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Transit Strike
An Analysis
by Walter Linder

A PROGRESSIVE LABOR PAMPHLET

New York Transit Strike 1966

If a visitor from outer space had dropped into New York City during the first two weeks of this year and read its press or watched its TV newscasts, he would have concluded that some plague had probably descended upon the populace. Screaming headlines and the anguished cries of newscasters presented an hysterical picture of subway motormen and bus drivers holding a knife at the throat of eight million New Yorkers. This hysteria culminated in a statement by a judge—in ruling that the transit workers had struck in violation of the law—that their unjustified demands were “holding the city for ransom.”(!)

For our visitor to get an accurate picture of just what was going on, and why, he would not only need to talk to the workers themselves, but would have to examine the total background from which such a struggle could grow and produce such a reaction.

In the past twenty years, United States imperialism has embarked on a long-range strategic plan to dominate the world. To accomplish this goal, it has made as one of its chief tasks the “securing of the home front” against interference with this plan.

This attempt at domestic security has spawned the destruction

of left leadership in the labor movement, replacing it with the Meany-Reuther type of servant to do the bosses’ bidding while sometimes mouthing forceful phrases. It helped to bury militant actions by the workers in their immediate interests—aims such as job security and keeping pace with a skyrocketing cost of living. It also allowed the bosses to build their bankrolls for continued re-investment at home and abroad, secure in the knowledge that American workers would not have the unity, organization or leadership to upset the apple cart.

Strikes—the major weapon of trade unions under capitalism—became a dirty word, especially if they ran counter to what the White House labeled the “*national interest*.” Negotiated (sellout) settlements became the order of the day, worked out between the business-union leaders and their benevolent bosses.

As U.S. imperialism became directly involved in fighting wars around the globe (Korea, Cuba, Laos, the Congo, and Vietnam), it attempted to insure that strikes did not occur in key sections of the economy that would affect the war effort. It especially strived to keep all settlements within as low a limit as it could set; first, because of its profit motive; and secondly, because it constantly tries

to control inflationary tendencies within the country that threaten to wreck whatever temporary economic stability it has established.

But no matter what cushions or bribery the rulers of the system use, the inherent contradictions arising between them and the working class upset their most carefully laid plans. As the profit motive runs counter to the workers’ quest for job security and higher wages, they began to rear up again, challenging not only the phony “*national interest*” but their own mis-leaders as well.

In the past two years strikes have occurred in major industries, not just for a few days but for weeks and even months. Miners, longshoremen, auto workers, railroaders, aerospace and armament workers, and many more have hit the bricks against the more “reasonable” advice from their own union officials and their “friends in the White House.” In every one of these cases, the determination to stay out until greater gains could be won was based upon rebel rank and file groups among the striking workers who were able to temporarily overcome the sellout leadership foisted on them by their leaders’ support of Cold War policies.

The most recent example of this new turn of events, and perhaps one of the most significant, was the militant strike of 35,000 subway and bus workers in New York City, containing the country’s largest local transit system.

The New York transit worker has been tied into a neat package for the past fifteen years, out of which it has been extremely difficult for him to break. On the one hand he has the responsibility for

the lives of millions of passengers every day of the week. He operates a subway and bus system without which the economy of the City would be strangled. He is forced to work indoors and out, in all weather, under the greatest kinds of pressures, running a transit system that must operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year—probably the only one in the world, of any size, that does so.

He has seen 25 per cent of his co-workers leave their jobs in 12 years without being replaced. He is harassed by one of the highest-paid company spy systems in the country. He has seen safety thrown to the winds, and has one of the highest accident rates of any group of workers in the City. And he has seen workers with less responsibility achieve conditions of which he can only dream.

On the other hand, when he moves to gain some measure of compensation for the special responsibilities and hazards of his work, he is hit with “arguments” that, in effect, accuse him of attempting to pick the pockets of eight million people. He is told that any increase in wages or benefits will raise the fare that passengers have to pay to use the subways; that riders will choose other forms of transportation and he will lose his job; that he will be responsible for increasing the City’s transit deficit and thereby take away money desperately needed for repairs and expansion.

And he is told, contract after contract, by his union leaders, that he has just achieved the “best settlement ever.” This boils down to a conductor earning \$2.95 an hour (about the average wage without overtime), supporting a



wife and two children, taking home around \$93 per week. The government states that such a family needs nearly twenty dollars a week more just for a minimum adequate standard of living. But every other year transit workers have been forced to forego adequate wage increases and benefits (not to mention elimination of harassment, unsafe working conditions and overburdened jobs) because such gains would allegedly lay the basis for a higher fare for the "public."

