

# Workers' Power

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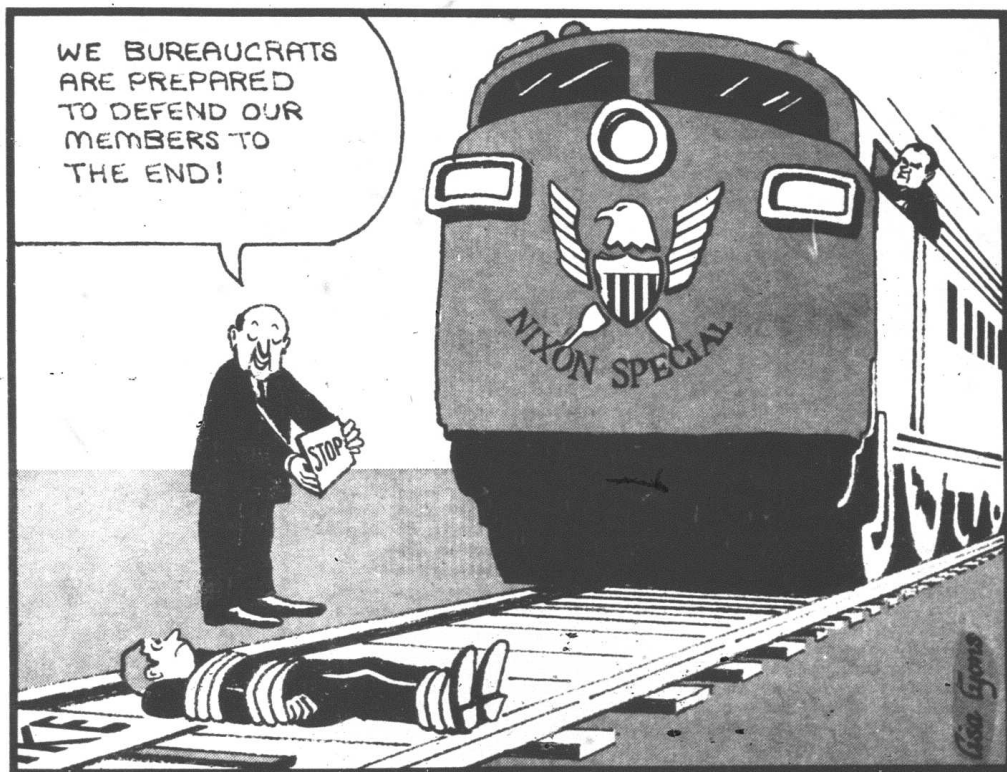


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## Gov't Breaks Rail Strike



**The Economy: Prices Up; Wages...**  
**Taxi Strike · Doing Time · The Big Game**  
**Pakistan · Cairo, Ill. · Woodland**  
**Open Letter to the Women's Movement**

# Pakistan: Who Is To Blame?

The flood which followed the November 13 cyclone on the coasts of East Pakistan was immediately called "the greatest natural disaster of the century." The numbers make it seem so. Hundreds of thousands died by official count, both from drowning and from starvation and diseases like typhus in the days following the flood. The real death toll may be higher than one million. In some areas, instead of trying to count the dead, officials found it easier to count those still living.

News coverage has focused on the scenes of suffering — on the plane loads of food and medicine sent by charitable organizations — on the arrival of British troops to help distribute aid. The stench of charity almost covers the stench of death.

What no newspaper or television story has said is that the flood in Pakistan was not really a natural disaster at all — it was a man-made disaster. That is, it could have been prevented — not the cyclone, of course, but its effects.

Consider first the rescue work. Scores of thousands starved or died from disease after the flood. Why?

Part of the reason is greed. When relief supplies arrived, government officials hoarded them and sold them for profit. More than greed, inefficiency operated on a grand scale. In a country so poor, so close to starvation, the giant civil service serves mainly to put those with connections on the public payroll, their salaries taxed from those who cannot eat; such people profit off disaster or simply go about their routine.

In some cases, the government was unable to communicate with local officials, unable to coordinate rescue efforts. The British troops wound up playing volleyball: the government did not know where to send them, and didn't really care.

But not just Pakistani greed was involved. The United States shipped plane loads of surplus grain. Forget, for a second, that this is the same surplus grain our government stores in Texas while Pakistanis, Indians, Brazilians starve — because giving it away would hurt the market price for grain. Just picture this: when the grain was distributed, THE U.S. AMBASSADOR STOOD MAKING EACH PAKISTANI SHAKE HIS HAND BEFORE RECEIVING GRAIN!

Many still think U.S. aid comes from generosity; this scene showed the real, propagandistic purpose behind the aid. The Pakistanis understood the proper response — they mobbed the Ambassador to get at the grain, forcing him to take refuge in his helicopter and return to his proper home — the heavens.

But behind the greed and arrogance of Pakistani and American officials alike, the Pakistan disaster pointed up something even more basic. The cyclone and the resulting tidal wave could not have been prevented. But the floods could have been prevented by constructing concrete dikes along the coastline. Meteorology could have predicted the cyclone, radios could have flashed warnings to the inhabitants, roads and efficient transport could have evacuated thousands and could have brought relief to everyone after the flood, medicine could have prevented the epidemics that took tens of thousands of lives. The science and technology to do all this exists. Why was it not used?

Why were there no dikes, no meteorology, no radios, no roads and transport, no availability of medicine? All these things are available in the United States

and England. They are not available to Pakistan because of imperialism.

In the eighteenth century, conquering India and what is now Pakistan, Britain destroyed the beginnings of industrial production — forced India backward economically — in order to create a market for Lancashire textiles. In the nineteenth century Britain ruled with then-modern technology — but did not teach this technology to its subjects, who would have used it to fight for their freedom. Britain educated only as many Indians as were needed to administer the empire. In the twentieth century, too weakened by World War II to hold on to her empire, Britain withdrew — and the United States arrived — to exploit India and the new state of Pakistan through the market.

Military aid befooled up the new states' armies but brought no help to their people. Aid to build factories was given only if the factories were privately owned for private profit. These and other poor countries produced largely minerals and food-stuffs; overproduction made the prices fall continuously. At the same time the prices charged by the industrial countries for manufactured products rose continuously.

The rich countries made loans to the poor countries — at heavy compound interest. The industrial countries had a monopoly of scientific technology and charged their own prices for setting up modern industries. In most countries, these were owned by American, British, or French corporations.

The corporations used the poor countries for cheap labor — and paid the local governments to smash unions and radical movements and keep the labor cheap. They kept the local governments inefficient, greedy, and corrupt. At the same time they shipped the profits home — to their stockholders, who in turn were to be found mainly among the richest five percent in the home countries. Economic imperialism did not merely fail to bring development to the poor countries. By extracting their wealth, it forced them ever deeper into poverty and backwardness.

That is the real secret of the Pakistan disaster. The science exists which could have reduced the death toll by hundreds of thousands. But that science is private property — the property of the giant corporations. (Just as, at home, the same science produces super weapons, but not urban transportation, medical care, or an end to industrial pollution.) The Pakistan disaster resulted, not from nature, and not just from the backwardness which increased the death toll by hundreds of thousands — but from the imperialist system which maintains this backwardness while financing the local ruling classes and sending its troops to put down the people when they rise in rage.

Along with the hundreds of thousands bombed and starved in Vietnam — along with the hundreds of thousands killed in Indonesia in 1966 by the right-wing generals whose coup the U.S. supported — along with these, the hundreds of thousands drowned, starved, and dead of disease in Pakistan can be listed as victims of one of the world crimes of capitalism and the imperialism which results from it. One Pakistani, asked why the flood deaths had caused relatively little concern in Pakistan itself answered, "Here we are close to starving every day." For that crime, as for others, capitalism will one day be held to answer. ■

## Workers' Power

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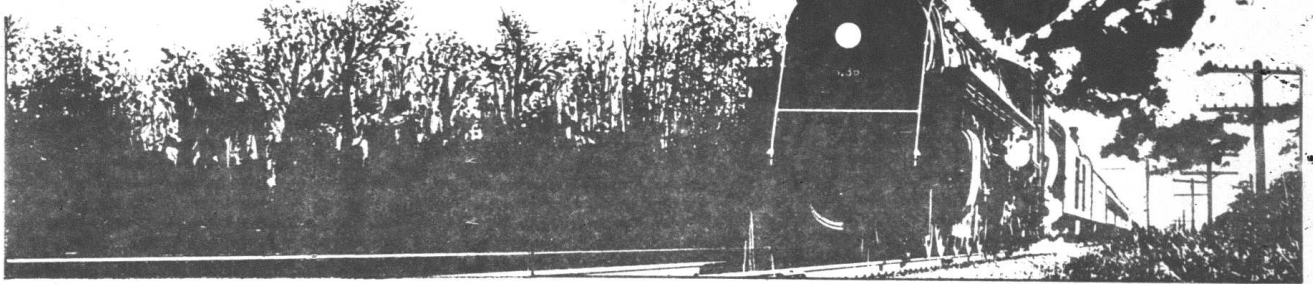
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# GOVERNMENT BREAKS RAIL STRIKE

Michael Stewart



At exactly 12:01 on Thursday morning, December 10, all the trains in America stopped running. Four unions struck all the railroads, defying tradition, President Nixon, Federal law, and a court injunction.

Most people, including most members of Congress, were taken by surprise. There have been various "strike deadlines" in the past, and always, or almost always, the strikes have been averted or delayed. But this time railroad workers had waited long enough, and the trains stopped. They were not to run again for 24 hours, and in some cases, due to wildcats, not even then.

Four unions were involved in the strike: The Brotherhood of Railway and Airlines Clerks (BRAC), the United Transportation Union, the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, and the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union. It was BRAC president, C. L. Dennis, who actually called the strike; the other unions agreed not to cross the picket lines. Together the four unions represent about 75 percent of the 525,000 railroad workers.

At issue were wages and proposed changes in work rules. The unions were demanding a \$1.65 an hour increase, to match the gains won by the Teamsters earlier this year, and no changes in the work rules.

Negotiations between the unions and the railroads had been going on for over a year, but due to the reactionary nature of the Railway Labor Act, each previous deadline had been extended. Finally the delaying mechanisms of the RLA ran out, and it was up to Congress to act. This was not the first time that Congress had intervened, having imposed a settlement on four different rail unions in 1967. In that instance also, changes in work rules were at stake.

Dennis, hours before the strike, had suggested that if an immediate raise was granted, a strike could be averted. Congress got the message, and, acting to delay the strike until March 1, offered an immediate 13.5 percent wage increase. However, due to pressure from the rank and file, Dennis was forced to call at least a token strike anyway.

There is good reason for the rank and file pressure. One of the things the companies have been fighting hardest for is the proposed changes in the work rules. These, they argue, are necessary in order to raise productivity in order to offset any wage increases and hence avoid any inflationary pressures.

A lot has been said lately about the

need to "raise productivity." It is put forth as the solution to almost all our economic problems. Yet what it really means is that the companies want to get more work out of each individual. If each worker does more work, then less workers are needed to get the job done. Thus, the proposed changes in the work rules would mean that thousands of railroad workers will lose their jobs.

The ranks remember that work rules changes enforced under President Kennedy resulted in the loss of thousands of jobs. In a time of rising unemployment, when jobs are getting increasingly hard to find, railroad workers are going to have to fight militantly to preserve theirs.

Wages also have been an important issue. The government has recommended a raise of \$1.32 an hour in six steps over three years. The unions want \$1.65. The difference does not seem that significant. Yet the struggle is really an attempt by rail workers to achieve wage parity with other transportation workers, especially the teamsters.

For some time now, the Teamsters have been raiding the rail unions, and have hit BRAC the hardest, stealing locals from them at Braniff and Pan American Airlines. If the unions hope to halt these incursions, they are going to have to show the ranks that they can win as much for their workers as the Teamsters can. This means getting \$1.65 an hour.

The increasing dependence of the railroads on Congress to solve their problems has raised once again the question of nationalization. Indeed, the fact that for the first time in history Congress has imposed a wage settlement on a labor dispute in the private sector indicates how close to nationalization the current situation is.

The need for nationalization is clear. The strategic importance of the railroads in the nation's economy is reason enough to take control of them out of the hands



Charles Leslie Dennis

of a few individuals, so that they could be run in the public interest and not in the interests, and for the profit, of a few. The United States is the only major industrial country which has not nationalized its railroads.

The railroads today, run for private profit, are increasingly becoming a burden on the public. Rate increases for freight are always granted, thus boosting the cost of goods in order to protect the owners' profits. In the case of the Penn Central, Federal tax dollars are being used to directly subsidize those profits.

