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the rank and file in action

# Labor Today

35¢



Volume 18, No. 4

Apr. 1979

# Taxes

... it's that time again



# Solidarity with Mexican miners

**AWAC** RANK AND FILE auto program

# Reality and 'real wages'



# Making the work place safer

IT'S THE SAME FIGHT

# Build solidarity with Mexican miners

# Labor Today

LUIS MARTINEZ ROJAS  
Coordinator, Mexican Miner's Union

We are in the U.S.A. in order to contact all democratic and progressive unions and organizations and to establish a relationship between the workers and representatives of this country and the Mexican workers. At the same time, we are here to get economic and political support.

We are the workers from "La Caridad", a mine located 13 miles from Nacozari de Gracia, a town in the state of Sonora, Mexico, 80 miles south of Douglas, Arizona.

We have been working with the so-called "proprietary" company of the mine for 7 years. It is called Mexicana de Cobre, S.A.

Mexicana de Cobre S.A. is the same as INDUSTRIA MINERO MEXICO S.A. which is affiliated with AMERICAN SMELTING AND REFINING COMPANY (ASCARO). (I am sending a study of ASCARO.) You will see that on the board there are people with high government positions in Mexico. The state governor of Sonora is Licentiate Alejandro Carrillo Marcor and a representative of the secretariat is Licentiate David Ibarra Munoz, both of which are on the board.

For years we, the miners from Nacozari, have been fighting to register our local, Section 277 as part of the UNION MINERO METALURGICO Y SIMILARES DE LA REPUBLICA MEXICANA. In 1974, after we registered before the federal labour authorities, the company, in agreement with corrupt government officials, signed a collective bargaining contract with a construction union that belongs to the Confederacion de Trabajadores Mexicanos. (CTM is a central union similar to the AFL-CIO.) The CTM is used by the government to control the workers. The top leader is Fidel Velasquez who has been the general secretariat for more than 40 years.

We were forced to belong to that union. The worst thing is that the statutes in the article 25, section 4 says: the representatives are appointed directly by the national executive, thus taking away our right to elect our own representatives.

We wanted and still want to form a local union and to have a collective bargaining agreement that will comply with reality and the law, but the conditions to which we are and were submitted are contrary to what our rights entitle us.

## OUR DEMANDS

Our demands are:

1) To elect our own representatives, a right which all workers in the world should have.

2) Decent living conditions. We now live in cardboard houses with dirt floors, that lack electricity, drinking water and a bathroom. The land we occupy belongs to a company that was there 40 years ago (MOCTEZUMA COPPER COMPANY). We live there because we took the land to build our shacks. Mr. Roderico Soto, a very famous millionaire in Nacozari, says he is



Luis  
Martinez  
Rojas

the owner of these lands.

- 3) Safe working conditions. There is a fatal accident every 10 days.
- 4) Clean and appropriate transportation for the workers. For years we have been transported like animals in sheep trucks and in trucks used in mining operations.
- 5) Better wages. The minimum salary per day is 84 pesos (\$3.87) and the maximum salary is 144 pesos (\$6.63).
- 6) An 8-hour workday. We work anywhere from 12 to 14 hours a day.
- 7) Education for our children. The company and the union should pressure the state to build schools that will guarantee the education of our children. In Nacozari we have 18 bars and only 2 small elementary schools.
- 8) Accountability in regard to our union dues. For 5 years we have not been told what has happened with the 50 million pesos that have been deducted from our salaries as union dues.

We see our union representatives with good houses, good businesses and new cars. We think they have stolen from the workers.

9) Social Security. After 66 days on strike, the federal government finally began to construct a social security medical clinic (in Mexico the social security system includes medical care via clinics and hospitals).

10) Just pensions for construction workers, and the workers who died or were hurt while working. There have been cases in which families have not been told when their family members have died in accidents.

THUS, the pensions remain with the officials of the company and the sold-out union leaders, all of this with the agreement of state officials. This is a crime! These pensions are almost nothing and yet they steal them. Even worse, the families of these men never find out what has happened to them.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

We think that North American workers can do much to help.

First we need economic support.

In Mexico, strikes for union democracy are important. We do not have emergency strike funds, so generally strikes are broken because of hunger. With economic help, workers will be able to hold out longer in the fight to gain just contracts.

Secondly, we need political support.

If the Mexican government is aware that American people and workers are familiar with the movements in Mexico; if there are manifestations of solidarity; if telegrams are sent to the Mexican ambassador in Washington, D.C., to the President in Mexico, D.F., and to the secretariat of labour asking them to explain what is happening to our brothers in this or that point of Mexico.

If all these things occurred, then the government would hesitate before using the police force and the army to repress the workers' movements as they now do. They will have to be more democratic, and operate under the constitution and federal labor laws.

## REPRESSION IN MEXICO

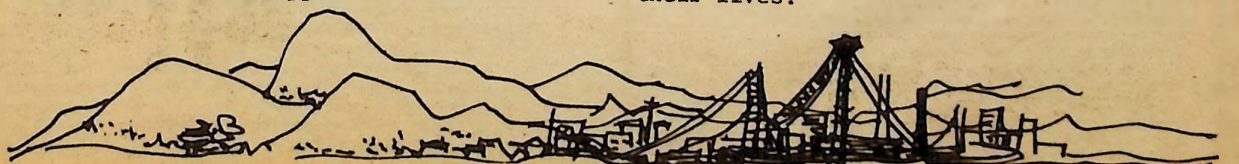
Last year there were more strikes than in 10 years of Mexico's working class history.

Workers attempted to put a stop to union and government corruption by trying to democratize the unions. To name a few cases of repression: the workers from the United Busworkers in the south of the country were machine-gunned, many of the workers of the Monte de Piedad were jailed and are still in jail, the paper factory workers from Loreto y Pena Pobre were also suppressed by the police and the miners of Nacozari by federal troops, and many other incidents occurred which are too numerous to mention in the pages of this newspaper.

The unions for university workers, steel workers, miners, transit workers, peasants, textile workers, auto workers and so on have for the most part corrupt union leaders who keep the workers under repressive statutes, take away the workers' rights, fire them and suspend them from their jobs.

With the support of the government and the companies these leaders are able to remain in their positions for many years.

During the 66 days that we were on strike, we closed the bars. Not one case of controversy occurred nor was anybody jailed. During those days the citizens of Nacozari lived most happily, and we have not forgotten that. It shows us that people live best when they have authority over their lives.



# Pentagon Secret Stash--Trouble Brews

The Defense Department has quietly amassed \$75 billion in funds that were not spent in previous budget years, and the surplus is making some Carter administration officials nervous and liberal members of Congress angry.

Most of the Pentagon's backlog of funds is the result of a decision by Congress to appropriate in one year all the money the Pentagon needs to pay for major weapon programs — like shipbuilding — that run from three to five years.

Pentagon officials assert that the practice is good management. Weapons systems are costly and complex and take a long time to complete, they say. Having funds in the bank so to speak gives needed flexibility.

But two New York Democrats, Representatives Elizabeth Holtzman, a member of the Budget Committee, and Joseph Addabbo, the new chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, disagree. The two are preparing to use the unspent funds to argue for cuts in the 1980 defense budget.

### INFLATION SURGE

At the same time, Carter administration officials are worrying about a surge in the inflation rate if the Pentagon starts to speed up spending to lower its reserve of unspent funds. Such a surge, they privately concede, would just about kill the President's program to control inflation.

The budget proposed by Carter to meet the nation's defense needs in 1980 is \$125.8 billion, an increase of \$13.5 billion or 12 percent—over the present defense budget.

Defense was the only department in government to win a substantial increase in Carter's "lean and austere" budget, which contained reductions or no increases over inflation for most government agencies.

But the Pentagon is the only agency with a whopping account of appropriated but unspent funds. Other agencies either have no such account or very limited funds carried over from one fiscal year to the next.

Holtzman contends, in a report to the Budget Committee, that by the end of fiscal 1980 the amount of money the Pentagon has received but has not spent will reach about \$99 billion, a figure that is more than the total defense budget for 1977.

"The obvious implication of (the surplus) is that the Pentagon has consistently and increasingly overestimated its ability to obligate and spend its annual appropriations and has been overestimating its yearly need for additional new funds," Holtzman said.