This built-in lie has become one of the cornerstones by which transit workers have been exploited and should be thoroughly laid to rest before the recent strike is analyzed.

When the subways began operating sixty years ago, they were privately owned. The original fare was three cents. This was later raised to a nickel. The BMT and the IRT were owned by the Rockefeller and Morgan interests.

They constantly pressed for more fare increases but popular resistance prevented the politicians from agreeing to it. As these bankers realized that they couldn't soak the riders through further fare hikes, they concentrated on making their profits in another manner: allowing the equipment and maintenance to go to hell.

Repairs were never made; new cars were not purchased; needed improvements were cut back. The situation got so bad that in 1939 the City was forced to *buy* the subways (and eventually the majority of the bus lines) from the banker - owners; not, of course, *confiscate* them in their decrepit condition, but *pay* the owners \$325,000,000 for them.

Since the City treasury didn't have that kind of money to pay all at once, it was forced to borrow the money from the banks, pay the owners, and then repay the bondholders forever and ever,

principal plus interest. Since 1939 other loans have been made for capital equipment, new cars (not one was purchased from 1936 until 1949!), and a new Second Avenue subway—a \$500 million dollar issue that never produced a single track under Second Avenue but was used for repairs and maintenance that were neglected when the system was privately owned.

Presently the City is paying these bankers - bondholders approximately \$110 million a year, 60 per cent of which is interest—*pure profit*. However, when these obligations could not be met, the bankers and the politicians propagandized the public enough to shove through a doubling of the fare to ten cents in 1948, just to guarantee profits for Morgan and Rockefeller. But as the population grew, and with it the necessity to borrow still more money from the banks to make up for years of neglect, the banker-created "deficit" also grew.

The "solution" became the establishment of the New York City Transit Authority in 1951, enacted into law by the State Legislature under former Governor Dewey (a Rockefeller-Chase Manhattan stooge). The TA was initially composed of five non-salaried members, later reduced to 3 members at \$30,000 each annually. The big gimmick in this Authority was a procedure for a built-in fare increase.

The law stated that the City would continue to pay all capital equipment costs (new cars, stations, buses, etc.) out of its general treasury (much of which comes from the people's taxes). The TA would pay for all opera-

ting costs (wages, power, fuel, materials and supplies, maintenance, etc.) from the collection of fares, but it would not be allowed to borrow from the bankers for capital improvements.

If, however, the income from fares did not cover these operating expenses, the law *required* the Authority to raise the fare to a level that did. Previously the subways had been treated as a public service, to a certain extent, by the City. Increased costs for their operation could be financed, for instance, by raising taxes on real estate. Now this had become impossible. Any increase in operating costs *had* to be paid by a fare hike, rather than, for example, by a moratorium on paying off the banks. That debt was strictly the City's responsibility.

Since the biggest expenses were the wages and benefits of the workers, whenever they asked for a raise, a hue and cry went up that they would "bankrupt" the TA unless the fare was increased. This is exactly what happened in 1953: the fare went up to 15c and gradually all free or nickel transfers from subways to buses were eliminated also, raising the cost of transportation still higher for the workers who had to use mass transit to get to their jobs.

Thus was set up the biggest hoax of all: whenever the transit workers would ask, legitimately, for more money and better conditions, the feelings of the "public"—that is, the rest of the working class, in the main—would be mobilized by the politicians and the bosses' press against them. In this way, a division was created between the transit workers and their

fellow workers in the City.

Those who operated the trains would blame those who rode them for not paying a high enough fare to meet the needs of the transit workers. And those who rode would blame those who operated them for forcing increases in the fare. Meanwhile, the bankers continued to rake in tens of millions of dollars in interest every year, all well-hidden from view.

When the City hit a debt limit in 1962, a special law was passed enabling the Transit Authority itself to borrow \$200 million for capital improvements, with the proviso, of course, that it meet the payments for this loan as its *first* obligation from its income from fares. It promptly borrowed \$95 million, for which it has to pay back \$75 million in interest over a 25-year period. This means another seven million a year to the bankers, added to the City's payment of \$110 million, for a total approaching \$120 million annually.