Despite the undeniable need for fast, efficient and comfortable public transit to supplement the crowded freeways and overcrowded airways, the railroad magnates have waged a systematic campaign to destroy passenger service. Federal agencies have so far taken only half-hearted steps to protect the passenger trains.

George Meany, shortly before the strike, said that if the workers were not allowed to strike, then the railroads should be nationalized. But Meany, as usual, seems to be more concerned with maintaining labor peace than with winning the legitimate demands of the workers. Nationalization can not become a gimmick to avoid strikes. Workers need the right to strike in order to fight for their interests even against the state, as Federal workers have discovered.

## Workers' Control

It must be emphasized, however, that nationalization by this government would not significantly improve the situation. All it would mean is that the capitalist state would run the railroads, in the interest of private profit.

Only if the railroads are nationalized under workers' control can the workers be sure that the industry will be run in their interests, not for the capitalists. Another increase in the growing bureaucratic power of the present state would hardly be a step forward.

The strike, although short, was significant, for it points out quite clearly the relations of power in this society. Railroad workers have tremendous potential power. By shutting down the railroads, they not only cripple that industry, but also threaten to shut down a good part of the nation's economy. Farm goods, steel, auto, electricity, and the postal service, to name just a few, are all dependent on the railroads. The railroad workers, through their strike action, can exercise tremendous economic

pressure in fighting for their demands.

However, they are fighting a powerful foe, the Congress. Congress has the full power of the Federal government at its disposal. It can call out the troops to run the trains, as Truman did in 1946; it can delay the strike indefinitely or impose a settlement, thus outlawing a strike; and it has the courts and police to issue injunctions, fine unions and jail workers if necessary.

Congress, of course, pretends to use this power for the "public" or "national interest." A rail strike, they declare, would be against the "national interest," and hence must be delayed. It is not the interests of the people that the politicians are concerned with, but the interests of big business. This was most evident in the type of action they took, since there were alternative courses of action available.

The simplest way to avoid a strike would have been to impose a settlement which granted all of the workers demands. This, they reply, would be inflationary. But then they should have included in the settlement a provision that there be no fare increases, that is, that prices be controlled.

This they are unwilling to do because it would mean a loss in profits for the railroads — profits are the key to the Congress' actions. Their concern is not with the public interest, but with private interests, the interests that the owners of the railroads and other businesses have in preserving their profits. Through the years Congress has indicated that it will use the full power of the State in order to protect those private interests.

The fact that a 13.5 percent wage increase was included in the action taken by Congress has misled some of the leaders of the unions. Three of the unions issued a statement saying that "Labor's friends in Congress had the foresight to realize the injustice that was being done to our members by the carriers holding back a year's wage increases." However, what the union leaders ignore is the fact that the "friends of labor" acted, not to bring justice to the rank and file workers, but to break their strike.

The wage increase, which was very small, was only included in hopes of pacifying the ranks. If future gains are to be won, the ranks are going to have to continue to reject the orientation of their leaders, who place their trust in the "friends of labor" in Congress.

This does not mean they can simply ignore the state. For in the railroad in-

[continued on page 5]



## THE ECONOMY:

# Prices Up; Wages, Jobs Down

Tom Kromer

The American Economy is in trouble, and the end of its problems is not in sight.

To the individual wage-earner the constant flow of economic statistics from Washington and Wall Street is, deliberately, meaningless at best, and deceptive at worst. Who cares whether the economy grew at a rate of 1½ percent between July and September if you lost your job? But the performance of the economy as a whole will influence the decisions that are being made all the way from your company's front office to the White House. Those decisions can have a real impact on our jobs and our ability to make ends meet.

Let's look at the economic box score as it appears today.

Almost every major industry cut back its work force in October and November. The unemployment rate stands at over 5.6 percent of the work force, up from 5 percent in August and 5.5 percent in September. While several major strikes have occurred during this period, striking workers are not counted among the unemployed. It is important to remember that due to the deceptive manner in which unemployment statistics are reported *actual* unemployment is *higher* than the official 5.6 percent. *More than one out of every 18 workers is presently out of a job.*

Inflation is continuing. Personal income fell again during October and November. That means that while prices are going up and while there are always more people who need to be fed, clothed, and housed, the actual amount of money that got into pay envelopes decreased. The workers' standard of living fell.

During this same period when personal income was declining, it was reported that corporation profits had increased. The increase was slight and was the first increase in a year, but it was an increase. The companies' strategy of layoff and speed-up is beginning to pay off. If they can cut their costs by laying off workers and forcing those who remain to work harder and faster for no more pay, while at the same time raising prices, it is possible to improve profits. They cynically refer to this game as "increasing productivity."

### Profit Spiral

In the aftermath of the GM strike, some severe distortions in the economy are expected. With the assembly lines back in motion, the demand for steel and other materials needed for auto production is going to increase. But it won't take long for this demand to be satisfied.

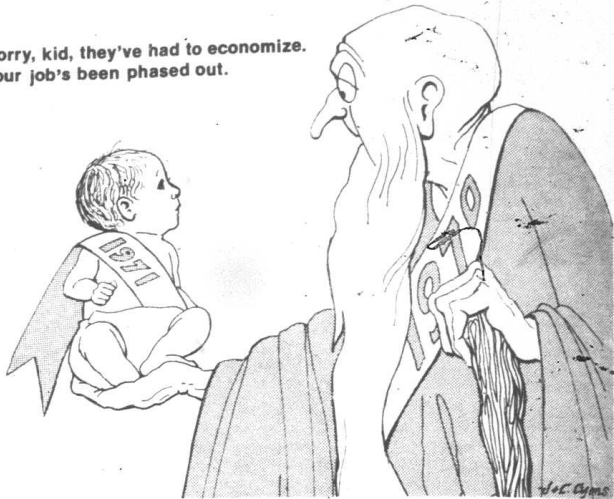
Economists expect these post-strike related activities to spark a temporary upturn in industrial output. But they do not expect unemployment to decrease. In fact they see no signs of significant growth in the economy occurring next year. They admit that without significant growth there is a good chance that unemployment will continue to increase, perhaps to 6 percent or higher.

The expected burst of business activity in early 1971 will have two undesirable side-effects. First, the sudden and sharp nature of the increase in activity will add to the inflationary pressures that are eating away at the workers' take-home pay.

Secondly, the press will play up the "improvement" in the economy in an attempt to show that everything is coming up roses. We will see lots of businessmen and White House flunkies telling people that it is necessary to prevent further strikes that might slow down the "recovery." That could be interesting since the Administration has never admitted that we were having a recession! (They refer to it as a "slowdown in the rate of growth.")

The anti-strike campaign will intensify as the spectre of a steel strike looms ahead. During the same period when auto companies will be replenishing their supplies of steel, other industries will be stockpiling against the anticipated steel strike. These pressures may cause the price of steel to go up, which will cause even more inflation, as major companies adjust their prices upward.

Sorry, kid, they've had to economize. Your job's been phased out.



The increased inflation will then be used as ammunition against workers who are fighting for wage increases that are necessary to keep up with rising prices. Workers will be told that it is their patriotic duty to forget their "inflationary wage demands" in the interest of halting the "wage-price" spiral.

But the current round of inflation was triggered by companies taking excess profits during the economic boom that occurred when the Vietnam war was escalated. The truth is that we have a profit-wage spiral; not the other way around. And it is wages that are lagging behind.

### Crucial Year

For workers who are angry at the way their paychecks are being eaten away by inflation, 1971 will be a crucial year. Especially in industries represented by the United Steelworkers of America, there will be an all-out attempt to prevent them from striking for what they deserve. Top USW bureaucrat I.W. Abel, while supposedly talking tough, was reported to say that steelworkers are ready to strike, but that he hopes to avoid such a walkout. If the rank and file in the steelworkers don't get organized independently of the leadership, they may find themselves in the same boat as the auto workers; that is, on the short end of the sell-out stick.

The union leadership has been dropping hints all over the place that they may not be able to "control" the work-

ers when it comes to strikes next year. The best way to turn those fears into reality is for shop floor caucuses and struggle groups to be formed that can fight against sell-outs and for the kind of settlement that will at least protect the workers' standard of living and working conditions from further erosion.

In Washington there is more and more talk these days about wage and price controls. Their polite phrase for such controls is "some kind of incomes policy." What they are really talking about though is wage controls. That is Washington's cure for inflation.

The future looks pretty gloomy, holding out the prospect of increased unemployment, increased inflation, and increased resistance to workers' legitimate demands. The labor movement must launch its own offensive against inflation, unemployment, and the government policies which cause them.

### For a Labor Offensive

At a minimum, this means fighting to protect the workers from the inflation and unemployment. There must be full, adequate, cost-of-living escalator clauses in all contracts, so that wages keep pace with rising prices. When layoffs occur, there should be full and complete unemployment compensation.

To begin to slow down inflation and unemployment, we should demand that there be no price increases in the products we produce and that this be written into the contract; and that there be no lay-offs, but rather that everyone work 30 hours at 40 hours pay, or at whatever ratio is necessary so that no one loses a job.

All these demands can be won at the contract table, and though if met they would not end our problems, they would represent a significant step forward. However, while fighting on an industry level is important, it is not sufficient. For many of the current problems can be directly tied to the government's economic policies. To fight against these policies, it is necessary to carry the struggle into the political arena.

Against the government policies of wage controls, tight money, and massive defense spending for the Vietnam war and such things as ABM, the labor movement must demand: price controls not wage controls, an end to the defense spending which pours money down the drain in hopeless wars and useless missiles, and the conversion of defense industries to the production of useful and necessary goods, such as housing, hos-



INTERVIEWING JOB APPLICANTS IN DETROIT

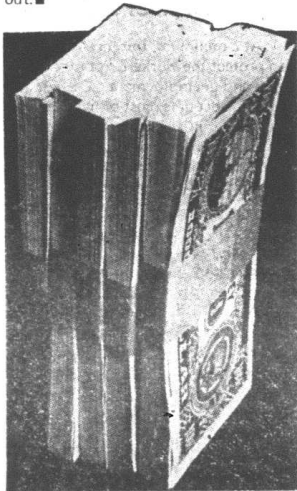


pitajls, schools, etc. This would produce more jobs and thus promote full employment, and end once and for all the chronic unemployment due to fluctuations in the defense budget (which caused the loss of 55,000 jobs at Boeing in Seattle in the last year). If the defense budget does not provide enough money to yield full employment, then more money should be devoted to public works programs at union wages, to build urban transit, replace slums with decent low-rent housing, etc., financed by taxing the corporations, not workers.

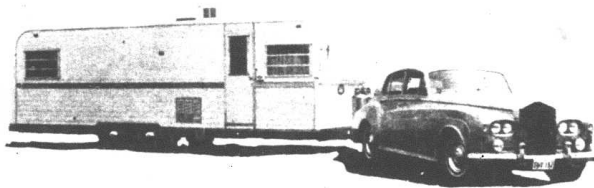
If any of these demands are to be won, either at the bargaining table, or as government policy, it will take more than "jawboning" by labor bureaucrats to do it. Whatever has been won in contracts has been due to rank and file militancy and willingness to strike, rather than heroic leadership provided by the bureaucrats. We must organize ourselves to increase this pressure, or to take on and lead the struggle ourselves if necessary.

This is especially true with regard to national government policy. So far, all the union bureaucrats have been urging us to support the Democratic Party "friends of labor" candidates — Ted Kennedy, Muskie of Maine, Mansfield of Montana, and others. Yet it is these same people who have criticized Nixon for not imposing wage controls, and who got Congress to adopt a bill giving Nixon these powers. If we want any other alternative, we cannot rely on them. Rather, we must rely on our own actions, our own strength.

Some pressure can be put on the politicians through demonstrations, such as the miners did during their black lung strike. But ultimately, we must form our own party, a Workers' Party, to fight for a program which is in our interests. This is the only way we can be sure that our program will be carried out. ■



## Cops, Scabs and the Courts: The Fleetwood Strike



Police harassment, beatings, scab strikebreaking, and a mass march of workers highlight a bitter strike now being waged in Woodland, Washington. With a population of only 1615 and located more than 30 miles from any major urban-industrial area, Woodland seems a very unlikely site for a labor struggle that could have national significance. Yet the outcome of the strike against Broadmore Mobile Homes here, and against other Fleetwood Enterprises plants in other parts of the country, could influence the nature of an emerging multi-billion dollar industry.

Fleetwood moved into Woodland the first part of the year; the Carpenters local was certified on June 25, and struck on September 15th. The issues in the strike include union security, dues check-off, the right of union representatives to visit the plant for inspections, etc., and some form of maternity leave.

Women comprise a large proportion of the industry's workforce and the company is using the equal rights for women issue not to protect the rights of either women or men, but to divide and further exploit both. Currently women are granted only a 30 day leave, after which time they lose seniority rights if they fail to return to work. The company very coyly argues, "it would not be fair to grant women paid maternity leave because that would mean treating them differently than men."