### "CALLOUS"

Holtzman called the President's proposed budget increase for the military "indefensible" and "callous," since the additional funds would be made available by cutting social programs including those de-

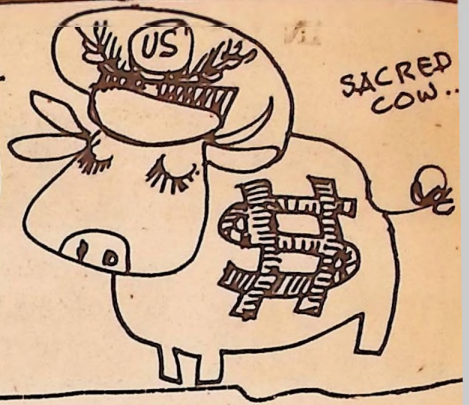
signed to help the elderly and the cities.

She pointed out that the Pentagon budget has increased significantly since the end of the Vietnam war and said the increases not only stimulate inflation but provide more money that can only add to the surplus.

"This sacred cow attitude allows the Pentagon to have the fattest budget in government — about 24 percent of the entire 1980 budget is for defense," Holtzman said.

"We have been raising the defense budget every year, and all we've been doing is subsidizing the appropriations backlog," Addabbo said. "I want to give the Pentagon every weapon it needs and I believe we can cut several billion out of the budget and still do it."

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# Oil Companies Hold US Hostage

WASHINGTON, DC—You don't have to own all the latest appliances, or central heating and air conditioning, or drive the fanciest car in the world to know that energy inflation is raging out of control.

We all pay for it, and the rates seem to go up with each flick of the light switch. From 1970 to 1977, energy prices rose 99 percent—more than twice as fast as the price of non-necessities. Last winter one of every five older Americans had to choose between buying groceries and paying the utility bill. Currently, gas and electricity prices are going up at an annual rate of 17 percent.

The energy industry is highly concentrated. Electric and gas utilities have local monopolies. The eight largest oil companies control 50 percent of domestic oil production, 40 percent of natural gas, and increasing amounts of coal, uranium and alternative fuels.

To argue that reducing the minimum wage or increasing unemployment will hold down gasoline prices or electric rates is economic nonsense.

The problem is that these monopolies are privately owned, and run for profit, not for public need.

The consequences of private ownership of utilities are numerous:

- Big businesses pay less for the utilities they use than residential users, although expensive new equipment goes for special business needs.
- Private utilities make numerous political and charitable contributions in the company's name, and then charge it to the consumer in the form of higher utility bills.
- Private companies overstate the cost of their equipment in an effort to persuade the regulatory agencies to approve higher rates.
- By means of well-financed lobbying efforts, campaign contributions and "personal favors" private utilities often succeed in turning regulatory boards into pro-industry, anti-consumer agencies.

# EVEN THE NEW YORK TIMES SAYS 'SHORTER HOURS'

## Newer Technology, With Little Unemployment

The effect of technological advance on employment has been debated for over 168 years since desperate workers in the textile town of Nottingham, England, led by a certain Ned Ludd wrecked newly invented knitting machines that threatened — so they thought — their livelihood. The mill owners of course disagreed and were supported by economists who proceeded to "prove" once and for all that unemployment caused by technology can be nothing but an illusion.

There were, however, notable exceptions, among them John Stuart Mill (the author of "On Liberty") who, after arguing first that workers displaced by machines in one line of production would necessarily find equally good employment opportunities in some other, later changed his mind and admitted that both the introduction of machines and their increase in numbers and efficiency can, indeed, depress the aggregate demand for labor.

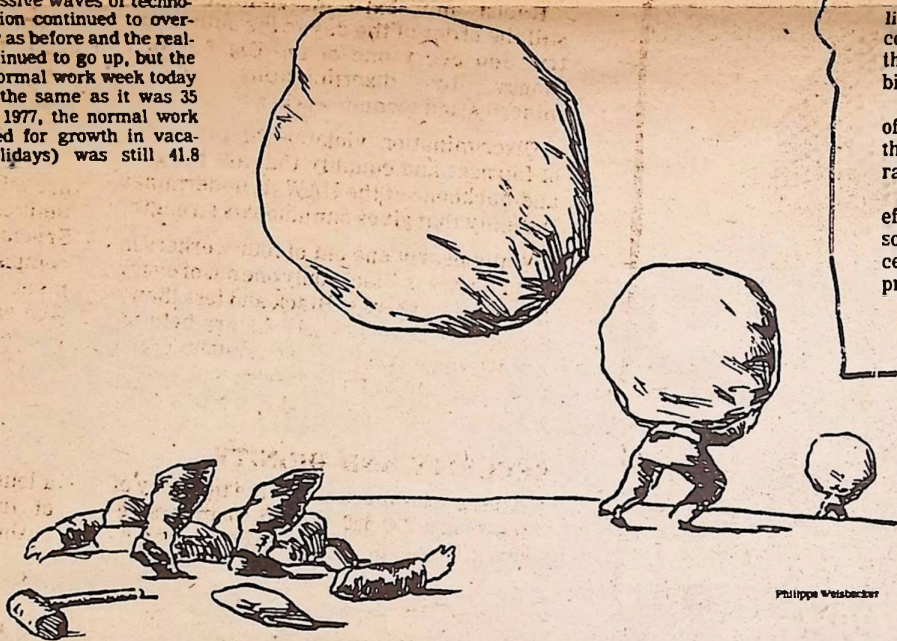
Technological advance is uneven. Some sectors of the economy are more affected by it than others; some types of labor are replaced faster than others. Less-skilled workers, in many instances but not always, go first; skilled workers, later. Computers taking on the jobs of white-collar employees perform first simple, then increasingly complex mental tasks.

From the time that the steam engine was invented, successive waves of technological innovation have brought about an explosive growth of total output accompanied by rising per-capita consumption and, up until the middle 1940's, a progressive shortening of the normal working day, working week and working year. Although increased leisure (and for that matter cleaner air and purer water) is not included in the official count of goods and services used to measure the gross national product, it has certainly contributed greatly to the well-being of blue-collar workers and salaried employees.

Moreover, the reduction of the average work week in manufacturing, from 67 hours in 1870 to 42 hours in the middle 1940's, combined with longer schooling amounted to a large-scale withdrawal from the labor market of many millions of working hours. At the end of World War II, the situation changed. Successive waves of technological innovation continued to overtake each other as before and the real-wage rate continued to go up, but the length of the normal work week today is practically the same as it was 35 years ago. In 1977, the normal work week (adjusted for growth in vacations and holidays) was still 41.8

By Wassily Leontief

tural, as contrasted with passing cyclical, unemployment. Some advocates of full-employment policies have proposed that labor-in-



THE NEW YORK TIMES, MARCH 6, 1979

Wassily Leontief, who won the Nobel Prize for Economic Science in 1973, is director of the Institute for Economic Analysis at New York University.

hours. This means that we have to face the prospect of technological unemployment's turning from its past benign "voluntary" state into a virulent involuntary phase. With this would come an inevitable increase in the social tensions resulting from the slowly but steadily increasing pressure of struc-

tensive processes be given preference over labor-saving technologies. If administered persistently, such Luddite medicine would slow down technical progress and bring about difficulties even more menacing to the health of our economic and social system than the disease that it is intended to cure.

Stepped-up investment can certainly provide additional jobs for people who otherwise would be unemployed. However, under conditions of labor-saving technological advance, creation of one additional job 20 years ago might have required \$10,000; today, \$20,000; and 20 years from now easily \$50,000, or more, even if inflation is controlled. A high rate of investment is indispensable to satisfy the expanding needs of a growing society. But it can make only a limited contribution to solution of the problem of involuntary technological unemployment, particularly since the greater the rate of capital investment, the higher the rate of introduction of new labor-saving technology.

One must conclude that it would be sensible to explore the possibility of resuming the interrupted process of the gradual reduction of the length of the labor day, labor week and labor year — or even labor life.

Once, voluntary sharing of technological unemployment — that is, pro-

gressive shortening of work time — was accompanied by a steady rise not only of hourly wage rates and monthly salaries but also of total annual, and even lifetime, take-home income. It appears that because of the greatly expanded opportunities to replace labor by increasingly sophisticated machinery, the impersonal forces of the market will not favor this solution any more. But humans are not horses — they can reason, and in our democratic society they can vote.

