minutes in the morning or they miss a day as a result of the pressures of the job, they frequently are given disciplinary layoffs from 3-5 days or sometimes fired. Grievances accumulate by the thousands in that local. What's typical of most of these auto plants is a very high turnover of workers.

The pressures build up to a great degree and break out in either wildcat strikes or, if the union's international leadership allows it, in authorized strike.

I interviewed one young Black worker after a three-week strike and asked him what had happened. He said, "It's all going to be the same. We got 180 workers back to work. The same thing's going to happen again." He didn't know me from Adam. I didn't explain to him who I was except that I was a reporter. He says, "I'm in shape. I'm 24 years old. I worked in this plant for three years. I keep myself in shape because I need it. But how would you like to run up and down an assembly line for eight hours? If they add one extra assignment to me, just speed-up the line just one little bit. I can feel it so much that it affects my life at home. My wife is constantly mad at me."

Last month three or four hooded workers wearing ski masks tied up the Lordstown plant for several days. The remarkable thing about that is that these new actions are similar to what's going on in the Chrysler plants in Detroit. They all get away with these defiant actions. The masked pickets at Lordstown haven't been caught, in spite of the fact that the union leadership and management would like to know who they are.

The union leadership lets the workers have short strikes at times in order to blow off steam and dissipate some

of the pent-up resentment against the company. But that's no solution to the basic problems of speed-up, unsafe working conditions, layoffs, and inflation.

Our political opponents — the Communist Party, the YWLL, and the various ultralefts — are very actively circulating their newspapers down there. The CP often sends 8-9 people to sell at Lordstown. Those young workers welcome radical literature and are seeking a solution to their problems.

Another example of the changing moods resulting from the younger composition in the plants and the effects of the radicalization is the GE plant where I'm presently working. I was hired last year while I was a congressional candidate for the Socialist Workers Party. The General Electric personnel office warned me in advance that they would not allow me to indulge in political activity during working hours. I was on six months probation, like all other new hires. The average age at this plant is 30, and there are 2,200 workers in the GE complex in Cleveland.

In the first three months of work, during my probationary period, I sold six subscriptions to *The Militant* and \$30 worth of Pathfinder literature. Evelyn Reed is one of the authors that's frequently asked for. Writings of Trotsky also sell well. Copies of *The Militant* circulate in the plant. Some workers come from there to the Militant Labor Forum.

To my great surprise, after being red-baited for the last 20 years in an auto plant, I found virtually no red-baiting in this plant, in spite of the fact that I'm well known as a public representative of the Socialist Workers Party. Last week a leading member of the Knights of Columbus, knowing the position of the party on abortion, asked me to debate a member of the "Right to Life" on abortion and he said he'd get a meeting hall holding 500. I declined and suggested a woman more capable of arguing that subject, one of our comrades. And he accepted very readily. As you know, the Knights of Columbus is a reactionary Catholic organization.

On May 5, at the first union meeting I attended, I spoke about the demonstration against high prices. A motion to endorse the demonstration was adopted unanimously.

They also support the United Farm Workers. The International Union of Electric Workers, along with many AFL-CIO unions, supports the United Farm Workers. This, by itself, however, means little. But it's possible for our comrades who are working in unions to do something about that. I think there's a lot more elbow room today than existed a few years ago in unions. It's possible in some unions to get up at the meeting and say, "I'm an endorser and I'm helping the United Farm Workers. If anybody would like to help out, see me in the back of the hall." We can do this and get a favorable response on an issue like support of the UFW, which the union is committed to, if we have made a few friends and talked about the issue in the shop beforehand.

GARY DELLSON:

I'm going to report on the regional conference of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, held in Chicago on July 28 of this year. The purpose of the conference was to start implementing their national convention's perspec-

tives and to start organizing a regional structure.