The company not only refuses to recognize the right of labor to organize but has imported scabs to break the strike. The scabs were escorted through the picket lines by Woodland Police, County Sheriffs and deputized company security guards. A union statement reports: "At one time, on or near our picket line, we counted 9 law-enforcement vehicles and 6 security guards (with police dogs and sawed-off shot guns).

The union has been hit with arrests on petty charges, several beatings from

scab thugs, and an injunction. The judge who granted the injunction leaves office this year and will become the industrial relations officer for a major employer north of Woodland — so much for the "neutrality" of the court system.

The company's tactics, bolstered by police intimidation and the court injunction, have undermined the union's ability to enforce the strike. If the police and court orders are obeyed and if outside support and solidarity is not mobilized, the strike is in for rough going.

An encouraging sign was a parade of hundreds of union members from around the area as they demonstrated their solidarity with the members of Industrial Workers Union Local No. 1238. This show of support was area labor's response to the police and court harassment of strikers, and the company's strike-breaking tactics. The presence of labor solidarity has limited what the company and the authorities will try to get away with, but more support will be necessary to win the strike.

The housing industry is already bigger by far than auto, and its growth is assured because of a crying need and government willingness to subsidize. The present housing industry is very decentralized. Though some big companies are in the field they do not produce a very large percentage of the total output. Housing "experts" describe the home-building industry as "unbelievably inefficient and overcostly," "it uses virtually none of the available tools of automation or standardization."

As a result of the vast need and the profitability automation offers, huge corporations are becoming involved in housing. These include: ITT, Westinghouse, Kaiser, Boise Cascade, Jones and Laughlin Steel, Gulf Oil and others. The Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 will provide subsidies and guarantee profits, while automation will cut the labor costs.

In the mobile and modular home industry, where production-line technology is used, labor costs average about 10 percent as opposed to nearly 40 percent in traditional house building. Fleetwood Enterprises is one of the most aggressive of the large companies in mobile and modular homes — and they are also one of the most blatantly anti-labor companies around. Fleetwood's profits and strong growth record have made them one of the darlings among the speculative stocks in the stock market. Company spokesmen are very frank about their ability to cut costs, especially labor costs, as one reason for their high profits.

It has been Fleetwood's style to set up plants in rural, economically depressed and job hungry areas where labor is not strongly organized. In these areas all attempts by workers to organize have been met with reprisals, police action and strike breaking. Since they have many small plants around the country, Fleetwood is able to hold out in one area against a strike because their other plants are non-union or have been organized by another union.

The Woodland strike is one of five Fleetwood plants being struck by Industrial Workers Union locals of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners AFL-CIO. Other Fleetwood plants that have been organized are under either electricians', machinists' or plumbers' control. Because of union infighting, workers in the industry have suffered and the company has taken advantage of the situation, playing one against the other, thereby weakening all.

### United Action

The techniques of the mobile and modular home industry will very likely become the way of the future. If labor is to have some say in the development of that industry, they must forget jurisdictional battles and organize on an industry-wide basis. Besides the Carpenters, Electricians, Machinists and Plumbers, the United Auto Workers are also in the modular field, and this can only mean union squabbling and setbacks unless the ranks push for and organize a national industrial union, or affiliate with the UAW.

As long as Fleetwood or any other company can attack unions in isolated areas of the country with the sanction of a police and judicial system that represents the corporate owners, working people will always be fighting a losing battle. The issues seem clear enough at Woodland now, and at Waco, Texas, West Moreland, Tennessee, and Macomb, Illinois, the other Fleetwood plants being struck. Other workers in the industry must react to this attack upon their fellow workers by creating an industry-wide union that can take united action against the strike-breaking Fleetwood plants. ■

## Rail Strike, con't.



dustry, perhaps more clearly than anywhere else, simple trade union action is not enough: their struggle is increasing by a struggle against the state. What railroad and all other workers need is a

party of their own, a Workers' Party, controlled by the rank and file.

Railroad workers are facing a difficult struggle. If they are to win, it will take great solidarity and militancy. Today, they are divided in separate unions based on craft and job classification distinctions. This has kept them from working together and fighting as a united force against the railroads.

Two of the unions involved in the current dispute, BRAC and the UTU, are the result of mergers. These mergers are good, and should continue, but they must aim at establishing one union of all rail workers. It is unlikely that

the leaders of many of the rail unions will go along with such a plan. They are more interested in preserving their own privileged position. The ranks must therefore begin the job themselves. They don't have to wait for the official leadership, but can begin establishing rank and file organizations now which cut across craft and company lines.

Rail workers must be willing to take militant, aggressive action. What is at stake here is not merely wages and work rules, but also the very right to strike, to struggle, over these issues or any others. The right to strike was not something that was given as a gift to

American workers; it was won through countless militant and often illegal struggles. Now, for railroad workers, it will take militant struggle to preserve that right. This means being willing to defy the courts and Congress if necessary; it means using the power that rail workers have, that they demonstrated in the recent strike, to win their demands.

They are not alone in this struggle. The rest of the American working class has a vital interest in it also. The right to strike is something which concerns them all. Rail workers should appeal to the rest of the labor movement for support and solidarity. ■



# Pass It On John Single

## Death on the Job

"While we sit here talking, from now until noon, seventeen American men and women will be killed on their jobs. Every minute we talk, 18 to 20 people will be hurt severely enough to have to leave their jobs -- some of them never to work again. In the time these two sentences have taken, another 20 people -- one every second -- have been injured on the job -- less seriously, but in most cases needlessly.

Today's industrial casualty list -- like yesterday's -- and tomorrow's and every working day's, week after month after year -- will be 55 dead, 8,500 disabled, 27,200 hurt. The figures for the year will be 14,000 to 15,000 dead, over 2 million disabled, over 7 million hurt. These are all average figures, but there is a disheartening consistency about what happens day after day. Death takes no holidays in industry and commerce.

But to rely on aggregate statistics in this area demeans our humanity. If this kind of human tragedy touched our own families just once it would make us committed crusaders. It cheapens us as individuals to let ourselves -- especially if we carry public responsibility -- find refuge in our personal good fortune.

Several photographs have been placed here in the hearing room. Each of the pictures shows safe working conditions, the way it is for most of us. But there is imposed on each of these pictures another -- smaller -- which it takes a strong person to look at and not turn away from quickly.

I hesitated -- and then felt smaller

for hesitating -- about displaying these pictures: of what a hand looks like lying alone by a power saw, of what half a man looks like when a falling girder has cut him in two."



Above are the opening sentences from a statement made by Willard Wirtz, Secretary of Labor during the Johnson Administration. He was speaking to a group of United States senators. His appearance before them was an official one. The date was February 15, 1968. They were the members of the Subcommittee on Labor of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare.

At issue was S. 2864, the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1968. Cabinet members are seldom allowed the satisfaction of eloquence on behalf of a just cause. Even though the act was a minimal one and hardly what is needed, the senators killed it in com-

mittee.

A similar bill, H.R. 16785, known as the Daniel's Bill, was finally passed by the House of Representatives earlier this year. The Senate version of the same bill, S. 2193, called the Williams Bill after its author (Sen. Harrison A. Williams, Jr., New Jersey-Democrat), came up for consideration last October 13...two days before the pre-election adjournment of the Congress.

A filibuster resulted which produced arguments that were unbelievably frank in their admission that capitalism is a society divided into classes, which places profits before all else. Below is an example, from the speech of Ohio Republican Senator Saxbe, who led the filibuster:

"About 12 years ago, they adopted a number of safety bills that were very idealistic in their concept, but so restraining to the place of work and so restraining on the assignment of employees that they served not to make the plant safer and to increase production, but rather to make the business less competitive, and, as a result, it lost business to German manufacturers producing the same item."

In the meantime, the Nixon administration introduced its own bill into the senate via Colorado Republican Senator Dominick. Whereas the Williams-Daniels Bill assigns full responsibility for the establishment and enforcement of safety standards to the Secretary of Labor, the Administration bill would put responsibility into three separate agencies. There would be one board to set standards and a separate enforcement

appeal commission, while inspection responsibility would be left to the Department of Labor.

The Williams-Daniels Bill allows the Secretary of Labor to shut down a factory for five days, if there is "imminent" danger to employees, while seeking court action; anyone who tips off an employer that an inspection is about to occur can be fined and put in jail (if caught.) But the Administration bill provides for no shutdowns and no penalties.

### Fighting George

The labor-supported Williams-Daniels Bill is of course preferable to the Administration bill introduced by Dominick. The safety-health crisis in American industry is so bad that any improvement is welcome. But neither bill contains the protection that American rank and file labor must have in order to achieve even minimum relief from ever-present danger.

The phyness of the Dominick bill, also backed by the Chamber of Commerce-National Association of Manufacturers, is obvious. The joker in the Williams-Daniels Bill is that it leaves the setting of standards to the Department of Labor, the very agency that has even refused to enforce the sickly Federal Coal Mine and Safety Act of 1969 (which set coal dust limits to 3.0 rather than 1.0 milligram(s) of dust per cubic meter of air, and which is powerless to stop the mad rush for coal production which causes explosions and cave-ins).

AFL-CIO President George Meany

The Senate has finally passed a "Job-Safety Bill" and action is expected soon in the House. But don't get excited. This bill is designed to accomplish almost nothing.

The main provision of the bill is the establishment of a government apparatus to set up and enforce Federal job-safety standards in the nation's industrial plants. A big dispute developed in the Senate over who would have the power to enforce the regulations. The original bill passed by the Senate Labor Committee, and supported by the trade union officialdom, called for the Labor Department to have the power both to set the regulations and enforce them. The Nixon administration, on the other hand, proposed that both functions be performed by an independent panel appointed by Nixon. A compromise was finally worked out: the Labor Department would set the standards, and an independent panel would enforce them.

Why the need for an independent panel to enforce the legislation? According to Senator Javits of New York (as reported in the *N.Y. Times*), this

was necessary to "help restore the confidence of the business community in the legislation." What this means, of course, is that the panel would do nothing which would endanger the business community's drive for profits. Thus we can expect little or no enforcement of the inadequate standards that will be established.

The AFL-CIO had correctly argued that an independent panel would be totally ineffective due to the fact that such boards always fall under the influence of the very industries they are supposed to regulate. Ralph Nader, in numerous studies, has documented this pattern at length. Even where regulations have been enforced, the penalties have been so slight that it is usually more profitable for the companies to go on ignoring the regulations. Thus, the U.S. Steel Corporation received a \$100 fine for its fourth conviction on polluting the atmosphere.

Even if the original bill had passed, and the Labor Department had the power to enforce the regulations, the result would not be much better. For

the Labor Department is a part of the Federal administration, and responsible to it, and this administration has shown time and time again that it is not interested in fighting for safety on the job.

We believe that Federal laws and regulations are an absolute necessity if significant changes are to be brought about in the conditions in the plants. However, it is not enough to have good laws: they must be enforced. The only way we can be sure that they will be enforced is if the power to enforce those laws is placed in the hands of those people directly effected by them -- the workers who work in those plants.

The power must be vested in boards elected by the rank and file of the industry effected by the regulations. These boards must have the power to close down an industry which violates the regulations -- at company expense, with full pay to the workers. Only in this way can the workers who work under the unsafe conditions, to whom job safety is a matter of life and death, be sure that real job safety will be established. ■

**Post-script on Job Safety**

**Michael Stewart**

who, in the main, determines the lobbying policies of American labor in the capital, held a press conference during the first week in November. He made it clear that from his point of view there is no vital rush to obtain the safety bill he supports.

Meany also made it clear that his federation would rather not have any bill at all unless it is to be administered and enforced by the Department of Labor. He criticized Secretary of Labor James Hodgson and indicated that if the Williams-Daniels Bill does not pass now, "It can be reintroduced some day when we get a Secretary who will shape up to his responsibilities."

What an aggressive stance! What a proud experience it is to watch old "Fighting George," the leader of the largest labor organization in the world, earn his fifty grand a year by demonstrating that he is the fearless champion of over 13 million men and women!

### Plain Murder

In the previous issue of *Workers' Power* this column printed without comment the testimony of a steelworkers union staff representative before a Senate Labor Subcommittee in 1969, pleading the case of the workers in the Granite City, Illinois, plant of the National Lead Company, and urging the passage of the earlier version of the Williams-Daniels Bill. His testimony revealed that 70 percent of the workers in that plant have lead poisoning, and are dying a horrible brain and nerve damaged death — while the company denies knowledge of any lead poisoning among its employees.

Undoubtedly, the only champion these workers have ever had is the union. But their crisis is no longer one that simply involves safety. It is a question of homicide...plain murder. Yet the union is battling the case with pleading, with words.