Up to the middle 1940's, American families chose, as their real income rose, to enjoy it not only through increased consumption but in the form of a shorter work week and more leisure. Without the increase in leisure time, the educational and cultural advances that have marked the first 40 years of the 20th century would not have been possible. Americans probably would have continued to absorb potential technological unemployment in this voluntary way had real wages risen during the next 40 years even faster than they have.

Government policies designed to bring about a steady rise in real wages sufficiently large to induce workers and employers to resume continuous voluntary reduction in the length of the normal work week once could have been considered. Under present condi-

tions, such policies would require so large an increase in labor's share of the total national income that there would be a decline in productive investment, and this would result in an unacceptable slowdown of economic growth. The other alternative policy consists of a two-pronged approach combining direct action toward progressive reduction in the length of the normal work week with income policies designed to maintain and steadily increase the real family income of wage earners and salaried employees.

We are already practicing such income policies by gradual changes in the structure of our tax system and through Social Security, medical insurance, welfare payments and unemployment benefits. The system should be redesigned and expanded so as to reduce the contrast between those who are fully employed and those who are out of work. Let us remember the widespread European practice of paying supplemental benefits to wage earners who work less than the normal number of hours per week.

A reasonable and effective response to the incipient threat of involuntary technological unemployment should aim at bringing about an equitable distribution of jobs and income without, however, obstructing, even indirectly, technological advance.



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# A program for production workers



## AUTO WORKERS ACTION CAUCUS PROGRAM

### PUT SOME BREAD ON THE TABLE

Reject Carter's 7 per cent wage guidelines. A wage increase big enough to catch up, get ahead, and stay ahead. All increases across the board.

### GET THE COMPANY OFF OUR BACKS

Settle the grievances on the shop floor. Right to strike on grievances, production standards, and health and safety issues without sanction from the international union. Innocent until proven guilty. One steward for every foreman. Health and safety committees with the power to shut down any unsafe job.

### CUT THE DAY BUT NOT THE PAY

End forced overtime. 32 hours work for 40 hours pay.

### UNITE TO FIGHT

Defend and extend affirmative action hiring programs for minority and women workers. More on the job training and apprenticeship programs. Real economic equality for all auto workers. End racial and sexual harassment. Strengthen Fair Employment Practices Committees.

### SECURITY FOR RETIRED WORKERS

Cost of living allowances for pensioners.

### BREAD ON THE TABLE

Last year the Big 3 made \$14 million in after tax profits every day, including Sundays. Speed up, job combination, forced overtime, harassing the hell out of us, and raising new car prices brought record profits to the auto companies.

At the same time auto workers took record losses in their standard of living. Inflation ran at 9 per cent last year, 12 per cent on necessities. January 1979 has already seen a jump in the cost of living of

### COMPANY OFF OUR BACKS

The power of the union has to be brought back to the shop floor. Grievances have to be settled when and where they happen. We have to have the right to strike on grievances, production standards, and health and safety issues without waiting for sanction from the international union. The shop steward system has to be able to give us day to day representation. We need one steward for every foreman.

### CUT THE DAY - NOT THE PAY

Ending forced overtime would let us make the choice between working extra hours and spending more time with our families.

A 32 hour work week for 40 hours pay could begin to give us a fairer share of the Big 3's prosperity.

Taken together, ending forced over-

### UNITE TO FIGHT

Racist and sexist discrimination are still the order of the day in the auto industry, and every one of the Big 3 makes money by discriminating against minority and women workers.

Discrimination violates the principles of fairness and equality that are the guts and backbone of the UAW. It undermines the unity that gives our union its strength.

While nearly one out of four workers in the industry is Black, only one out of every 15 skilled workers is Black and less than 2 out of every 100 skilled jobs are held by women. As a result, large numbers of the most militant of our brothers and sisters are forced into a second class economic

### SECURITY AND DIGNITY

After a lifetime of work, the majority of our union's 300,000 retired members receive pensions of only about \$250 a month-

1.3 per cent, the biggest in 4 years.

Carter's wage guidelines and "real wage insurance" have to be rejected outright. Keeping the current level of benefits will use up most of Carter's 7 per cent, and no Congress full of millionaires is going to give us real wage insurance. What they give, they can take away. Our only wage insurance is the strength of our union and contract.

Under the law you're supposed to be innocent until proven guilty. We should have the same protection when we're up against the foreman. No discipline without negotiation.

We have to have health and safety committees that can give us protection, and the only thing the company will understand is the power to shut down any unsafe job.

time and the 32 hour week could create over 200,000 jobs in the auto industry immediately. Our jobs would be more secure. The 100,000 auto workers laid off since 1974 could come back to work. Opportunities could be opened up for those who have been denied the dignity of a job, and our union made stronger with more members and friends in the community.

### status within the industry.

This second class citizenship will not go away by itself - it will take a fight by our union to end it. Affirmative action programs - with quotas and timetables - are necessary to overcome discrimination.

Pre-apprenticeship training programs are necessary to make upgrading opportunities available to production workers. Special steps must be taken to put a stop to company-inspired campaigns of harassment aimed at driving minority and women - especially minority women - workers out of these programs and even out of the plant.

a lousy \$3000 a year. Retirees need a cost of living allowance on pensions as a cushion against inflation.

### IT'LL TAKE A FIGHT TO WIN

The Big 3 started their take away campaign during the 1976 contract negotiations. We can expect more of the same this year, now that they've got Jimmy Carter backing them up with his wage guidelines.

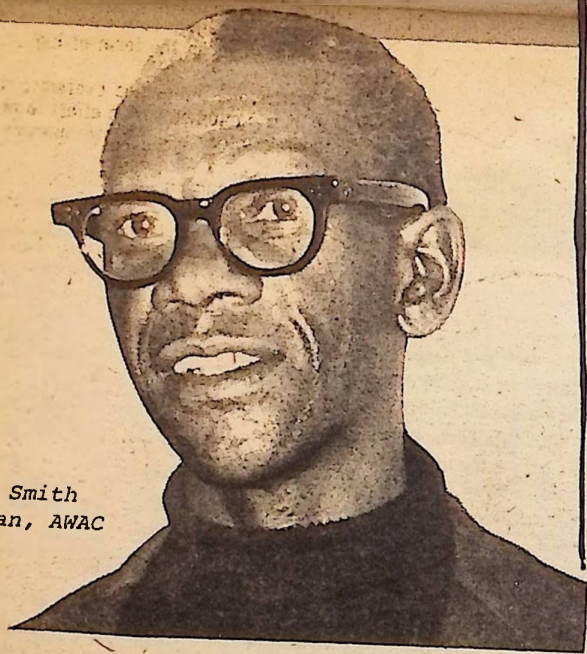
But we can win. The coal miners did it last year here in the U.S., and Ford workers in England won a 17 per cent wage increase last winter.

### UNITY IS THE KEY

We're not saying it will be easy, and we know that the Big 3 will eat us alive if we allow ourselves to be divided - or if we fail to put economic equality for all auto workers at the heart of our demands. We can't expect minority and women workers to make an all out fight for the union if the union doesn't fight for them.

### ONE OUT - ALL OUT

If the Big 3 want a fight, let's give them one. Strike one - strike them all. Why shut one down and let the other 2 keep on raking in profits? Industry-wide bargaining is the only way to make our strength felt and even up the score.



Lasker Smith  
Chairman, AWAC

### WHAT IS AWAC ?

AWAC is an organization of rank and file auto workers in the UAW, founded in 1973.