There were 80 registered delegates and six guests, representing a total of 22 different organizations. There was no further breakdown than that in the credentials report. Unions represented there were the Meat Cutters, AFGE, SEIU, AFSCME, TWU, AFT, UE, USW, IBT, IUSSE, and SIU, Taxicab local 777. The radical tendencies there were us, the CP, and the Social Democrats. NCLC tried to get in but were not allowed. The conference was composed of mostly middle-aged Black male unionists, with the male/female ratio being 70-30. There were only three white males, one being Fred Gadburry, the national coordinator of TUAD. The structure was mainly that of reports by Hayes and Lucy, the secretary-treasurer of AFSCME. Those two played the major role. Ed Todd, the international vice-president from the TWU, played a less visible role, but his opinion was referred to by messages carried back and forth by L. A. Dunnigan, an international representative from the TWU. There was also a presentation by Peggy Smith Martin, a state representative from the 26th district. Her presence was important because she was one of the floor leaders in the fight against social service cuts and for the ERA in Springfield.

Charles Hayes, the international vice-president of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters, started the conference with an explanation of the objectives of CBTU and some of the problems they face. The CBTU is not dual unionism but a structure to work within the existing structures to bring about certain reforms. Those mentioned were getting more that the present two Blacks on the central structure of the Illinois AFL-CIO and cracking the white domination in the building trades. Some gains mentioned were getting a Black male president of the Hotel Maids Union, which is 95 percent Black and which previously would not allow maids on the negotiating committee. He said that certain changes had been started by the AFL-CIO to head them off, but he would not be specific. He also blasted the Urban League for allowing Secretary of Labor Brennan to speak at their national convention.

Next, Bill Lucy, secretary-treasurer of AFSCME, gave a report on the steering committee meeting the previous day at the packinghouse and on the priorities they had chosen for themselves. Their first order of business was to expand their steering committee and to make it more open to the young and to women. Added to the original five-person list was Ms. Clarke of the United Furniture Workers, Issen Clemens of the International Longshoremen, Levi Daniels who is a regional director of the UMW, Ola Kennedy of District Council 37 of AFSCME, Dennis Serrette of CWA, Ed Todd of TWU, and Bob Wilson of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters. There was a regional meeting on July 21 in St. Louis, and there will be regional meetings in Detroit on August 11, New York on August 18, Philadelphia on August 25, and Baltimore around September 15. Their next convention in 1974 will be held in Detroit, tentatively May 10-12. Lucy stated that they are trying to build the structure first, before they get involved in too many activities.

Their executive committee has taken action on a whole series of issues. Some of these are the Burke-Hartke bill,

which they support; tax reform, and social service budget cuts. By action, they mean lobbying.

Their biggest lobbying success was the OEO founding bill. The Black Caucus called them, claiming they were short by 13 votes. Lucy claims that they were able to pressure enough to pick up 19 votes.

The CP's intervention was fairly sizeable—at least 20. Their role was mainly tailending the leadership by, for instance, equating withdrawal of U. S. corporations from South Africa to the CBTU's position on the Burke-Hartke bill. They also had an intervention around their September 28 anti-imperialist conference on African liberation. Tony Montero, one of the CP leaders, was there and he spoke at the conference and got their endorsement.

The important thing that came out of this conference was their support for the September 8 demonstration called by the Coalition for Jobs and Economic Security, which includes forces like PUSH, CBTU, and a wing of the bureaucracy with figures like Woodcock and Gorman. These demonstrations will take place in five cities this fall: Chicago, New York, Detroit, Washington, D. C., and Los Angeles. There were no specific dates mentioned for the last four, while the one on September 8 is in Chicago.

This demonstration was not stressed at the meeting, outside of being announced. They expect to have 75,000 in Chicago, but that remains to be seen. I was able to talk to a rank-and-file meatcutter about the action, and he expressed the need to be out on the streets again. He also expressed agreement with me that the only way to win reforms was by mass street actions. Bill Lucy, on the other hand, when I talked to him afterwards, explained that he expected nothing much out of this action, but that it would set a positive tone and help them present their program to Congress better.

It is obvious that the CBTU is tied to the trade-union bureaucracy, but it does reflect the pressure of Black trade unionists on these leaders to improve their standard of living. It is also obvious that this Black trade-union bureaucracy will try to use this to also further enhance their own position vis-a-vis the white trade-union bureaucracy. Rank-and-file trade unionists will also be pulled around this and we will want to talk to them about our program and sell our press to them.