Learn of a scandal of this kind and the question that bursts forth is: Isn't some bolder action needed to save these workers? Might it be too radical to suggest that direct strike or job action be considered? Couldn't the official leaders of labor in the area, from steel and all other industries, work up some really solid support for the National Lead workers among unionists and the public?

One wonders whether or not the workers in the plant have taken the initiative by now. If they have not, it may well be because the city in which they work is all-white, dominated by southern attitudes, while most of the lead workers are black, and feel very alone.

None of them will live as long as, maybe not even half as long as "Waiting George" of the Washington lobby whose wages they help pay.

**The right to strike on health and**



safety must be won and used. The strike is our primary weapon. But the national safety and health crisis in industry cannot be solved purely by job action.

What if a number of local unions in a region united and said: "We demand a National Labor Safety Convention Now, of elected delegates to set safety standards and enforcement procedures. We demand that, when the convention has finished its job, the last day it is in session be declared a National Safety Stop Work Holiday to honor and respect the millions of injured and dead, and to insure that all past suffering has not been in vain. And, we demand that all collective bargaining contracts empower local unions with the power to strike when safety and health standards are violated."

Are any of the above demands unreasonable? Hardly. The only trouble is that they are not being made. The only fight now being made to obtain safe working conditions is that being waged by union labor officials and lobbyists and a few politicians. That "fight" is pitifully and unnecessarily weak. It doesn't use even a small part of labor's muscle. It does nothing to involve the

ranks of labor in the struggle.

The Williams-Daniels Bill doesn't contain enough benefits to excite the ranks to militant action even if the leadership was unafraid to involve them. Could the ranks of labor be mobilized by demands like the three suggested above? No group knows the answer to this any better than the uneasy official leaders of labor.

Those violations of even minimal safety standards that get any publicity at all occur in the large workplaces where rank and file workers are more likely to wield power that can pressure their leaders into action. The worst violations are most often in the smaller shops where the victims feel isolated and lack a sense of their own power.

Might the owners and top managers of the National Lead Company be accused of criminal conduct? Should that conduct be punishable by law? How many workers would say "hell yes" if given a voice? One might think that the horror at National Lead is an extreme case. Not so. The files of the Department of Labor right now carry evidence of thousands more like it.

Could the one thousand and eighty four staffers of the steelworkers union, and the staffs of numerous other unions, get their locals to support a national safety convention and an all-day stop-work meeting, picnic or holiday celebration? Could living victims of greed like those at National Lead be obtained as featured speakers at the stop-work meetings? Might not this sort of national drive be expected to get more of the results we need than the one now being conducted?

In each case the answer is yes, but the yeses will never be heard in the offices of the top international and federation leaders until the ranks get themselves organized as rank and filers on a local and regional basis — and start to put the leaders who won't listen to and take instruction from the ranks...out of office...starting right at the local level. ■

## Doing Time

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

tism. He writes to his lawyer:

*Blacks were beaten and killed for jobs like porter, bellboy, stoker, pearl diver and boot black. My clenched fist goes up for them: I forgive them, I understand, and if they will stop their collaboration with the fascist enemy, stop it now, and support our revolution with just a nod, we'll forget and forgive them for casting us naked into a grim and deleterious world.*

Jackson's ability to transcend intellectual and social barriers extends to his feelings about the white prisoner. In a recent interview, Jackson noted a change in the relationships among black and white prisoners. For Jackson, the possibility of a unified resistance in the prisons is due to the increasing revolutionary activity outside the prisons, and the decreasing nationalism of black militants:

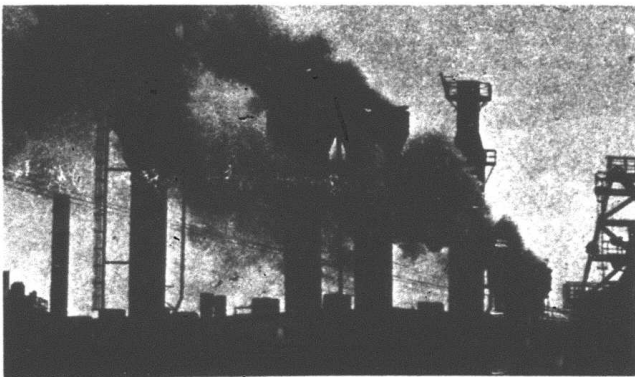
*It's gone from just "brother" to "comrade" and from black to just people. The white convicts have stopped feeling threatened and they're able to respond to the new approach.*

What finally emerges from both Serge and Jackson is a revolutionary perspective, developed over time, sparked by the outer society, developed and intensified within prison, then redirected toward capitalist society. Both men feel solidarity with men and women who are inmates of the outer society — both ultimately view prison and society as one. Jackson expresses this most articulately with reference to his father's working life:

*I think it should be generally accepted that if a man (or woman) works for a wage at a job that he doesn't enjoy, and I am convinced that no one could enjoy any type of assembly-line work, or plumbing or hod-carrying, or any job in the service trades, then he qualifies for this definition of neo-slave. Serge expresses it differently, but the meaning is the same:*

*This could be the square of some mining village in the North. The survivors sitting here could be the victims of the mine gas. After all, one form of suffocation is much like the other.*

More and more prisoners are seeing the political aspect of their imprisonment, regardless of whether their initial "crimes" were overtly political. They are creating new definitions of crime, rejecting given definitions. They are creating their own revolutionary roles. It is a revolutionary process that is occurring in prisons today, and Serge and Jackson together provide a means of understanding that process, its development, and its real and potential relation to the revolutionary movement outside the prisons. ■







# Open Letter To The Women's Movement

Nancy Brewster  
Rose Veviaka

On October 15, 1970, at a meeting of the General Assembly of the New York City Women's Center, motions were passed to bar from any position of responsibility within the center any woman publicly participating in a campaign for political office, in particular, members of the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance.

The incident which prompted the passage of these two motions involved the mailing of a leaflet using the return address of the center by members of the SWP who were serving on the coordinating committee of the Women's Strike Coalition. But underlying the vote were political differences among the women using the center, differences concerning the roots and nature of women's oppression, and how to go about building a movement to end that oppression.

The Center was originally organized "with a very loose structure" because "we wanted to make the Center a place where women of widely varying affiliations could meet and exchange ideas freely." How did a women's center with such a goal come to the point of passing the above motions? The answer lies both in the history of the political development of the women's liberation movement and in the role the SWP has played in this and other broad social movements.

## Feminism and Politics

The women's liberation movement in New York City has always favored a "loose structure" because of a fear that structure was authoritarian and "male." The result has been a lot of unchaired meetings, meetings and groups formed with no mechanism for implementing or even making decisions, and responsibilities assigned by lot. In the name of sisterhood, democracy and equality, chaos has prevailed, with no democratic controls to ensure the protection of the rights of the minorities, the timid, or the inexperienced.

Moreover, many of the groups using

the center saw a dichotomy between politics and women's liberation. The center itself was conceived of as a non-political place that any woman's group could make use of. The center would not take positions on issues or endorse actions. "Politics" were to be left home and "feminism" to prevail.

The idea of keeping politics out of the center is based on the idea that all women have the same interests, that there should be no political disagreements to discuss. Because women have almost always been excluded from the political arena, politics must be "masculine" and therefore something to be avoided.

However, what this policy fails to recognize is that any perspective for social change is inherently political. Keeping politics out of the center may create an initial facade of harmony. But it only serves to suppress differences which sooner or later must come out, often explosively.

According to many women's liberation groups, women are oppressed not by a system, but by something inherently evil in men. Therefore, all women, having identical interests on the basis of their sex, must unite to fight male domination.

Socialists, on the other hand, do not believe that social relationships are determined by the inherent goodness or evilness of any one group, but flow from the way property and labor are organized in a given society. The oppression of women was rooted in the original divisions of labor (determined by the biological functions of childbirth and nursing, among other things) and has been perpetuated by complicated systems of property and inheritance relationships which necessitated control over woman. These ancient divisions have been exploited by successive ruling classes to help maintain their power.

Capitalism uses the subordinate status

of women to maintain a vast pool of reserve labor and to extract free labor in the production of socially-necessary work (housework and childcare). Since the oppression of women is intimately linked to the existence of private property and class society generally, socialists argue that women will not be able to completely liberate themselves apart from a socialist revolution, in which the material basis for their oppression is destroyed.

Thus, we believe that the feminists, when they attempt to suppress politics within the women's liberation movement, actually retard the growth of the movement and work to freeze it at levels that will shortly doom it to irrelevance. But at the same time as the feminists have avoided political debate out of a belief in the unity of sisterhood, the SWP and the YSA have also, for their own reasons, held back the political development of the movement.

## Bureaucratic Leadership

The SWP-YSA strategy for the women's liberation movement (transported from the SWP wing of the anti-war movement) is based on attempting to build the largest possible coalition around a single issue, to unite women at the most minimal level of political disagreement. They have argued that to raise any issues which go beyond the minimal level of agreement would be exclusionary. Often, the SWP-YSA refuse to even discuss their own politics, casting themselves as the defenders of the mass movement against sectarians who are attempting to split the movement.

The SWP-YSA have been willing, even eager, to take on leadership or bureaucratic positions in the movement. But they have then used these positions to stifle the movement and retard its development. Moreover, while restricting the activities of the movement, they have not restricted their own. Hence, while arguing that the movement shouldn't endorse any candidates for political offices or run its own candidates, they have run their own and have used their positions in the Women's Liberation Movement to further those SWP campaigns.

In this context, it is not surprising that women would begin to feel that the SWP-YSA were being deceptive about their politics, and were using the center for "their own purposes," which many women believed were manipulation and the cooptation of the movement.

These fears have had a certain legitimacy. For women have seen how the SWP-YSA has functioned, both in the women's movement and also in the anti-war movement. They have seen how the SWP-YSA have run first the Student Mobilization Committee and then the National Peace Action Council as their own front groups, how they have bureaucratically controlled them, and how they have retarded the political development of the anti-war movement.

Yet regardless of our criticisms of the SWP-YSA and their mode of functioning, we believe that the women in the center have reacted in a reactionary way, and we condemn the purging of the center and the undemocratic manner in which it was carried out.

It is particularly unfortunate that the basis of the expulsion was a series of diffuse charges, built up out of nuances, bad feelings, and suspicions, and reinforced by red-baiting. It would not have been much better, however, if the political differences underlying the charges had been made the explicit reason for the expulsion. The only effective



tive way to oppose the SWP-YSA or any other political tendency you disagree with is confront their political ideas directly and debate them. Expulsion, even on a political basis, is only a way of avoiding the political questions involved. Women in the movement have to consciously develop their political ideas and fight for and defend them.

### Democracy Crucial

Our position is more than just an abstract response to a distasteful episode but is based on a recognition of what these events will mean to the women's liberation movement. Any movement for social change which consciously orients away from the political arena dooms itself to impotence. The motions passed at the women's center do precisely that and therefore, if extended to the broader women's liberation movement, will be its death knell.

Moreover, turning away from political debate, and therefore from the clarifying of differences, must also mean endless splintering when differences can no longer be contained.

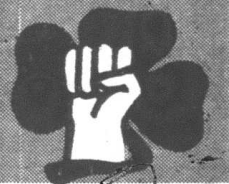
The question of democracy is crucial for every movement, but it is especially so for a movement for liberation. Women have always been kept from controlling their own lives; to give up control of our movement to a group of self-appointed leaders, even though they are women, does not significantly improve our position. Women dominating other women is little better than women being dominated by men.

If we are ever going to be able to break out of the forced passivity that has been women's lot, we must be able to actively control our own organizations as well as develop and sharpen our politics; this means open debate and democratic structures. If we are going to build a coalition capable of advancing the struggle for women's liberation, we must assure that our own movement does not become another tool for maintaining our oppression. Only in a democratically controlled organization will most women have the room to struggle, develop, and recognize their potential strength.

What has happened in New York may, unfortunately, only be a forewarning of what will begin to happen around the country, since the expulsion of the SWP-YSA from the New York Women's Center was a crystallization of tensions that have been underlying the women's liberation movement for some time. If this trend continues, the women's liberation movement will continue to splinter and will be unable to reach beyond its essentially white, middle-class base. ■

# Notes From the Irish Left

Robert St. Cyr



## Criminal Justice

The last days of June in Belfast were even more violent than in August 1969. Rioting swept from one end of the city to the other and 10,000 British troops — at times — were almost helpless to stop it. One answer of Ulster's rulers was to invoke the new Criminal Justice Act which still remains in force.

This provides for compulsory six month sentences for disorderly behavior, including taking part in an unlawful assembly (the "unlawful" being defined by the police and occupation troops), sitting down on a road or in a public building, and taking part in a banned demonstration. To date it has been used to imprison hundreds of people, including the ex-chairman of the Civil Rights Association, Frank Gogarty.