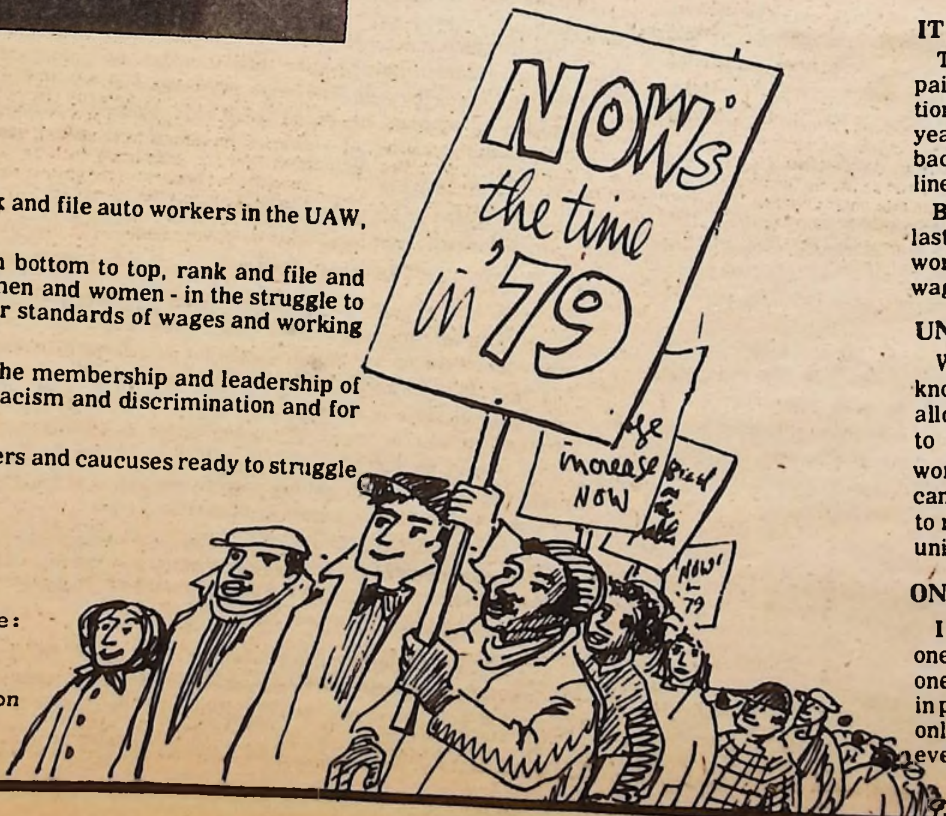
We seek to unite the UAW from bottom to top, rank and file and leaders, Black, white, Hispanic; men and women - in the struggle to defend our union, our jobs, and our standards of wages and working conditions.

AWAC fights to bring together the membership and leadership of our union in the struggle against racism and discrimination and for equality for all workers.

AWAC is open to all UAW members and caucuses ready to struggle for these principles.

For further information write:

AWAC  
Box 09184, Springwells Station  
Detroit, MI 48209



# U.S. tax system unfair to workers

A Labor Today editorial

In recent months the question of taxation-- of who pays and who doesn't -- has become a major political issue. And, after fishing around for issues for years, the right wing has been able to parlay the tax question into a number of important victories. And they're pushing for more.

Make no mistake about it: What the last United Electrical Workers Convention called "general public indignation" over an unfair and heavy tax burden is real -- and justified. According to an AFL-CIO study (we've published a table from that study on this page), combined state and local taxes came to nearly 176 billion dollars in fiscal year 1976-77. More than 112 billion of those dollars--nearly 64 percent -- came from sales and property taxes while only about 5 percent -- less than 10 billion in 1976-77 -- came from taxes on corporate profits.

It's the same way in every state (some states don't even have a tax on corporate profits while every state has some kind of sales tax). Tax laws sock it to working people while often letting corporations and coupon clippers get away with a free ride.

The need for tax reform is there: we are printing the resolutions from the Illinois AFL-CIO and the UE to help give others a handle to get more of the labor movement involved in the fight for tax reform based on the ability to pay.

However, neither resolution speaks to the threat posed by the campaign for a balanced budget. The fact that 28 states have already passed legislation supporting that demand makes the need to stop the threat even more real.

We agree with those who oppose the convening of a Constitutional Convention. Although we don't think that the Bill of Rights would be dismantled in such a Convention, (working men and women insisted that it be included in the first place and we do not think they would sit still for having it taken out now) we do know that there are other ways of balancing the budget.

Deficits don't just happen. They are the result of failure to collect enough income -- (look at all those corporate tax loopholes -- or they are the result of wasting what money is available (like military spending). So solutions to a balanced budget are already available: cut the military budget and raise taxes on corporate profits.

Consider the following: Two Michigan State University economists have examined the "balance of payments" between what people who live in major cities pay in federal taxes and what comes back to those cities in the form of government payments of all kinds. Because of the high level of military spending, every family in New York City and Cleveland paid an average of \$1,800 more in federal income taxes than was returned to the city by the federal government. This money alone would make New York City solvent and would have made it impossible for the banks to force an income tax increase down the throats of Cleveland citizens.



## Where State-Local Tax

STATES	Total State & Local Tax Revenue (millions)	STATE SALES TAX		
		Total	General	Selective
U.S. Totals (millions) % of Total	\$175,878.7	\$52,362.3	\$30,895.9	\$21,466.4
		29.7	17.3	12.0
Alabama	1,870.7	48.5	24.3	24.2
Alaska	934.4	7.1	—	7.1
Arizona	1,897.8	37.4	26.5	10.9
Arkansas	1,059.3	46.3	25.9	20.4
California	23,842.9	25.2	18.1	7.7
Colorado	2,157.6	25.5	16.7	8.8
Connecticut	2,750.9	38.3	21.2	17.1
Delaware	482.7	14.3	—	14.3
Florida	5,309.2	45.5	26.3	19.2
Georgia	3,074.7	36.9	22.4	14.5
Hawaii	872.1	51.0	39.1	11.9
Idaho	547.9	32.1	19.0	13.1
Illinois	9,674.0	31.1	19.0	12.1
Indiana	3,477.6	41.2	30.1	11.1
Iowa	2,155.2	26.5	16.1	10.4
Kansas	1,892.3	30.8	19.3	11.5
Kentucky	2,079.1	40.3	22.3	18.0
Louisiana	2,424.0	35.1	19.9	15.2
Maine	714.1	41.4	23.8	17.7
Maryland	3,691.8	26.8	12.6	14.2
Massachusetts	5,792.8	20.3	7.6	12.7
Michigan	8,016.8	27.0	17.5	9.5
Minnesota	3,601.7	27.3	13.0	14.3
Mississippi	1,260.1	55.6	37.7	17.9
Missouri	2,923.5	31.8	20.4	11.4
Montana	582.7	14.2	—	14.2
Nebraska	1,208.1	28.4	16.4	11.9
Nevada	564.8	45.6	20.5	25.1
New Hampshire	525.0	21.7	—	21.7
New Jersey	6,826.6	23.0	13.4	9.7
New Mexico	743.2	50.6	34.6	16.0
New York	22,444.8	17.6	9.9	7.8
North Carolina	3,275.2	34.5	15.6	18.8
North Dakota	445.1	37.0	24.8	12.3
Ohio	6,856.6	31.1	16.6	14.5
Oklahoma	1,681.9	29.3	12.2	17.1
Oregon	1,884.5	8.5	—	8.5
Pennsylvania	9,074.6	30.9	16.8	14.1
Rhode Island	741.3	34.4	19.1	15.2
South Carolina	1,578.6	45.0	26.3	18.7
South Dakota	433.6	40.1	23.3	16.8
Tennessee	2,425.0	46.5	30.2	16.3
Texas	8,178.3	38.9	20.7	18.2
Utah	827.0	37.1	27.4	9.7
Vermont	391.3	28.9	8.3	20.5
Virginia	3,488.1	28.2	12.3	15.9
Washington	3,004.0	52.9	39.0	13.9
West Virginia	1,157.1	56.0	38.7	17.3
Wisconsin	4,048.3	26.0	16.5	9.5
Wyoming	401.3	33.0	23.6	9.5

Lines may not total 100% due to rounding. Source: AFL-CIO Department of Research calculations based

### TAX REFORM

Adopted by 43rd UE Convention, 1978

The passage of Proposition 13 in California reflects the general public indignation against the heavy and unfair burden of federal state and local taxes. Unable to translate that indignation into a fight for real tax reform that would make the rich and the corporations pay their share without having to reduce services, California voters lashed out at the tax easiest to challenge—that on their homes.

The net result of Proposition 13 has been to cut local services such as parks, schools, libraries, police and fire protection, sanitation, health and other services. The victims of these cutbacks are the workers laid off and the people deprived of services, especially in poor and working class areas. Landlords, in general, are not passing along property tax cuts by reducing rents.