This whole formation represents the pressures of unemployment and inflation on Blacks in the trade-union movement. This is particularly true with the meatcutters, who have been hit with at least seven to eight closings at meat processing places in Chicago in the past week. It also represents the interests of the Black trade-union bureaucrats.

But, as they themselves mentioned, they represent a division in the trade-union bureaucracy, a division we can take advantage of. For instance, Lucy pointed out, the AFL-CIO is currently strengthening the Randolph Institute so they can isolate this threat to their leadership.

Comrades around the country should pay special attention to this formation and in places where there are demonstrations we should help build them, sell our press, and talk to the Black rank-and-file workers. For us this is an opening—a small one maybe—in which we can talk to Black workers about political problems and a program

for their solution. This is suggested by the reference in our political resolution to CBTU. Comrades in cities where there is activity should use this opportunity to take resolutions into their unions and try to set up action committees to mobilize their union brothers and sisters in mass actions.

THEODORE EDWARDS:

Some people can't imagine a world without capitalists, just as they used to imagine you couldn't have a society without a king. But Marx noted that a king is a king only as long as his subjects think that he is the king and they are the subjects. There are some people who think that you can't get along without capitalists, and one of those is Secretary of Labor Peter J. Brennan. He's also called Pistol Pete. He carries a revolver in his pocket when he goes around speaking.

The *U.S. News and World Report* interviewed him on July 30, 1973, and they asked him: "Do you have any special goal which you hope to achieve during your term as labor secretary?" His answer was: "I want to do the best I can for the country and the working man and woman, and that includes management, because the first thing I ever learned in bargaining for workers, the best contract I could get didn't mean a damn thing if somebody wasn't there at the end of the week to pay the checks and pay for fringe benefits. So you can't put them out of business. You have to make sure that they make their profit and they can take care of their obligations as the agreement goes." And so on and so on and so forth.

But some French watchmakers don't agree with that, as you know. On June 19, the Lip workers in a little town in France, Besançon, took over the factory over the issues of layoffs and the refusal to get their pay and started the assembly line and took over the factory and continued to produce by selling the watches at a 40 percent discount.

I don't want to go into the various details. You can read in the *IP* all the ins and outs of the typical maneuverings and so forth with the police. They held the management in the office. They took some \$2 1/2 million worth of watches as security so their pay would be paid eventually. But the interesting thing is that this was a very inspiring action for the rest of the French workers and it shows the kind of social crisis that does exist in France.

The capitalist class and the state institutions are very careful to move in on those workers because there's such widespread sympathy in the rest of France for this kind of an action. For instance, the Pompidou government tried to propose to the workers that they run the factory as a cooperative, but they rejected this in the union. They said that they were against capitalism. They don't want to become capitalists. Therefore, they don't want to run it as a cooperative. They also refused an order for some 30,000 watches from some Arab retailer for \$75,000 because they didn't want to become capitalists either.

What do they want then? They want somebody to take over the plant that would guarantee there would be no dismantlement of the plant, there would be a sliding scale of wages and other fringe benefits, guaranteed jobs. And then they would continue to work under those conditions,

although taking in the workers control that they exercise now, they're continuing to produce. And their movement has taken on the aspects of a social movement: general assemblies; childcare centers; they have reception centers; they want solidarity movements in various other countries; and so forth.

One of the reporters from *Rouge* went down there and interviewed them and suggested, "How about nationalization and workers control?" And they were very amenable to that suggestion. The only thing they thought was, but then all the other French workers would want the same thing as well. So it would spread like wildfire.

In the meantime they issued a manifesto which is also printed in the *IP*. Let me just read a few sentences from it. They say:

"We have shown that the bosses are not indispensable and that the workers are capable of organizing themselves on their own, even in the economic sphere. It is not only the management of Lip that has been challenged, but the whole employer class. And our struggle can be an important gain for all workers if tomorrow other attempts are made in the same direction, if we collectively think out our methods of action to make them most effective."

They also were appealing for solidarity from other workers throughout the world, for messages of support and financial contributions. I think that comrades everywhere in the unions where they can should introduce such messages of solidarity and collections and the address is in the *IP*.