This CJA was passed through Stormont in the course of one day. The Opposition M.P.s were persuaded that this measure would only be used against "hooligans" or "extremists" (like the People's Democracy) and not "respectable" oppositionists like ex-CRA chairmen. In return for their support for the CJA, the anti-Unionists were given a bill making it an offense to use abusive sectarian language. This was aimed at Paisley, whom the official Unionists fear almost as much as the Catholic do.

## People's Democracy

People's Democracy rapidly earned a reputation in 1968-69 as militant advocates of civil rights for Catholics. From its earliest days, however, P.D. had an interest in working-class socialism and sought to prove to Protestant workers that it was not a "Catholic plot" but a movement committed to a better life for both communities. This

is no easy task, because Protestant workers know that their marginal privileges over Catholics are the result of systematic discrimination in jobs, housing and votes.

P.D. has not shrunk from the agitation against legal repression. However,



they realize that, necessary as this task is, it is not sufficient for socialists. Furthermore, it will not reach Protestant workers, who mistakenly regard the source of all their troubles as the Catholic's very desire for full equality. P.D. has worked to show the connection between legal repression, the division of the working class and the poor condition of Ulster workers generally.

Demonstrations for improved housing were disappointing considering that the poorest Protestants are no better off than poor Catholics. On the Shankill Road, for instance, one of Belfast's oldest Protestant slums, 4,000 people are crammed into .32 acres; 93 percent of the houses have no indoor toilets or baths, and 95 percent are without hot

water. These conditions are as bad as those of Catholic Falls Road right next door. But hatred and segregation have been too great to bring the two districts together even on simple housing demands.

P.D.'s militant support for striking cement workers (including direct action against scab cement trucks) helped to differentiate them from strict Catholic rights advocates. The government used its police to attack P.D. meetings in support of the strike. P.D. agitation for the Lough Neagh fishermen against the private (and foreign) company which owns the whole lake, the largest in the United Kingdom, went further in demonstrating the class — rather than religious — basis of their politics.

P.D.'s newest campaign is directed against the 50 percent bus fare increase in Belfast, and includes organizing car pools to boycott the buses. This appears to be the most successful attempt so far to attract interest across the gaping sectarian divide. At least one Paisleyite city councillor gave the P.D. a backhanded public endorsement for the boycott. The Paisleyites, who attract their support from the poorest Protestants, won't make much capital out of denouncing the boycott as either a "Romish" or a "Moscow" plot.

## Letters

Three People's Democracy members have recently been imprisoned on trumped-up charges in a typical case of police assault followed by charges brought against their victims. The prisoners were organizing support action for striking cement workers. They are Brian Vallely (6 months), Eugene Cassin (4 months), and Oliver Cosgrove (1 month). Not only the inmates, but the prison authorities might find it interesting to have sympathetic American mail, addressed c/o Her Majesty's Prison, Crumlin Road, Belfast.



1  
"Let's play a game," said the President, putting on his casual-fun face.  
"You generals put on your ribbons of official bravery, all of them. I'll be it and hide my face against this tree of official freedom. You tell me what I see."

"You see," the generals said, "troops of brave men riding, riding into the lion's lair, bravely saving all the imprisoned maidens who have never been there."

"Yes," said the President, "yes! It is like old times. History rides again over the crenellated surface of my popular mind."

2  
"Isn't this fun? Isn't this fun?" said the President again, sitting in the plush blind, shooting at the gray feathers of men flying in the windy draft.  
"Pull," said the President.

"A hit, a very palpable hit."

3  
"Now what shall we play?" said the President, dancing for joy.

"There aren't any markers left," said the generals.  
"All of the pawns that were captured have inexplicably run away."

"Oh, well," said the President, imperturbably leaping through all of the old torn rules, "tomorrow is another day."

## Games People Play

Richard Lyons

# Cairo, Ill:

## Police War On The Black Community



Howard Falk

Last month shootings and arson in Cairo, Illinois, made the national news — as they have repeatedly in the last two years. To the residents of Cairo nothing very unusual is happening, for they have lived in a state of war all this time. In the past nineteen months there have been 149 nights of gunfire.

The violence has been directed at Cairo's black community, and in particular at the United Front of Cairo, a coalition of several black organizations and community leaders which has been leading a black boycott of Cairo's downtown merchants. Although even such respected newspapers as *The New York Times* have repeated claims of attacks on the police station by uniformed blacks, the reality of the situation is quite different. The recent shooting of a black GI, home on leave from Vietnam, and the almost nightly shootings into the all-black Pyramid Courts housing project by the White Hats — a group of vigilantes linked to the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party — show the racist nature of Cairo's crisis.

In response, the United Front's demands for such elementary needs as decent jobs and housing, the Illinois state government and the politicians of both the Republican and Democratic parties have attempted to whip up a "law and order" campaign backed up by heavily armed state troopers. Governor Richard Ogilvie's personal response to the white goon-squad violence was to send a special armored car to aid in "keeping order" — among the blacks.

Cairo's crisis stems from its location at the extreme Southern tip of Illinois, a few miles from the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, bordered by Missouri on the west and Kentucky

on the east. Unlike the farm country surrounding it, Cairo has a large black population.

Before the Civil War, Cairo's first black residents were runaway slaves (Illinois was a free state); later came blacks looking for jobs, and since World War II, poor Southern blacks looking for the somewhat higher unemployment benefits of the North. Cairo is now about 40 percent black. Its problems are those of the South and Appalachia — depressed areas passed over by the rich industries which go where profits are.

### Economic Decay

Founded by land speculators, the town has never had a real basis for existence. Since the 1920's it has lost population and industry; population has fallen from 18,000 to 6,100; the largest shop in town employs only 700 people, and the next-largest 250. 27 percent of Cairo's people are on welfare; the official unemployment rate is 10 percent, and the rate for blacks is considerably higher (the figures, of course, do not even include most women). Wages are low and work is not steady — many workers and welfare victims rely on seasonal farm work to supplement their incomes.

Talk of attracting new industry with promises of low wages and no unions is always going on among Chamber of Commerce circles, but Cairo's distance from markets (and now, the black militancy of recent years) makes the town unattractive to businessmen.

This background of economic decay set the stage for a viciously repressive response by the local business groups to black campaigns for equality. Early civil rights groups campaigned for inte-

gration of the municipal swimming pool and the schools. The present leadership remains politically moderate; but like Martin Luther King and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference, moved in the late '60's to viewing blacks' exclusion from jobs as the basis of race oppression.

The present organization of the black community stems from a 1969 attack on Pyramid Courts by the White Hats. The leader of this goon squad was the owner of the local lumber yard, the members mostly merchants and businessmen. In response, the black community groups called a boycott of the downtown stores. The United Front was formed to lead the fight. Its major demand was that blacks be given half of all jobs.

The boycott has been almost totally effective among blacks; merchants' business has been cut almost in half and some stores have gone out of business. The United Front has also organized cooperatives for food and housing. As repression increased, the United Front was able to organize to keep police out of the black community, replacing them with citizens' patrols. The city finds it almost impossible to keep a police chief.

### Wholesale Repression

Despite the continuing strength of the boycott and the Front, Cairo's rulers have not responded by making concessions — even the token concessions that have been used to sell out other civil rights fights. On the contrary, they have covertly encouraged the White Hats, the police have harassed the United Front, and the civic leaders have refused even to talk with the Front leaders.

The reason for their uniformly repressive response is found in the same

conditions which produce the blacks' problems — Cairo's economic stagnation. The local business leaders simply can't meet the central demand, for jobs, in a shrinking job market. They could do so only by taking jobs from white workers, and even if they had any reason to do this, it would risk provoking militancy on the part of the whites, completely upsetting the applecart.

Such a move might trigger a racist response by the white workers against blacks — and though this would provide the rulers with the kind of reactionary mass support they haven't had yet, it would make the conflict even more intense, and end any hopes of attracting new industry. The rulers' only hope is to crush black militancy and organization completely; thus Cairo's black community is fighting for survival.

The struggle of the United Front deserved the support of all wage earners: if the struggle is lost, this will only strengthen the local business class, and keep Southern Illinois a reactionary stronghold, a backward drag on the rest of Illinois. Governor Ogilvie — part of whose power rests on the same downstate local ruling groups — knows this. This is why he plays a double game — aiding the Cairo repression while encouraging the United Front to think its only hope lies in "enlightened" moderates like himself.

But given Cairo's circumstances, the United Front's major demand — simply for more jobs for blacks — has the possibility of boomeranging. So far white workers have not taken sides — they have little in common with the merchants and businessmen of the White Hats. But with their own jobs so insecure, they could have much to lose if the Front's demands were won; the potential for reactionary developments is clear.

Half the Cairo pie is a hollow victory at best. Cairo needs more jobs so that all workers, black and white, can be employed. But when the only motivation for building plants is profit, and when this depends in part on good markets and a docile work force, it's unlikely that industrial investors will pick Cairo.

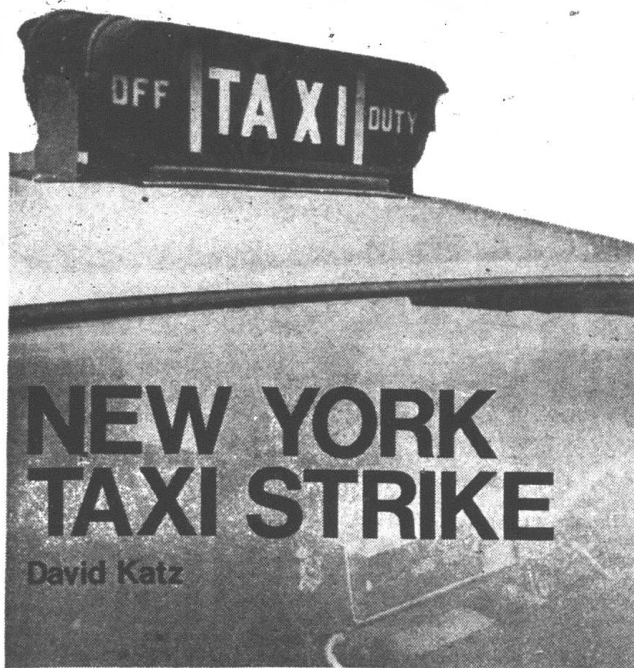
### Jobs For All

The key demand in this bleak situation is for ENOUGH JOBS FOR ALL WORKERS in Cairo. This isn't pie in the sky — the struggle can only be won if the United Front embraces this demand. The black community must neutralize the threat of white reaction and can only do so by adopting a program which white workers can support in their own self-interest. Moreover, the force of the working class is the only force which can make such a demand real.

The United Front must not fall for appeals to "good liberals" in Springfield and Washington, who will never oppose the local ruling class. It should begin helping local workers to form unions; together with them it should demand organizers and funds from the labor movement. It should call on the labor movement to demand for Cairo needed public works to provide jobs for all; the funds for these public works must come from a tax on corporations; not on working people. Only the power of the working class can fight for this.

This strategy — of seeking a class alliance with local workers and the labor movement — is a long-term one but it offers the only hope. If it is not followed, the struggle may continue for a decade without being won, while the young drift off to Chicago, and Cairo, black and white, continues to die. ■





After several abortive wildcats, clashes with the police, and two weeks of stalling by their leadership, taxi drivers in New York City are on strike. At a union meeting called on Friday, December 4, the drivers voted almost unanimously to strike, effective at midnight that evening. Many drivers left the job early, and by midnight there were virtually no cabs remaining on the streets.

The original contract expired at midnight on November 16, and the union had announced that it saw no useful purpose in extending the strike deadline beyond that date. But two hours before the strike was to begin, Harry van Arsdale, the union president, announced a three-day extension "in consideration of a request made by the City Council."

The ranks were upset, but by and large willing to accept the extension. Three days later, when he refused to take a vote on extending the deadline still further, fights broke out between militant drivers and union bureaucrats, and clashes with the police took place as the drivers poured out onto 42nd street stopping taxicabs and evicting their occupants. The fact that the strike has finally been called is a testimony to the militancy of the rank and file of the union.

### Safety

The sources of the cab drivers' militancy are many. Foremost among these is the question of safety. As many taxi employees as policemen have been murdered on the job this year. Drivers have been demanding bullet-proof shields in the cabs and two-way radios. The owners claim both of these items are too expensive, but have instead spent about \$800 per cab installing "hot seats" which turn the meter on as soon as the passenger sits down.

Also under the heading of safety is the matter of taxicab maintenance. It's difficult enough driving a cab through New York City's heavy traffic and pot-hole-lined streets, but when you're given a cab without good brakes, it's nearly impossible. Often the choice is between driving an unsafe (and uncomfortable) cab and not driving at all. If you're brave enough to return an unsafe cab to the garage, it's usually not fixed,

but given to another, more easily intimidated driver.