Each week, federal, state and local taxes take 11 hours pay out of our wages.

In 1960 corporations paid 24.2% of all federal taxes. By 1976 after pressuring for additional deductions, credits and other loopholes, corporations paid only 15.5% of all taxes. 34.5% of all taxes collected by the government were withheld from workers' paychecks in 1960. By 1976 this figure rose to 41%.

While corporations are supposed to pay income taxes at a 48% rate, the effective rate for billion-dollar corporations is less than 30%, including several cases of corporations paying no income taxes whatsoever.

Sensing a popular issue, politicians, especially those who have always fought against recognition of the people's needs by government, are jumping on the Proposition 13 bandwagon with all kinds of fraudulent tax cut schemes. None of these phony politicians deal with the three major causes of high taxes on working people.

1. The shift of tax burdens by both political parties from the rich and their corporations onto the backs of working people.
2. The bloated military budget.
3. Corruption, graft and waste that permeates every level of government.

Instead, their goal is to reduce those government programs that genuinely serve people's need while keeping those programs and tax loopholes that line

their pockets and those of their rich and corporate friends and sponsors.

Politicians in each community and state try to outdo each other in giving tax breaks to big business. Their argument is that such giveaways are needed to attract and keep industry and, therefore, jobs in the area.

In Wisconsin, for example, before the machinery and equipment (M&E) tax exemption went into effect in 1974, residential property owners paid about half of total property taxes collected. Since 1974, this figure has risen to nearly 60%, and is expected to reach 70% by 1982. At the same time, there has been virtually no increase in manufacturing jobs—the excuse, used for this business tax break—and 90% of Wisconsin businesses have said the M&E has made no difference in their employment and location politics.

As in other states, the Wisconsin homeowners cannot shoulder this increasing burden hoisted upon their shoulders by politicians acting on behalf of vested interests. The intent and goals of the M&E, like other state business tax schemes, has been twisted and subverted to serve the business interests at the expense of workers. The effects of the M&E can be viewed the same as all such schemes:

1. Increased residential property taxes.
2. Financially hurt local units of government.
3. Encouraged some manufacturers to "take the money and run."

In the face of such inequities, the Carter Administration and Congress have proposed further giveaways. While proposing a few modest reforms, the Administration tax proposal calls for new investment credits and an outright cut in the corporate income tax rate. Not to be outdone, Congress voted an increase in the regressive social security tax that hits workers hardest, as well as approving further protections for tax shelters and a reduction in the capital gains tax, all of which are designed to benefit upper-income investors and big property owners. It is no coincidence that most congressmen themselves fall into this category.

A major political objective of working people must be to overhaul completely this loophole-ridden tax system which is so grossly unfair to workers and so brazenly favorable to the rich and to the corporations. In connection with federal taxes, therefore, Be It Resolved:

1. All federal income taxes should be based on the ability to pay under a truly progressive tax structure. Such a rate structure should leave intact at least a moderate standard of living as defined by the U.S. Department of Labor.

2. All tax dodges and loopholes should be eliminated.

3. Social security should be based on a progressive tax system on paychecks.

4. Restore the sick pay and workers need every pay.

5. Major tax reductions.

Be it further resolved: that those interests, like the oil and others, who can afford services.

Be it finally resolved: a state the following:

1. Property tax cuts limited with tightening up on wealthy individuals and corporations.
2. Landlords should be relieved from property tax cuts and taxing body of any rate.
3. Cuts in regressive taxes on essentials—food, clothing, etc.
4. State income taxes should be based on ability to pay.



# Revenue Comes From

STATE INCOME TAX	Local Property Tax		All Other	Total Taxes per \$1,000 of Income
	Individual	Corp.		
25,492.5	\$9,173.8	\$60,575.1	\$28,575.0	\$128.17
14.3	5.1	34.3	16.3	
14.0	4.1	9.9	23.4	99.96
22.5	3.8	13.5	53.1	234.83
10.0	2.7	31.5	18.3	144.14
15.5	6.3	22.0	9.9	101.78
15.2	6.9	40.2	12.5	154.93
15.7	3.7	38.0	17.0	129.72
2.2	7.3	46.6	5.6	119.97
34.8	6.0	16.2	28.7	117.96
—	3.7	32.3	18.5	104.74
16.1	5.6	30.8	10.8	111.50
23.3	3.2	17.1	5.4	140.71
20.5	5.7	32.0	9.7	116.97
14.6	4.0	36.9	13.3	118.99
13.8	2.5	36.5	6.0	105.41
20.7	4.3	38.8	9.8	120.25
12.4	7.2	40.2	9.4	113.24
16.3	6.3	16.6	20.5	112.76
5.5	3.9	18.0	39.4	120.91
10.5	4.9	34.1	9.0	124.39
21.8	3.1	27.8	20.4	129.47
20.6	6.8	49.0	3.3	151.36
18.3	9.8	36.3	8.6	130.39
26.6	7.2	29.8	9.1	146.92
10.5	3.6	21.8	8.5	118.17
13.3	3.6	31.6	19.7	120.60
19.2	4.3	44.6	17.7	136.05
14.1	3.5	45.8	8.2	127.84
—	—	28.1	26.3	129.30
1.4	6.2	60.7	10.0	106.23
10.4	4.9	5.1	56.5	126.06
3.6	3.9	16.0	25.8	119.54
20.2	5.8	35.7	20.7	176.84
23.9	6.2	22.4	13.0	109.83
12.4	4.9	32.2	13.5	118.35
9.0	4.6	37.3	18.0	99.44
12.9	4.2	22.5	31.1	106.53
29.8	4.8	44.5	12.4	129.25
13.0	7.3	25.4	23.3	118.80
14.0	5.5	40.4	5.7	126.37
18.4	6.7	23.1	6.8	107.67
—	0.5	48.8	10.6	123.46
0.9	6.4	25.1	21.0	107.27
—	—	36.0	25.1	105.61
19.1	3.0	29.2	11.5	125.88
18.0	4.3	40.7	8.1	151.84
20.8	4.8	28.1	18.5	108.69
14.2	2.0	18.0	26.1	122.34
28.3	6.2	32.1	9.8	116.39
—	—	38.5	7.4	143.61
—	—	—	28.5	154.76

Bureau of Census data for fiscal year 1977.

## AFL-CIO AMERICAN FEDERATIONIST

for the corporations and the wealthy must

out of general tax revenues from a truly

social security deductions from workers'

possible by cutting the military budget.

ation be supported to shift the tax burden

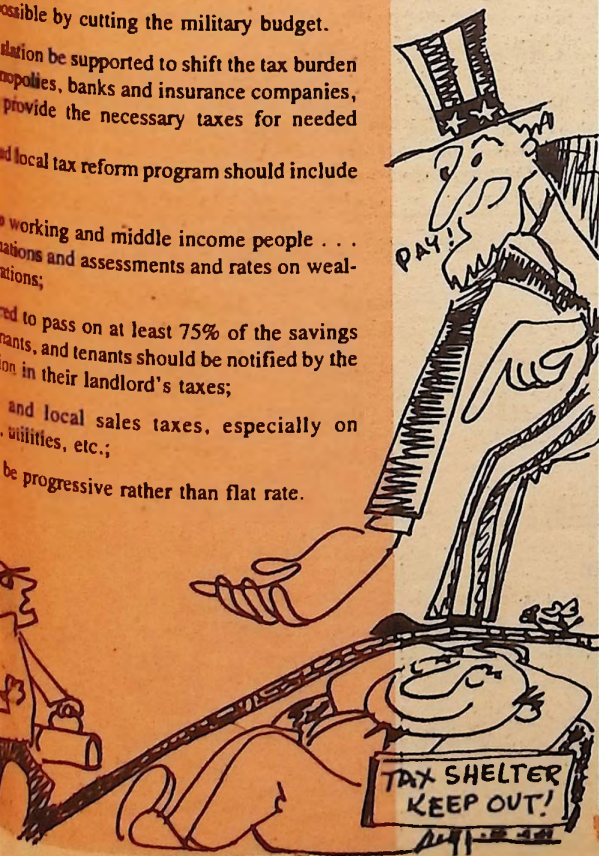
and local tax reform program should include

working and middle income people . . .

and tenants should be notified by the

and local sales taxes, especially on

progressive rather than flat rate.