TELEGRAM TO STRIKING LIP WORKERS:

Trade-union members of the Socialist Workers Party, at the party's 25th National Convention, send warmest fraternal greetings and solidarity. We have received two of your watches, produced under workers control without benefit of management, and we welcome them as proof that workers can do well without bosses. We expect that the workers of the U.S. will follow your example, as they did in the 1930s when they borrowed from you the sit-down strike as a new weapon in the class warfare of that time.

JEFF CHIPLEY:

Beginning on January 26 and ending May 19, the Oil Workers (Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers — OCAW) strike at Shell's Deer Park refinery was a test of the union movement here where unions are not strong.

We tried to help the strike in the following ways: (1) support through publicity in *The Militant*; (2) support by our candidates in the Houston mayoral election campaign; (3) aid and solidarity of the protest movements in which we were active; (4) resolutions of support in the central labor council; (5) financial and moral support from all unions in the area that we could reach and influence.

These methods of helping the Oil Workers strike were projected on the basis of our previous experience in support of the Dow Chemical strike here.

From its inception, the strike attracted quite a bit of attention, primarily because it wasn't an economic strike

in the ordinary sense of the word. The central demands were related to the health and safety conditions on the job and the degree to which workers could exercise control over them. Consequently, this suggested several transitional demands, the most significant being "open the books."

When the strike ended on May 19 and the terms of the contract were revealed, it became obvious that while Shell had granted some concessions with respect to health and safety, the contract language didn't really contain any protection against inflation, speed-up, or cutbacks. Thus, after four months of struggle, the OCAW might as well have been spinning its wheels, and it is in this direction that we will be aiming our propaganda in the future.

Finally, the one really significant development to come out of the strike was the role played by the Women's Auxiliary and their unhesitating use of mass action. Led by Linda McGregor, the Women's Auxiliary of local 4-367 conducted numerous demonstrations, rallies, sit-ins, and marches culminating in the march and rally on April 26 with about 300 participants and involving 16 local unions in a united action. This is all the more interesting because it appears that a pattern of militant strike actions led by women is developing here in Texas; first in Freeport during the Dow strike, then in El Paso during the Farah strike, then most recently during the Shell strike. In the last case we were able to utilize our women comrades and establish ties between the Women's Auxiliary and the feminist movement.

Probably the single most important form of strike support we could conduct was with our press. Accordingly, the branch decided that the trade-union work director would direct the stories on the strike and that the sales committee would direct the sales—making a special effort to ensure selling on the job, plantgate sales, and union meeting sales (especially those meetings where we were attempting to get support resolutions passed).

All together we wrote six articles for *The Militant* (two more came from California) covering all the important points in the strike. Unfortunately, coordination of articles with picket line sales proved difficult at best and remains a problem we will have to overcome in the future. On the other hand however, shop and plant sales went exceptionally well, and we were selling around 100-150 papers a week in this way at the height of the strike.

Our campaign support was modeled along the lines of the one we conducted during the Dow Chemical strike—the campaign and especially our mayoral candidate quickly solidarized themselves with the strike and issued statements of support. In addition our mayoral candidate, Dan Fein, joined the picket lines and spoke at a public debate between union officials and company representatives. By the strike's end there could be no doubt that the SWP was the only political formation gearing its campaign towards the strike and working people in general.

During the Dow strike the labor council was one of the most fruitful areas of our involvement, but not so during the Shell strike. Attempts to get other unions to sponsor a strike support resolution calling for the formation of rank-and-file support committees fell through. Nevertheless, attendance at council meetings provided us with an excellent inside view of what was happening on the bureaucratic level—allowing us to stay abreast of official

union developments.

The branch also projected helping through the other movements we're involved with and our successes here were greater than we anticipated. Most importantly we were able to develop some excellent contacts through the women's liberation movement and link up with the struggle being conducted by the Women's Auxiliary of local 4-367. Inversely, we were able to involve some of the Auxiliary's members in some of our activities outside the trade-union movement. (For example, Linda McGregor, the president of this group, spoke at the International Women's Day activities at the University of Houston. Her talk dealt with "the role of women in labor's history" and focused on the radical women especially.)