Another cause of frustration is wages. In order to make enough to support a family in New York by cab driving, it is necessary to work a six-day week, at least nine hours a day. On this basis, a driver can expect to earn roughly \$150 a week, including tips. The union is demanding at least \$175 weekly, which would match the basic wage paid to other transit workers in New York.

Other issues include: pensions (now only \$75 a month if you retire at 65 after 25 years of service — and you lose even this if you take another job to supplement this "pension"); sick pay (presently none); the grievance procedure (it doesn't work); discrimination in hiring (certain garages have not a single woman driver — black mechanics are given the worst jobs at the garage); etc.

### No Fare Increase

Fleet owners contend that they are currently losing money. This line has not been challenged by the union, although at least one employer has been heard to brag about how he uses such devices as high salaries and rents paid to relatives to conceal his profits. The fleet owners have been taking this opportunity to press for a substantial fare

increase. And union President Van Arsdale talks of holding a massive rally at city hall (presumably in cooperation with the fleet owners) to pressure the city council into enacting a fare hike!

This is exactly the wrong approach. Any fare hike is likely to lose so many riders that cabbies will end up gaining very little. But more than that, it is another example of the old shell game of paying one group of workers by robbing another — for not all taxi riders are businessmen and theatre-goers, in New York or elsewhere; thousands are working people.

Why does Van Arsdale propose to mobilize taxi drivers for this anti-labor ripoff? Van Arsdale, like all conservative "business unionists," is afraid to try the alternative — cutting into the companies' profits, without allowing a price increase. This is in fact the only way to raise wages without letting company price rises set off more inflation. We should demand that the pay raise come from an increased percentage of the meter, and that there be no fare increase.

If the fleet owners claim they'll lose money without higher fares, the drivers can demand that they OPEN THEIR BOOKS — let's see what their profits are. And if they really are losing money — we should fight to have the city seize the taxi fleets and operate them under workers' control, with a tax on New York's huge banks and corporations to make up any losses and to subsidize owner-drivers.

### Organize to Fight

There are worse unions than Taxi Drivers Local 3036 — some charge higher dues to sell you out. Harry van Arsdale is also president of Local 3 of the Electrical Workers and president of the New York City Central Labor Council. This busy man has never been a cab driver. After reluctantly leading a drive to organize cabbies six years ago, he "volunteered" for the presidency for a short time to get the union on its feet. It's been impossible to get him out since.

The union bureaucracy called for the strike reluctantly when they realized that the "final offer" of the owners was one that not even the most passive driver would accept. (It contains a provision that would, in effect, reduce the percentage of the meter which goes to the drivers from 49 percent to 46 percent.)

Even though the strike has finally begun, the basic position of the drivers in relation to the union bureaucracy remains the same. Van Arsdale conceives

of a strike as something that is to be turned on or off, at his discretion. The union continually preaches: "Trust your leadership. Support the negotiators."

Rank and filers who have tried to initiate militant action against van Arsdale's wishes are accused of being misguided and/or of attempting to break the union.

There has been virtually no effort made to organize massive picketing. There will be no rallies, and not even any progress reports to the ranks. The union has accumulated a strike fund which amounts to a total of only \$4 per member. Even before the first hour

One theory has it that the drivers will be allowed to strike for a week or so until they have become demoralized, and passive, and will then be expected to ratify a contract that is only slightly better than the one they have just rejected.

The only way for the drivers to safeguard themselves against sell-outs and inadequate contracts is to form strong, militant, rank and file organizations in each garage. These rank-and-file groups should have several functions: to pressure the union into fighting for the interests of the drivers; to take over this struggle entirely by calling strikes and other job actions if the union bureaucracy shirks its responsibility; to fight for democracy within the union; and to carry on the day-to-day struggle in each garage over grievances such as inadequate maintenance on the cars, discriminatory shape-up procedures, unfair work rules, etc. If we are to make real progress, we must have an organization that will struggle on a day-to-day basis — not one that has to be forced into fighting once every three years.

We can expect vigorous opposition from both the union bureaucrats and the bosses. The bureaucrats will rightly fear that their privileged position and tight control over the drivers will become a thing of the past if the ranks organize. And the bosses, for their part, will not be at all happy at the prospect of a union that will not collaborate with them.

For too long we have allowed the bureaucracy of our union to be the union. The experiences of the last few weeks, and indeed, of the last six years, have shown that Harry van Arsdale prefers making deals with the bosses to leading a militant struggle against them.

[David Katz is a member of Local 3036, Taxi Drivers Union AFL-CIO, and a member of the New York branch of the International Socialists.]



Cab drivers' wildcat stops taxis on 42nd Street

# Bread and Circuses



## The Big Game

Chuck Leinenweber

A couple of weeks ago I went to the Big Game by accident. The Big Game is what they call the annual game between California and Stanford. I was there because I wanted to take part in a demonstration called by the Jock Liberation Front. It was a cold day and I had just turned thirty, but I still wanted to look like a jock so I wore a red-white-and-blue T-shirt with three-quarter length sleeves, sort of like a football jersey, and no jacket. I wanted everyone who saw the demonstration to say, "Now he looks like a football player."

Actually, I was once a football player. I was a Big Ten end, which sounds impressive until I say that I played for Indiana, which has had about six winning seasons since 1892. By some fluke Indiana went to the Rose Bowl a few years ago, but I saw them when they played Cal this year, and it was just like the old days. Cal scored over fifty points on them. I didn't like the idea of Indiana being a football powerhouse anyway.

backs, especially since they were rare at Indiana. Our quarterbacks threw passes that looked like field goal attempts, with the ball going end over end, and you never could tell where they would land. This wasn't especially frowned upon by the ends since they couldn't catch anyhow, and it saved them the embarrassment of having a well-thrown ball pop out of their hands.

I approached one scalper who seemed to have a lot of tickets, and told him I might be interested. He said he could give me a 50-yard-line ticket for five dollars — all of them were shouting about the 50-yard-line — and I told him I didn't have that much money since I left my wallet at home because of the demonstration. He said how much do you have, and I dug out two dollars. He said that's good, and he dug out a ticket that was torn in two. I was suspicious about the validity of this ticket, but he accompanied me to the gate with it, and when the ticket-taker OK'd it, I passed the two dollars to my friend and went inside.

There were seventy-five thousand people inside, seated in a towering ring, with the football game going on below. It was like stepping back ten years, fifteen years, maybe even more. There were the teams, wearing the same uniforms, the same pads and helmets, knocking heads. There were the bands, wearing stiff hats and playing fight songs. The Cal band wore white spats.

The crowd was the same, or at least a lot of them were. A Stanford grad, maybe 35 years old, went tottering by with a half-full or half-empty plastic martini glass swaying in his hand. He was wearing a red and white striped blazer, white trousers and white bucks. White bucks! And he had a white carnation in his lapel, with a red S in the middle of it. He talked to everybody he passed by.

I made my way to the end zone, which is what my ticket was for, sat down and began to freeze. I didn't know how long I could take it, being in the cold without my jacket, and no one cared whether I looked like a jock or not. Then my friend John came along. John used to be a warehouseman. But John is unemployed now, and he uses his unemployment to set in the Med, a Berkeley coffee house, and talk, and also to attend athletic events from time to time. He was sitting way up in the stands and invited me to join him. It was much warmer there because all the people protected me from the wind, and I could see the game better.

Not that people always watch the game. Did you ever notice how crowd scenes in movies, like at a football game

or the race track, always look fake? It doesn't matter how great the director is, crowd scenes always look fake. Then look at a real picture of a crowd, like a picture in Sports Illustrated where the decisive field goal is kicked. Look at the crowd behind, and you'll see that some people are yawning, some people are getting up to take a pee.

It's always like that, because the game cannot proceed without people peeing. Sometimes it seems there's a causal relationship. The next time you're at a baseball game, see how many runs are scored while you take a pee. The first thing anyone asks when they come back from a pee is, "How many runs were scored? What did I miss?" It is well known that in the movies, no one ever takes a pee. That is why crowd scenes are so fake.

Half time came very shortly after I sat with my friend John, and I went out to make a phone call. It took the whole half time to make the phone call because I had to wait in line, and while I was gone someone ran through the Stanford band. I saw his picture in the paper the next day. He was a demonstrator. He had long curly hair that stood out from his head, and he had a beard. The paper said he ran through the Stanford band while it was marching, and a variety of band members jumped him. A tuba player hit him over the head with his tuba, and others kicked him around. I hoped he wasn't hurt too bad.

In the 1964 Big Game — this was before the Free Speech Movement was really big — two Cal students ran through the Stanford band upsetting some trap drums (that's what they used to be called) which the band had placed on the field for a "battle of the drums." These students were clean-cut, and they wore Levi slim-fits and track shoes, the kind without spikes. They weren't fast enough, though, and the band caught them too. They had to be carried off the field, and one should mess around with bands, which work a lot harder than football teams.

Back at the game I looked at the crowd some more. There were hip looking young people behind me, but they were Stanford students all involved in the game, which Stanford was beginning to lose. "Oh fuck," they were saying, "come on Jim!" Jim started throwing some beautiful passes, into areas so tiny that Cal couldn't defend against them.

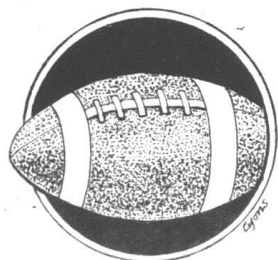
Stanford scored, but Cal came right back, looking like Indiana when they would win. The Cal quarterback didn't even throw passes, it was other people, like halfbacks and ends, throwing wobbly

passes that would bounce off the hands of Stanford defenders onto the ground, or into the arms of Cal receivers. It was amazing, because Stanford was clearly a better team, much more class.

The Cal students, thousands and thousands of them all sitting together, gave a cheer. It was a terrible cheer, a frightening cheer, out of one enormous cave of a throat. Everyone on the Stanford side of the stadium shut up after that, and Cal won the Big Game.

After the game I walked past the Sigma Nu house, where earlier this fellow I know named Jim had stood. Jim had been big in the People's Park and on my way to the game I spotted him standing on the sidewalk near the Sigma Nu house, holding up a large sign that said, "Down with the Missionary Position." I asked him what it meant and he said, "The missionary position is the beginning of imperialism."

Now the Sigma Nu house was filling with old grads, more old grads than active members I suppose, since fraternities have been almost knocked out by dope which is more fun. The old grads were all smiling and greeting each other and they had their wives with them, who all wore bell-bottom suits with matching shoes. The old grads held out one arm to each other with the hand tilted slightly, they were real guys — GUYS — the kind you don't see any more, so clean cut you couldn't believe it, with slick hair and clean outfits. They looked like they had makeup on and were about to do a commercial.



I never did find the Jock Liberation Front demonstration, but from what I hear it was small and it was mostly by outsiders, little people, so it doesn't matter. I stood outside the stadium watching for the demonstration and listening for shouts about Ho Chi Minh, but the demonstration never appeared. Then the Big Game began. I knew it began because I could hear the roar of the crowd — it actually was a roar — but I never planned to go in, especially since tickets cost seven dollars each.

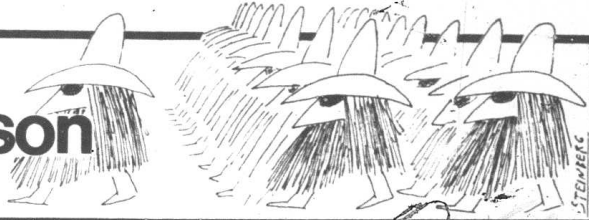
Then I saw the scalpers, mostly young black guys, waving fists of tickets at the few stragglers making their way to the stadium. I began to think about how these tickets were actually perishable commodities, going down in value very rapidly as the game proceeded, and how the market for them was shrinking. I thought about how maybe I could come by one very cheaply, and how Stanford had this quarterback named Jim Plunkett who could throw the ball like no one else.

I have a weakness for good quarter-



The author in his playing days

# Sex, Drugs and Treason



## The Good Gay Poet

James Coleman

When we read Walt Whitman in school, he is generally presented as an inspired poet of everyday American life, daring in his extremely unconventional verse, but slightly tedious — very much the “good gray poet,” as one of his admirers called him with more good will than good effect.

There is some justification for this impression. Whitman could write lyrically of everyday life:

*I hear America singing, the varied  
carols I hear,  
Those of mechanics, each one singing  
his as it should be blithe and strong,  
The carpenter singing his as he meas-  
ures his plank or beam,  
The mason singing his as he makes ready  
for work....*

But when the carpenter and mason are followed by the boatman, deck-hand, shoemaker, hatter, wood-cutter, and several more — and when dozens of similar poems follow each other — the whole thing can grow tiresome.