# RESOLUTION

from Illinois AFL-CIO 21st Annual Convention, 1978

WHEREAS, President Carter characterized the present tax laws as "a national disgrace," with workers being forced to shoulder a larger and larger share of the tax burden while wealthy individuals and corporations pay proportionately less and less; and

WHEREAS, Those who now evade their just share of taxes through a number of loopholes which allow the rich and the corporations to evade at least \$100 billion in tax payments; and

WHEREAS, Other tax breaks, such as those on the foreign income of corporations also are responsible for most of the jobs "exported" from the United States in recent years; and

WHEREAS, One of the major political objectives of the labor movement must be a complete overhaul of the present tax system—at both state and national levels, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Convention of the Illinois AFL-CIO State Council calls for a Federal tax system based on the principle

of ability to pay and recommends the following revisions in present law:

1. Abolition of any income tax on families earning less than the so-called "moderate" budget as defined by the Dept. of Labor.
2. End all depletion allowances, foreign tax credits and other special-interest tax breaks for the wealthy and corporations.
3. Reestablish a steeply graduated tax on all incomes above 100 thousand dollars per year; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That this Convention goes on record in opposition to any "proposition 13" type of tax legislation or initiative which results in cutting social services while reducing taxes on wealthy property owners, and that we instead call for a revised state tax code that will:

1. Abolish all property taxes on owner-occupied single family dwellings.
2. Abolish the sales tax on food,

clothing, drugs and other necessities of life.

3. Replace these taxes with increased taxes on the property and income of the wealthy, with particular emphasis on legislation that will force the corporations, banks and other financial institutions to bear their share of the taxes in the State of Illinois; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That any revisions of the tax code of the State of Illinois empower the State of Illinois to exercise the right of eminent domain in any instance where any corporate entity moves to close any plant in the State in an effort to evade payment of their share of taxes; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That whenever shutdowns of large plants occur, threatening loss of jobs and tax revenue, that in such event the State be empowered to take over through nationalization or other means, to keep the plant in operation and the workers retaining their jobs.



# YOUR TAX DOLLAR



33.5¢ MILITARY

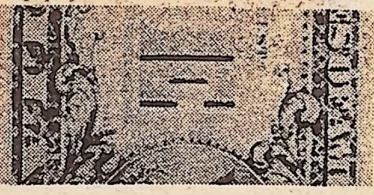
52.5¢ PAST & FUTURE WARS



5.3¢ VETERANS



13.7¢ INTEREST ON DEBT



17.1¢ MEDICAID, WELFARE & JOBLESS BENEFITS



10.0¢ GENERAL GOVERNMENT & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



7.3¢ EDUCATION, TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT



7.0¢ NATURAL RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY



6.1¢ TRANSPORTATION, INDUSTRY & AGRICULTURE

THE CARTER BUDGET for fiscal 1980 of \$531.6 billion lists \$147.3 billion for Social Security and Medicare. These items don't belong in the budget as they are self-financed. We have subtracted them in order to show how the people's tax dollar is spent on a budget of \$384.3 billion.

ADOPTING TRICK ARITHMETIC first thought up by President Lyndon Johnson to cover up the cost of the Vietnam War, the Carter Administration has released budget figures that show Social Security to be a major part of government income and expenditures.

In the process, paying for past and future wars is presented as being a much smaller part of government costs than it is.

An accurate presentation of government income and expenditures, however, does not include Social Security. As every worker knows only too well, Social Security is a self-financed system with

deductions taken out of the paycheck on top of the federal income tax deduction.

It is not part of federal income because it cannot, by law, be used to finance anything but Social Security payments.

In presenting the budget the way it has, the Administration attempts to mislead the country into thinking that "payments to individuals," basically Social Security, rather than military costs are the source of the federal deficit. It is the basis of the Carter Administration's proposals to cut Social Security.

UE NEWS, February 19, 1979

# BLS giving us b-l-s . . .

It was either Mark Twain or Will Rogers who said, "There are figures, statistics and outright lies."

Although it matters not who said it, statistics published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics do matter, and have a direct bearing on the living standards of millions of workers.

For instance, the Consumer Price Index is used to determine the cost of living allowance due under many union contracts. The impact of the BLS Weekly Spendable Income figure is less direct. But, by hiding the declines in spendable income, the Bureau is a party to a deliberate campaign meant to convince the "public" that workers are doing okay.

This article from *Economic Notes* exposes some of the distortions used by the BLS.

A year's sub to *Economic Notes* costs \$5.00 and can be ordered from EN at 80 E. 11th St., New York, New York 10003.

## REAL SPENDABLE WAGES

More attention must be paid to the government's method of measuring real spendable wages now that Washington is attempting to link maximum wage increases to projected price increase goals. Thus the government claims that a 7% average money wage increase will prevent real spendable wages from declining if inflation is also limited to 7%. This is a fraud.

The fact is that the government's method of computation deliberately causes the real spendable earnings of employed workers to be overstated. . . and the difference between claim and reality is rapidly increasing.

### Tax Bite Too Small

Why is this increasing difference occurring? First, the BLS allows for smaller deductions from workers' paychecks for federal income tax than are provided by the standard government-authorized tables supplied to employers, and that difference has been widening. Second, the BLS makes no allowance for state and local income and social insurance tax deductions. These taxes, all on a local level, have been increasing rapidly and now amount, on the average, to 3% of paychecks, compared with 1% in 1965.

### LRA Computations Reflect Reality

LRA calculations make the tax adjustment using the estimated total federal, state, and local income taxes and social insurance taxes deducted from wage and salary workers' paychecks, less estimated tax refunds. They show that the direct tax bite on workers increased from 14.6% of gross wages and salaries in 1965, to 21.9% in 1977, and 22.8% in the third quarter of 1978. These calculations are based upon data contained in the national income and product tables supplied by the U.S. Department of Commerce. (Complete tables by year with technical details will be supplied by LRA upon request.)

After the total tax factor has been computed (e.g. 21.9% in 1977) it is then applied as a deduction to the average weekly earnings of private non-farm production or non-supervisory employees earnings which the BLS has reported. The resulting spendable weekly earnings series is corrected to 1967 prices by application of the BLS index of consumer prices for urban wage earners and clerical employees. This is shown in the table below.

ings of private non-farm production or non-supervisory employees earnings which the BLS has reported. The resulting spendable weekly earnings series is corrected to 1967 prices by application of the BLS index of consumer prices for urban wage earners and clerical employees. This is shown in the table below.

### Wishful Thinking Exposed

Using LRA's corrected method of figuring real spendable earnings, some wide discrepancies show up. Thus, while the Bureau of Labor Statistics claims that real spendable wages have had a generally flat but overall slightly upward trend since 1965, except for a bulge in 1971-73 and a decline in 1978, LRA's calculations show that a decline has been underway since the mid-1960s, with only a temporary interruption during the early 1970s.

According to calculations based on all wage and salary workers, prepared for LRA by LRA board member Victor Perlo, the actual decline in real spendable wages has been sharp, totalling 6.8% since 1965. BLS figures, on the other hand, indicate an increase of 1.6% for workers with no dependents and 0.8% for those with three dependents.

### Differences Increasing

The difference between the BLS computation of the average employed worker's real spendable earnings and the LRA computation has been increasing. As of 1965, the LRA figure was \$85.90 (in 1967 dollars) compared with the BLS figure of \$91.32 for a worker with 3 dependents—a gap of \$5.42 or 6.3% more than the LRA figure. By the third quarter of 1978, the gap had grown to \$11.98, or 15.0%, as the LRA real earnings figure declined to \$80.09 and the BLS figure rose to \$92.07. This is shown in Table I where the dollar figures given are computed in dollars deflated to 1967 buying power—that is, with dollars having constant buying power and buying what they could have bought in 1967.