In another area the YSA at the University of Houston succeeded in establishing a strike support committee which held one of the year's most successful forums. This formation was treated very seriously by the strikers who reported its inception to the labor council and invited its members to help in the leafleting campaign.

Unfortunately, our trade-union support fell short of our projections. Nevertheless, the successes we did have were solid ones. We projected raising support resolutions in our unions around the transitional demand to "open the books" (which we felt was the demand most closely linked to the strikers' actual demands). In addition, the sales committee was to coordinate *Militant* sales with union meetings where these discussions were being held. The model resolution, which had been drawn up and distributed to all union comrades, was unanimously adopted by the United Paper Workers local and subsequently printed in its entirety in the Pasadena paper's labor column. Prior to this, three members of the paperworkers' union sold 16 *Militants* and one sub. With respect to other unions in which we planned to pass resolutions: meetings weren't held, comrades were unable to attend, meetings were cancelled for lack of a quorum, etc.

In the future, this will have to be an area that we treat more carefully as far as planning goes and hopefully will be able to get around most of these organizational problems.

It is obvious that we're going to have to give ourselves more time than in other areas of work. We've only been doing trade-union work on a consistent basis for four or five months and it is now clear to us that it will take time to develop a periphery, strikes or no strikes.

When the call to join in building the May 5 protest was issued, Houston found itself saddled with two major union-management disputes. Not only was the Shell strike in full swing, but a citywide lockout of the meatcutters had been launched after their union had struck the Wiengarten chain of supermarkets. In addition, the Retail Merchants Association (of which Wiengarten is a member) had initiated a huge media campaign to smear the meatcutters and portray themselves as selfless inflation fighters. Thus, when the call to support May 5 was issued we found ourselves in a position (as the main force in the coalition) to do some important strike support work as well as turn out people for May 5. Therefore, we decided that we would do as much as possible to involve the meatcutters and the OCAW in our activities.

Linda McGregor played a leading role in the formation

and development of the May 5 coalition. With her help we secured an OCAW union hall to launch the coalition and through her made contact with the Women's Auxiliary of the ILA and succeeded in getting a few of their members to our coalition meetings.

In those unions where we had forces and some periphery we decided to try and pass resolutions in support of May 5, and we subsequently succeeded in two of those unions. It didn't end there either. The paperworkers went on to supply five cases of paper, 4,000 envelopes and to print up and distribute some 2,000 two-page leaflets. In addition, their resolution of solidarity and support was printed in the Pasadena paper in full.

The weather turned against us and on May 5 the rally was rain-soaked. But publicity alone helped the meatcutters and also served to raise the political and union consciousness of several thousand who participated in building the rally.

Since May 5 not many opportunities for activity within the framework of trade-union work have occurred. Of those that have developed, the two most significant have been defense of the Ligue Communiste and support to the United Farm Workers struggle.

Despite the tremendous restrictions on us with respect to time and publicity, etc., we probably achieved more around the defense of the Ligue Communiste than around some of our other activities. As soon as we got word on what was happening in France we began to build working-class support for the Ligue's defense. A phone list was worked up and after several nights of calling

we had gotten one local union president, one shop president, one shop secretary, and one district organizer, respectively representing the National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees, the Paperworkers, and the Farm Workers, to sign our telegram.

Defense of the United Farm Workers is our current project and at the moment it is promising some interesting results. After a full discussion with the branch leadership, it was decided that we should attempt to pass resolutions. Additionally, we proposed establishing rank-and-file support committees. So far we succeeded in passing one resolution and establishing one committee. It is important to note that the meeting at which this was done was by far the most successful union meeting so far this year with over 40 percent attendance. Over ten people volunteered for the strike support committee—including three members attending their first union meeting (two Chicanos). Our success also impressed the district representative of the AFL-CIO's Human Resources and Development Institute who has requested to attend our next local and committee meetings.

In summation, I think that we can say that we're still at the base-building stage, that is, we're still in the business of reestablishing our credentials and becoming known. Despite the illusions of our sectarian opponents, this is taking some time—especially given the molecular effect the radicalization is having upon the working class as a whole. Nevertheless, we *are* sinking roots and I am completely confident that before too long we can begin to see the kind of recruitment we discussed last year.