But though Whitman was long-winded, one reason he seems “good and gray” is that other poems, which give a sharper meaning to his lyrical paintings of common life, are seldom read. Some indeed are seldom printed. Rereading Whitman, we realize with surprise that there is a side to him which we were never permitted to learn in school, and which even his biographers hesitate over. He was a radical democrat, who cheered the European revolutions of his time and agitated against slavery and exploitation in the United States. Moreover, his poems praised sexual love in a manner shocking to the nineteenth century — and they praised homosexual as well as heterosexual love.

Both these aspects of Whitman's life and work have remained taboo. In school we never heard of Whitman the radical; and if we heard of Whitman the homosexual, it was in whispers and snickers. For homosexual youths Whitman's homosexuality, like their own, was made to seem a matter of shame — and neither homosexual nor heterosexual students ever read about Whitman's homosexuality in his own words, which reveal a far different attitude.

By suppressing these aspects of Whitman, the anthologies made his work one-dimensional — made him the “good gray poet” which in life he never was.

### Democratic Rebel

In life, Whitman was a rebel. As a young newspaper editor in the 1840's, he wrote to rally the Northern working class to oppose slavery; he exposed the exploitation of working women, attacked unemployment, and discussed the “anti-democratic bearing” of the novels of Sir Walter Scott. Twice he was fired because of these views. In the Civil War he served as a medic and wrote movingly of the suffering of the wounded and dy-

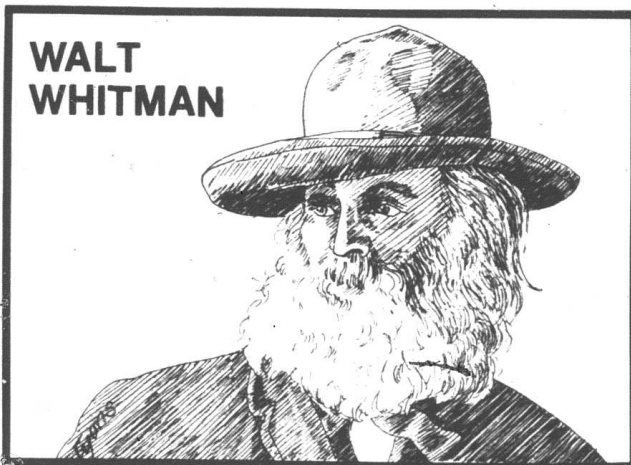
ing.

He was never a revolutionary — he opposed the Southern slave-owners but was less critical of Northern industrialists, he was sympathetic to the working man but did not think in terms of class conflict, and he worshipped President Lincoln, giving Lincoln rather than the Abolition movement credit for freeing the slaves. But in his old age as in youth he hailed revolutionary movements; when the Paris Commune, the revolutionary democracy of 1871, was destroyed, Whitman wrote of the defeated “star of France,” the “pale symbol of my soul, its dearest hopes, / The struggle and the daring, rage divine for liberty, / Of aspiration toward the far ideal, enthusiast's dreams of brother-

the prostrate dawn.” More hesitantly (he seems to have realized his homosexual side only after a struggle against guilt) but at last unmistakably, he celebrated homosexual love too:

*And that night while all was still I  
heard the waters roll slowly continu-  
ally up the shores,  
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid  
and sands as directed to me whispering  
to congratulate me,  
For the one I most love lay sleeping by  
me under the same cover in the cool  
night,  
In the stillness in the autumn moon-  
beams his face was inclined, toward me,  
And his arm lay lightly around my  
brest — and that night I was happy.*

Whitman's homosexual feelings in-



hood, / Of terror to the tyrant and the priest.”

In the '30's and '40's, when the labor movement was on the upswing, the liberal left and the Communist Party — both preaching the “common man” and democracy, neither preaching the idea of workers ruling society as a class — helped popularize Whitman as a sentimental democrat. In conservative periods — in the '20's and again in the '50's — when even liberal ideas were suspect, critics ignored his political side entirely. In both cases, his explicitly revolutionary poems were ignored. The effect was that Whitman's praise of universal democracy and revolution was flattened out into a celebration of America as it existed in his lifetime.

Where the revolutionary poems were simply ignored, Whitman's sexual poems had to be explained away. Whitman wrote of the beauty of the human body and of sex. He wrote frankly about masturbation and celebrated heterosexual love — “Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous... / Bridegroom night of love working surely and softly into

created the intensity of his vision of brotherhood and of his war experiences — “Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have crossed and rested,” he reflected while tending the dying; “Many a soldier's kiss dwelt on these bearded lips.”

The critics blushed at lines like these, interpreted them as metaphorical or left these poems out of their collections. Of Whitman's two major American biographers, one does headstands to deny the poet's homosexuality — quoting none of the explicitly sexual passages in the poems, and viewing Whitman's many passionate friendships with men as so many “strong friendships.” The other deals frankly with the homosexual themes in the poems, but from some lines describing unexpressed desire, concludes that Whitman seldom or never acted on his homosexual impulses. (To the homosexual reader such lines suggest a simpler explanation — the common situation in which we conceal our feelings from an uptight “straight” person. The critics can't face the fact that Whitman was in reality “the good gay

poet.”

If Whitman's poems are read without a prejudice against homosexuality, however, the poet emerges as a complex, and admirable, figure. He tried to adapt to what society expected of him, and fought to keep his homosexual feelings within limits — during much of his life he may have stopped himself from acting on them. (Today, millions who are homosexual or have strong homosexual leanings still do the same.) On the other hand, with a courage and honesty which were greater because he was not completely easy in his mind about his homosexual side, Whitman wrote openly about his own homosexuality (“the secret of my nights and days”) and proclaimed that homosexual love was as valuable as heterosexual love.

The treatment of Whitman's homosexuality by his biographers and the makers of anthologies keeps the homosexual reader — particularly the young one, for Whitman is often read in school and never again — from learning the lessons Whitman himself learned with such difficulty. That's no accident. In addition to fighting against actual struggles for change, a society based on inequality also tries to suppress ideas which go against the ideas considered “proper.” In school we are taught “the great ideas” — and, not by accident, we are not taught about historical figures who stood for opposed ideas.

### Biographical Closet

Society regards deviation from “normal” sex roles as dangerous, and just as Whitman's radicalism is ignored, so does society try to make sure we never learn any way of looking at homosexuality except the way it regards as “normal.” The prejudices of Whitman's biographers — who are pretty typical of their society — fit into this. To spend years interpreting a poet's life and work, a scholar must feel a strong admiration for his subject, and for most heterosexuals, admitting that the subject was homosexual makes him seem anything but admirable.

We can take a different attitude, both about Whitman's radicalism and about his homosexuality. Even if Whitman never fully embraced a revolutionary outlook, his passion for equality and his partisanship for the revolutions of his day excite the gratitude of today's radical. In addition, the beginning of a movement of homosexuals for their liberation has enabled homosexuals to see themselves without shame, to insist that society view them without condescension, without dismissing homosexual love as “perverted” or “neurotic” (that polite word meaning the same thing). Walt Whitman proclaimed this — as part of a vision of international brotherhood — a century ago. The new gay movement can feel toward Whitman not yesterday's guilty identification, but an open solidarity. ■



# feedback

## Political Defense

The editorial, "Hands Off the Panthers," in *W.P.* no. 25, says, "The Black Panther Party is being destroyed. How can it fight back?" *Workers' Power* is correct in pointing for a long-range solution to black workers organized at the point of production. The building of a movement in this sector of society must become the central focus for black radicals and revolutionaries.

But this is a gigantic task which will involve years of dedicated work as well as serious political changes for an organization which has based itself upon ghetto youth and a paramilitary image. What about the immediate problem of survival? What are the Panthers to do now, to avoid destruction? On this question, the editorial is silent.

The Panthers are falling prey to a campaign of political warfare, conducted by politicians and District Attorneys in the mass media. They are convicted before they enter the courtroom — those who are not shot down in the streets. Police power and judicial conspiracy are virtually unchecked, in dealing with this organization more than any other. There are many reasons why the forces of "law and order" are out to make an example of the Black Panther Party, but there is a particular reason why they are succeeding.

The Black Panther Party has built itself upon a paramilitary reputation and the notion of armed revolution by an elite force. Eldridge Cleaver continues to advocate urban guerrilla warfare and "the destruction of Babylon," from his exile in Algiers. It is easy to find articles and cartoons in the Panther newspaper which support and advocate every form of terrorism: bombing, arson, assassination. (One suspects that police provocateurs have written some of these articles.)

The mass media has seen to it that the public got this message if nothing else. By the time a Panther gets to court, the jury is already convinced that if he or she didn't commit the act in question, it was only for lack of the opportunity. In such an atmosphere, an effective political defense is impossible.

Whether or not Panthers actually plan and execute bombings, they will pay the price for those people who do. In some cases the charges are ludicrous, contrary to everything that the Black Panther Party stands for (like plotting to blow up department stores). But in other cases the charges correspond pretty closely to the sort of actions advocated in the Panther newspaper (like bombing police stations). Sometimes the frame-up is so obvious that the defendants get off, but even so they may spend months in jail awaiting trial.

The *Workers' Power* editorial says nothing about the need for a political defense, perhaps because this would involve criticizing the Black Panther Party for much more than "strong-arm tactics within the Movement, (and) self-defeat-

ing attempts to forge an alliance with 'good liberals.'" But the Panthers must reverse their public advocacy of terrorism and their paramilitary perspective, if they are to survive long enough to organize anything among black workers.

This does not mean abandoning militancy and the idea of armed self-defense for the ghetto community. It does mean an end to suicidal posturing by a small organization which has made itself a sitting duck to be annihilated by the vast military superiority of the capitalist state.

*Workers' Power* does a disservice to its readers as well as to the Panthers and other pro-terrorist radicals by not emphasizing that their stand on this issue is incompatible not only with a serious turn toward the working class, but with survival itself.

David Benson

## Rejoinder

We agree with David Benson's major points. Our editorial did not speak to the question of a political defense, nor about the fact that the advocacy of terrorism has made this nearly impossible for the Black Panther Party. It is true that the Black Panther Party can't use the tactic of replying to trumped-up charges of terrorism by laying out its real program — because its real program does advocate terrorism.

But his letter leaves several things out. First, in making such a criticism, we emphasize (for liberals who are unclear about such points) that *advocacy* of terrorism convicts no one of *committing* terrorism, and that, in law, only acts are punishable (it is for this reason that the state allows police to go around the law).

Second, in advocating a political defense, Benson doesn't say what this defense would consist of — except of an opposition to terrorism. The problem is that the mass media and liberal politicians painted the Black Panther Party as terrorist long before the Panther newspaper advocated terrorism. To liberals and, the rulers hope, to the average juror (that is, the well-off, white, middle-aged juror), organized armed self-defense for the black community and terrorism look much the same.

This is why simply dropping an emphasis on terrorism isn't enough for a political defense. Although a turn toward the working class would take time to bear fruit in organization, it would bear fruit *immediately* in providing the basis for a political defense.

Finally, in criticizing the Black Panther Party for laying itself open to charges of terrorism, we must emphasize all the more firmly that the real motivation of the state — which has never tried a single one of the police murderers of Panthers — is a political one, to crush the Panthers because they are revolutionaries. For this reason, *even if a Panther were guilty as charged*, the

state would have no right to try him: because the purpose of such a trial is not to suppress crime but to suppress revolutionary ideas. FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS.

W.P. Editorial Board

## Nudity?

When our article on the midi was edited for publication (*Workers' Power*, no. 25), a paragraph was added which we don't completely agree with:

*More generally, as the attitude of politicians like Nixon and Agnew clearly demonstrates, Establishment figures had hoped that the midi could play a part in the development of a new climate of repression in the U.S. They link the midi to nudity in movies, turmoil in the schools, opposition to U.S. imperialism, uprisings in the black community, and unrest among younger workers in the shops — all of which the ruling class needs to wipe out" (note needs).*

While we agree that the midi has been linked with freedom and protest in general, we're not entirely sure that nudity in the movies is one of those freedoms the ruling class *needs* to suppress.

While Doris Day movies can be far more destructive to women than "skin flicks" or, certainly, honest natural cinema, the "new" sexual freedom is not necessarily liberating. As we point out, and women well know, the concept of "sexual liberation" can be used against women. The notorious "Playboy Philosophy" and Helen Gurley Brown's *Cosmopolitan* magazine ("be liberated, it's sexy and attracts men") are two good examples of this two-edged sword.

Celia Emerson

Louise Mitchell

## Rejoinder

We are very sorry the paragraph in question has given rise to misunderstanding. We of course agree that the contemporary "sexual revolution" has many ambiguous aspects, on the one hand liberating, one the other hand exploitative and male chauvinist. In any case, the passage was a comment on the attitude of the Nixon wing of the Establishment; no evaluation of any kind of "sexual freedom" was meant. (To say that *Nixon disapproves* of something is not necessarily to say we approve of it.)