TABLE I  
REAL SPENDABLE WEEKLY EARNINGS

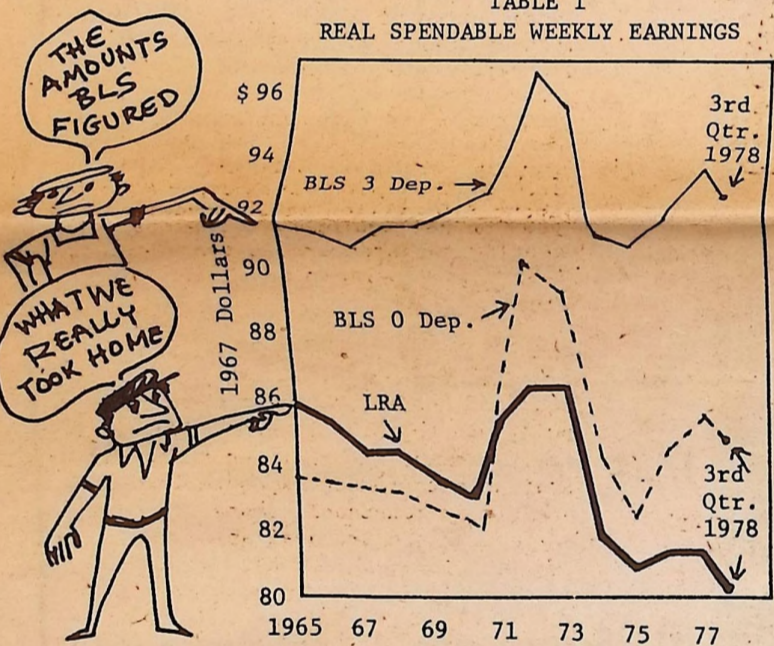
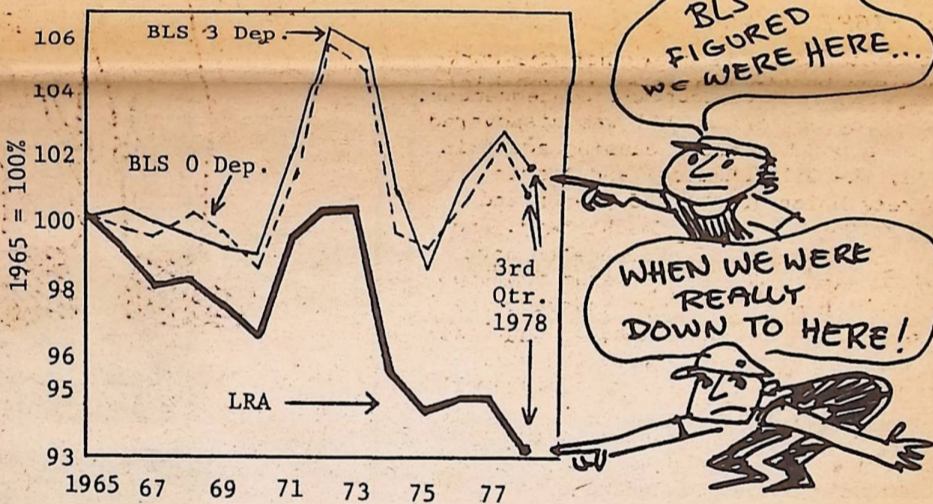


TABLE II  
PERCENT CHANGE IN REAL SPENDABLE EARNINGS  
(as calculated by LRA & BLS)  
1965 = 100%



### "No Dependents" Series Also Affected

The growing discrepancy between the BLS's figures and reality is also apparent in the BLS's series for workers with no dependents. In this case, the gap between the LRA and the BLS figures in 1965 was \$2.31—with LRA's figures 2.8% higher. By the third quarter of 1978, LRA's real earnings figure fell significantly below that of the BLS—\$4.81 or 5.7%. This resulted from the BLS figure rising 1.6% over this period of time while the LRA figure fell 6.8%.

Table II shows the widening gap between LRA and BLS figures since 1965 by placing the 1965 real spendable wage estimates of LRA and BLS equal to each other and showing the

growing gap which has since emerged. Thus, the percentage gaps between the BLS figures and the LRA figures, compared with the 1965 situation, are clearly shown. Since 1965, the gap between the LRA and BLS figures has grown 7.6% for the BLS three dependents figures and 8.4% for the no dependents figures.

### Accurate Computations Essential

Because of the increasing importance of accurate computation of real spendable wages—with voluntary controls on stage and mandatory controls waiting in the wings—Labor Research Association will publish the corrected series quarterly, as the *LRA Real Spendable Earnings Series*.



TAXES DEDUCTED FROM WORKERS' PAYCHECKS, AND TOTAL WAGES AND SALARIES  
(billions of \$)

Year	Federal Income Tax	State & Local Income Tax	Social Insurance Tax	Total Taxes	Wages & Salaries	Taxes as % of Wages & Salaries
1965	35.6	4.0	13.3	52.9	362.0	14.6
1977 <sup>P</sup>	126.2	27.8	61.0	215.0	983.6	21.9
1978 (3rd Qtr.)	151.4	31.3	70.4	253.1	1,110.9	22.8

LRA AND BLS REAL SPENDABLE EARNINGS

Year	Gross Earnings	% Tax Deductions	Spendable Weekly Earnings	Consumer Price Index (1967=100)	LRA Real Spendable Earnings (1967 \$)	BLS Real Spendable Earnings (1967 \$)	3 Dep.	0 Dep.
1965	\$ 95.06	14.6	\$ 81.18	94.5	\$85.90	\$91.32	\$83.59	
1977 <sup>P</sup>	188.79	21.9	147.44	181.5	81.23	93.49	85.72	
1978 (3rd Qtr.)	205.21	22.8	158.42	197.8	80.09	92.07	84.80	

<sup>P</sup>Preliminary. Quarterly figures are seasonally adjusted.  
\*Production or Non-Supervisory Workers, Private Non-Farm.

# Making workplace safer, cleaner

by JOEL SCHWARTZ  
 Ass't. Prof., Occupational & Environmental Medicine, U. of Illinois

Big business has been attempting to justify its frontal attacks on OSHA, and occupational health and safety regulations by telling workers they will be hurt by stringent enforcement of health and safety rules. According to this argument, workers fighting to improve health and safety conditions will injure themselves by causing their plant to be shut down or workers laid off. They will also hurt other workers because the cost of cleanup will be passed along to consumers in the form of higher prices, thus fueling inflation, cutting real wages, and threatening more unemployment. U.S. Steel claims it is shutting the foundry at Southworks' because of the "excessive cost of compliance with Government regulations." The need to fight inflation has been used as justification for the four year delay in the implementation of the new cotton dust standard, and weakening provisions of the rate retention rule in the lead standard.

The big business arguments are all false. While cleaning up the workplace does cost some money, and does cut profits somewhat, the actual cleanup costs are way below the figures cited by the corporations. The predicted plant closings, job losses and economic devastations made before previous regulations were proposed never materialized.

## THE FIGHT ON VC

A few examples will show that the workplace can be cleaned up at reasonable cost without dire economic consequences. When vinyl chloride (VC) was discovered to be a potent cancer causing agent in 1974, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) and the United Rubber Workers (URW) fought hard, and mustered a wealth of evidence to have the VC exposure limit lowered from 50 ppm to 1 ppm. The 1 ppm standard was passed, most companies are by and large in compliance, and despite the dire predictions the industry is doing well.

At the time of the hearing on the emergency standard, industry claimed that it could not meet any standard below 50 ppm and that attempts to force a stricter standard would be ruinous. The Society of Plastics Industry produced a study claiming that implementation of the 1 ppm standard would cost the U.S. economy 2 million jobs and \$65 billion. The "study" claimed that adoption of the union-sought standard would cause the vinyl chloride and the polyvinyl chloride resin producing industries to close immediately, and cause the construction and auto industries to lose 600,000 and 500,000 jobs respectively.

For their part, OCAW and the UPW stuck to their position of a 1 ppm standard as being necessary for health protection. OSHA supported the 1 ppm standard and predicted that compliance would cause a small increase in production cost, but no serious damage to the industry. Labor won the battle, and the 1 ppm standard was adopted.

Two years later the industry was substantially in compliance with the 1 ppm standard. Under pressure to comply, industry quickly developed and added new technology, and improved maintenance to lower exposure. The changes included replacement of batch processing with closed systems, the early detection and plugging of leaks, and the addition of a stripping process to remove vinyl chloride trapped in the polyvinyl chloride resin.