The paragraph was intended to touch on a serious subject which we felt needed to be mentioned but was otherwise beyond the scope of the article — that is, the efforts of Nixon, Agnew and friends to promote a return to the climate and the politics of the '50's, and the fact that their well-publicized enthusiasm for the midi was a real if minor part of that campaign. However, the specific language of the second sentence in the paragraph was supposed to be *ironic*, given the absurdity of assuming that a "fashion counter-revolution" could help solve the crisis in American society. Apparently, the irony did not come through.

Strictly speaking, the ruling class if necessary can tolerate not only the mini and nudity in movies (whether liberating or not), but also all the other things mentioned in the passage. Capitalism has shown itself to be a very flexible system. If it has no choice, it will try to live with anything short of socialist revolution itself. Perhaps if we had used the word "wants" instead of "needs," we could have conveyed the same feeling without causing confusion.

W.P. Editorial Board

## Free Greece

Permit me to congratulate *Workers' Power* for the fine analysis it carried of the movie *Z*, by Karl Fischer in the October 9-22nd issue. I was particularly struck with the author's correct emphasis of the political importance of Lambrakis and the wide support he received from segments of the Greek trade union movement. All of this, as Mr. Fischer states, never comes across in the film.

*Free Voice of Greece* is an independent radio program which broadcasts every Monday evening at 6 p.m. over WBAI-FM. *Free Voice* believes U.S. foreign policy vis-a-vis Greece, is an extension of her foreign policy in Southeast Asia. We further believe that the resumption of full U.S. military aid and other forms of material and moral support of the Greek neo-fascist dictatorship will only lead to a situation whereby the United States will find herself in a position as indefensible as that of Vietnam.

*Free Voice* believes an informed public is absolutely necessary in order to create a favorable climate of public opinion for resistance activity in Greece, and thereby obtain a meaningful change in the present situation in Greece.

Adamantia Pollis

[Adamantia Pollis is the Program Director of the *Free Voice of Greece*, 350 East 67th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.]



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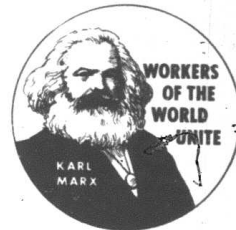
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# Workers' Power

**WE STAND FOR SOCIALISM:** the collective ownership and democratic control of the economy and the state by the working class. We stand in opposition to all forms of class society, both capitalist and bureaucratic "Communist," and in solidarity with the struggles of all exploited and oppressed people.

America is faced with a growing crisis: war, racial strife, pollution, urban decay, and the deterioration of our standard of living and working conditions. This crisis is built into capitalism, an outlived system of private profit, exploitation, and oppression. The capitalist ruling class, a tiny minority that controls the economy and politics alike, perpetuates its rule by dividing the working people against each other - white against black, male against female, skilled against unskilled, etc. The result is ever greater social chaos.

Workers' power is the only alternative to this crisis. Neither the liberal

nor the conservative wings of the ruling class have any answers but greater exploitation. The struggle for workers' power is already being waged on the economic level, and the International Socialists stand in solidarity with these struggles over wages and working conditions. To further this struggle, we call for independent rank and file workers' committees to fight when and where the unions refuse to fight. But the struggles of the workers will remain defensive and open to defeat so long as they are restricted to economic or industrial action.

The struggle must become political. Because of its economic power, the ruling class also has a monopoly on political power. It controls the government and the political parties that administer the state. More and more, the problems we face, such as inflation and unemployment, are the result of political decisions made by that class. The struggle of the working people will be deadlocked until the ranks of labor build a workers' party and carry the struggle into the political arena.

The struggle for workers' power cannot be won until the working class, as a whole, controls the government and the economy democratically. This requires a revolutionary socialist, working class party, at the head of a unified

working class. We alone can accomplish this for the workers.

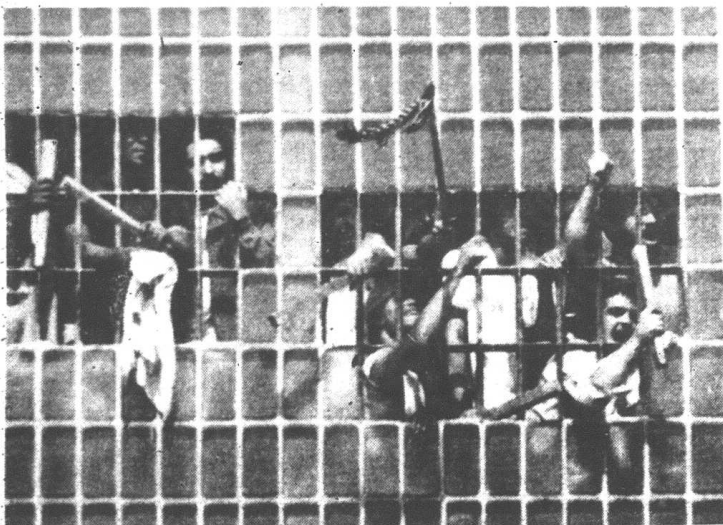
Nor can any part of the working class free itself at the expense of another. We stand for the liberation of all oppressed peoples: mass organization, armed self-defense, and the right of self-determination for Blacks, Chicanos, and Native Americans; the liberation of women from subordination in society and the home; the organization of homosexuals to fight their oppression. These struggles are in the interest of the working class as a whole: the bars of racism and male chauvinism can only prevent the establishment of workers' power. Oppressed groups cannot subordinate their struggle today to the present level of consciousness of white male workers: their independent organization is necessary to their fight for liberation. But we strive to unite these struggles in a common fight to end human exploitation and oppression.

The struggle for workers' power is world-wide. Class oppression and exploitation is the common condition of humanity. US corporations plunder the world's riches and drive the world's people nearer to starvation, while military intervention by the US government, serving these corporations, awaits

those who dare to rebel. The "Communist" revolutions in China, Cuba and North Vietnam, while driving out US imperialism, have not brought workers' power, but a new form of class society, ruled by a bureaucratic elite.

Whether capitalist or bureaucratic-collectivist ("Communist") in nature, the ruling classes of the world fight desperately to maintain their power, often against each other, always against the working class and the people. Through both domestic repression and imperialist intervention (the US in Vietnam, the USSR in Czechoslovakia), they perpetuate misery and poverty in a world of potential peace and plenty. Socialism - the direct rule of the working class itself - exists nowhere in the world today.

We fight for the withdrawal of US troops from all foreign countries, and support all struggles for national self-determination. In Vietnam, we support the victory of the NLF over the US and its puppets; at the same time, we stand for revolutionary opposition by the working class to the incipient bureaucratic ruling class. Only socialism, established through world-wide revolution, can free humanity from exploitation and oppression; and the only force capable of building socialism is WORKERS' POWER.



# Doing Time

Martha Sonnenberg

*Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, George Jackson, Introduction by Jean Genet, Bantam, 1970.

*Men in Prison*, Victor Serge, Introduction by Richard Greeman, Doubleday, 1969.

George Jackson and Victor Serge are separated by nearly sixty years of time. Victor Serge was born in 1890, the son of Russian emigrants who fled from czarist repression in Russia. By 1908, at the age of 18, Serge was in Paris, an anarchist associated with a group of social bandits known as the "Bonnot Gang."

Most of these men and women were killed by the police. Serge himself became disillusioned with social banditry as a revolutionary activity, but refused to dissociate himself from his comrades. It was this solidarity that landed him in prison for five years. He writes of that sentence, 1912-1917, in his book.

George Jackson's history is the present. At 18 he was sent to prison for robbing a gas station. That was 11 years ago, 11 years in prison. Now charged with the murder of a prison guard, Jackson, along with John Clutchette and Fleeta Drumgo — the Soledad Brothers — is on trial for his life. His book of letters from prison are letters of his life, both in and out of prison.

Serge's book is a novel, written from the memory of prison experience. Jackson's book is a collection of letters written as he lived through the experience. Yet this initial difference in form is minimal compared with the great similarity of content in the books, and compared with more important historical differences.

With both these books, the usual line between a book as the finished product of a man, and the man himself, is indistinguishable. The book becomes a living expression of the man, not separate from him. Rather than give a static or momentary picture of a man, these books offer more of a moving image of changes that a man undergoes in his life. This dynamic quality means that, especially when read together, the books of Victor Serge and George Jackson provide tremendous insights into the social processes of prison life as they have developed over a long period of time.

The most striking similarity in the books is that both men recount their

imprisonment first as human beings, then as political prisoners. This distinction seems to flow from the sense that it is life in capitalist society that is the real imprisonment, and that prison itself is the brutal intensification of that experience. What emerges foremost from Jackson and Serge is their open expression of the struggle to maintain their humanity, and the awareness and self-development that occur during the course of that struggle.

The expression of the struggle comes out first in the response to the immediacy of imprisonment — the physical confinement, the duration of time. Prisoners probably have the keenest sense of time and space. Time becomes something to live through; it becomes a unit of existence to be filled up only because there's an endless number of other units to follow. It is something to lose oneself in, or something to find oneself in.

In the beginning the prisoner is tormented by disorientation, but gradually the will to resist becomes stronger. By the end of Serge's book he has clearly defined his situation:

*I will walk down that dark road as long as I have to. Until madness or death? No. I have faith in myself. If one or the other brings me down, it will be by violence, in spite of myself, without stooping to fear them. I will conquer prison.*

By 1968, Jackson too has developed the determination to resist the pressures of the prison. He writes to his parents:

*Locked in jail, my mind is still free. I refuse ever to allow myself to be forced by living conditions into a response that is not commensurate with intelligence and my final objective.*

## Solidarity

The possibility for solidarity emerges from this struggle for self-determination, and self-determination is, in turn, enhanced by solidarity. Both Serge and Jackson point out that individual autonomy and social solidarity are not separate elements of prison culture, but are different dimensions of the same element — the fight to remain human.

Because of differences in the time, the place and the nature of imprisonment, the points of similarity in Serge and Jackson — the need for self-determination and solidarity — often appear in different contexts. There is the problem of polarization among the inmates. For Serge, the conflict between "real men" and the "rats," informers, occurs first on a class level. He sees the middle class inmates as "pious, submissive,

great scribblers, and prone to informing." For George Jackson, at a time when blacks are 40-42 percent of the prison population, polarization is first along race lines, and then along class lines.

There are also historical differences in the nature of inmate culture. For Serge, open prison revolt had not yet become part of inmate culture. Solidarity among prisoners was very real, but for the most part, it remained silent and symbolic rather than overt.

Resistance to prison authority was expressed mostly in writings on the walls: "M.A.V....mort aux vaches: death to the cops!" The era of open revolt in the prison, of prison work stoppages, of inmate-run underground presses, had not yet begun, and this meant that prisoners were more isolated in their imprisonment from each other and from the outer society.

## Black Prison Culture

George Jackson's situation today is radically different. He entered prison when black prison culture was strong and growing, in close touch with the black movement outside the prisons. During his years in prison, Jackson, and others like him, were consciously attempting to "transform the black criminal mentality into a black revolutionary mentality." They have largely been successful, as recent events have shown.

During Serge's time there was little relationship between prison inmates and an outside revolutionary movement. Without the presence of a social movement both in and out of the prison, Serge's development is isolated from the rest of the prisoners. His development lies primarily in his own self-conception, from rebel to revolutionary; and it is geared to a life and movement outside; there is no integral relationship between his own development and the inmates as a whole, except in an abstract sense:

*We have committed grave errors, comrades. We wanted to be revolutionaries, we were only rebels. We must become termites, boring obstinately, patiently, all our lives: in the end, the dike will crumble.*

But Victor Serge's development is still important as a precedent for the kind of self-development that is now widespread and common to most large prisons. (One prison authority has recently complained that American prisoners are becoming hotbeds of Marxism.)

George Jackson's self-development illustrates the difference that a social

movement can make. His own self-conception develops, as does his conception of others. He explicitly notes his move from black nationalist to Black Panther. More implicit, but no less important, is the development in his conception of women, of the older generation, and of white inmates.

Jackson's early letters are filled with references to the necessary dominance of males, and the inferiority of women. By the end of the book, especially in his letters to Angela Davis, he shows a conscious attempt to understand the oppression of women and its effects on them. He is elated by the model of women that Angela Davis represents.

Similarly, his first letters are filled with bitterness and hostility towards the conservatism of middle-aged and elderly blacks. Yet after years of correspondence with his parents, and after what appears to be an extensive study of the historical effects of the Depression on blacks, Jackson rejects the connection between old age and conserva-

*[continued on page 7]*



George Jackson