## NO JOBS LOST

The cost of the cleanup turned out to be small, and easily within reach by the vinyl chloride industry. The initial capital investment by the multibillion dollar industry was only \$34 million. Estimates by the Environmental Protection Agency put the costs of compliance at half a cent per pound, or about 2 percent of the cost of polyvinyl chloride resin. Cleanup costs were held down in part because some pollution control devices captured significant quantities of vinyl chloride which otherwise would have been wasted. Typically, costs of cleanup operations can be significantly reduced by the recovery and reuse of toxic wastes.



Meanwhile, business is booming for vinyl chloride producers. Vinyl chloride production has increased 2.3 percent per year since the new standard was introduced, and is projected to increase at 7.5 percent per year through 1983. Since the enactment of the standard, one VC production facility shut down, but this was obsolete, and would have been closed anyway. One new facility was built, and more are contemplated. NO WORKER IN VINYL CHLORIDE PRODUCTION OR FABRICATION LOST A JOB BECAUSE OF THE ENACTMENT OF THE STANDARD.

## A CANCEROUS APPROACH TO COKE OVENS

Another revealing example involves the clean-up of coke ovens. Coke oven workers are exposed to fumes consisting of particulate hydrocarbons, benzene, and sulfur oxides. Top side coke oven workers have lung cancer rates ten times those of other steelworkers. All coke oven workers have high rates of lung cancer, kidney cancer, stomach cancer, lung and heart disease. Additionally lung cancer rates among people living in counties with coke ovens are significantly higher than among people living in neighboring counties without coke ovens.

Despite this incredibly high death toll the steel industry has fought tooth and nail all attempts to lower worker exposure to coke oven emissions. It tried to get rid of the previous standard of .2 mg/m<sup>3</sup> benzene soluble fraction of emissions, and has continually challenged the new standard.

The new standard of .15 mg/m<sup>3</sup> benzene soluble fraction, which was adopted in 1973, is 75 percent of the previous standard. It was a compromise standard based on the conception that the lowest level the steel industry could feasibly meet was that attained in the mill with the best emissions control record in the U.S., a U.S. Steel plant in Fairfield, Alabama. But in setting the standard, OSHA ignored the existence of technology in use in many steel mills around the world that could feasibly reduce coke oven emissions much further.

Even this relatively weak OSHA standard has been challenged continually by the steel industry. In a recent Federal court suit, the industry tried to have the standard thrown out on the grounds that it was not economically feasible, that the industry had limited economic resources, and that the steel industry was facing a severe crisis with the chance of bankruptcy, layoffs and plant closings.

## LESS THAN 1% OF COST OF STEEL

The Federal court upheld the standard saying that meeting it would not be a hardship on the steel industry. It requires such technological changes as the availability of spare doors, the installation of devices for rapid movement of coal into ovens, mechanized cleaners for equipment, and a pressure control system on the coke batteries. The Council on Wage and Price Stability estimated that the implementation of this standard would cost the steel industry \$200 million per year, compared to the about \$15 billion it is investing per year on new equipment. The cost of meeting the standard is considerably less than 1 percent of the cost of steel.

But while defending the OSHA standard from industry attacks, many steel workers and health and safety specialists point out that the .15 mg/m<sup>3</sup> level is far too high, and that technology is available to reduce exposure levels greatly at reasonable costs. For example, methods are available which could reduce emissions from the charging and quenching processes by 90 percent, with a total cost of only about 1 percent the cost of steel production. Such systems are currently in use in many steel-producing nations including Japan, West Germany, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia.

In general the steel industry has attempted to place a major blame for recent plant closings on health and safety, and environmental regulations. But the clear evidence is that these accusations are false. First, emissions levels for coke ovens could be reduced to far below that required by the OSHA standard with expenditures of about 1 percent of steel costs, and in the long run some pollution control techniques would result in a savings of money. In other countries steel producers have installed more pollution control devices, met lower standards, and still produce steel more cheaply than their U.S. counterparts. For example, Bernie Bloom, director of the E.P.A. enforcement division, studied pollution control technology in Japan, a nation which produces many types of steel at 80 percent of the cost in the U.S. He concluded: "The Japanese steel industry has installed technology on all its new plants which far surpasses technology in place in the U.S. Every coke oven in Japan has hardware for capturing pushing emissions and desulphurizing coke oven gas." In the Soviet Union use of the dry quenching method is mandatory,



# Support the Newport News strikers!

by Scott Marshall  
National Field Organizer TUAD

The strike by 17,200 shipyard workers in Newport News, Virginia has all the earmarks of a classic labor battle.

A week before the strike began on January 31, Governor John Dalton made it clear that he would throw all the resources of the state, including hundreds of riot equipped, jackbooted state troopers, helicopters and police dogs into the fight on the side of Tenneco's Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company. Poor defenseless Tenneco, listed as the 19th biggest corporation in the Fortune magazine top 500 list, and boasting that the Newport News Shipyard has a "production record unequaled by any other shipyard in the world".

Its a strike for union recognition. The workers voted overwhelmingly for the United Steelworkers union as their bargaining agent. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) validated the election, but Tenneco choose to break the law and refuses to recognize the union. Not surprising to me; I grew up in Virginia.

Virginia is one of the most anti-union, anti-labor states in the South. I remember in high school, discussions around the state "right-to-work" law, and how we had to protect the companies from "greedy" workers and unions that want more than the minimum wage or, God forbid, the right to bargain collectively. And I remember newspaper headlines about organizing drives at Newport News shipyards. And I remember headlines about six shipyard workers killed by a falling elevator.

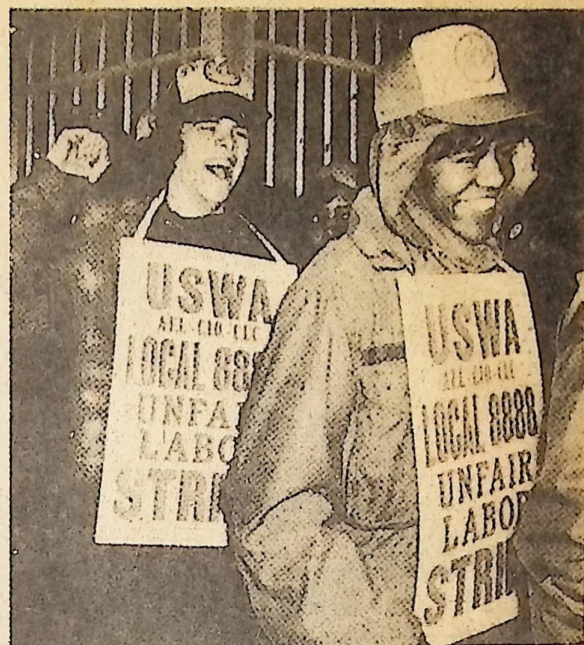
## ACTION!

The Tenneco strikers deserve and need the support of all working people. Write or get your union to write:

Tenneco Newport News Shipyard, Newport News Va.  
Demand that they recognize and bargain with the duly elected Steelworkers union.

Governor John Dalton, Richmond Va. Tell him to call off the troopers, police and their dogs. Get out of the strike breaking business.

President Carter, White House, Washington DC.  
Urge him to cancel all government contracts with Tenneco until they obey the law and deal with the union.



Newport News was a different town on March 1, 1979. Thousands of trade unionist from around the country turned out to a support rally and march for the strikers of locals 8888 and 8417 of the United Steelworkers union. The Steelworkers' International office had put out the call throughout the union for supporters to come to Virginia. Busloads came from Chicago, Gary, Youngstown, Pittsburg, Buffalo, and Baltimore. There was strong support from local unions and delegations from the National Education Association, the Teamsters, the Plumbers and the Firefighters unions.

They came because they understood that beating Tenneco is crucial to the labor movement and to any real effort to organize the South. It was an old fashioned solidarity day. In fact some of the old timers in the Steelworkers union told me they hadn't seen that kind of militancy and spirit since the thirties. They said it was the first time they could remember the union mobilizing from all over the country to support an organizing strike.

It reminded me of the civil rights marches of the sixties. That sleepy Southern town was alive with chanting, singing, laughing and high enthusiasm. The marchers were checkerboard Black and white, united with a real sense of togetherness in the struggle. They weren't about to let race divide them as it had in previous organizing attempts. A Black picket captain told me that the times are changing.

It was sure good to go back home.