The original law had mandated a study of the TA after ten years of operation to see if it had ended the transit deficit. Although it hadn't, it was able to become a self-perpetuating body, avoiding this check-up by being allowed to take on this long-term debt which had to be paid before it could dissolve. Again, the bankers came first.

When public pressure was able to maintain the 15c fare, the TA and City Hall, acting on behalf of the bankers, were able to squeeze the riders and the workers in many other ways. They shoved through the sale of the City-owned subway power plants to Con Edison in 1961, which has resulted

in an increased expense of \$14 million a year, paid to this monopoly for power. This also adds to the "deficit," since power costs must be paid from fare income. As transit workers retired, resigned or were fired, the TA did not replace them, causing a reduction of over 11,000 workers in the TA's first 12 years.

This job reduction wrecked havoc with safety on the subway. Preventive maintenance (check-up to *prevent* accidents and neglect) became a thing of the past. Fires and accidents increased. Workers made repairs under the most dangerous conditions, moving around on icy tracks at night on elevated lines, 60 feet above the street, without wooden guards, on the "live" third rails—all because the TA was saving money. Many a worker has been burnt, or has fallen to his death because of this "penny wise and pound foolish" approach which guaranteed bankers' profits at the workers' and riders' expense.

Throughout this period the union leadership, once among the most militant in the labor movement, turned sour, although always maintaining a "fighting face." Mike Quill, once a leader of the American Labor Party and a City Councilman on that ticket, along with other Transport Worker Union officials (many of whom *were* communists), decided not to face up to the Cold War attacks launched by the bosses in league with the Meany-Reuther leadership of the AFL and CIO. They began to give away many of the gains that a fighting left-wing leadership had won in the Thirties and Forties.

Soon the right to protest job

schedules was relinquished (in exchange for the union having the right to check off dues out of members' pay envelopes.) Previously won sick-pay provisions were emasculated. When the TA harrassed the workers with their \$8,000-a-year spies, known as "beakies," (who would report on workers secretly but never face the accused with the specific charges), the union did nothing. The TWU allowed more than ten thousand vacated job positions to remain unfilled.

Until this year it made a great show of threatening to strike every two years, right up until New Year's Eve (contract expiration is always December 31). But it never quite got over the hump, and always accepted far less than it demanded and the workers

needed. The estimated costs of settlement at contract-signing time were often far above what they eventually turned out to be. (In 1960-1961 the prior estimate was \$35,000,000; the actual cost was \$9,000,000. The following contract—1962-63—was supposed to net the workers \$36,000,000; it actually brought them \$24,100,000.)

The workers were drawn into ratifying these contracts through a mail vote completely controlled by union officials. But they did find a way to protest. The motormen wildcatted several times when angered by Quill's ignoring their demands for extra increases in line with their responsibilities. When the 1962 contract was signed, 3,000 workers picketed TWU headquarters, protesting the meager settlement. Two years later,



Quill had to quell a rebellion in Staten Island garages and several other spots to insure ratification.

Finally, it should be realized that since transit workers are not required to be TWU members to hold their jobs, many workers do not join the union in the belief that it is a worthless move. It is estimated that nearly half of the 35,000 subway and bus workers in New York are *NOT* members of the union.

The latest reflection of rebellion in the ranks was evident in the first opposition slate to run in Local 100 (the subway and bus unit) in ten years. An inter-racial rank and file team received 4,000 votes, or 25 per cent of the total—a remarkable amount when considering that the officials' machine completely controls the mail ballot procedure.

With this result ringing in their ears, and with tremendous pressure building up from below for an all-out effort to reverse the sellouts of the past 15 years, the TWU leadership was in a tight spot this time. If it went through its usual hocus pocus and then signed another meager contract just before the old one expired, there was a good chance that the union would lose its grip on the rank and file, who might walk out anyway.

Furthermore, there was tremendous advance publicity from the TA and the City, gleefully spread by the news media, to the effect that not only would it be nearly impossible to grant any increase this year, but that the TA had a \$43 million "deficit" already. By law, it would have to raise the fare to 20 or 25 cents under any

conditions. This added another burden onto the transit workers' heads—the necessity to subsidize the 15c fare by foregoing an adequate raise in wages and benefits, or have a "wrathful public" down on them.

Finally there was the threat of the anti-labor Condlin-Wadlin Law which makes it illegal for government employees to strike in the State and penalizes them with possible loss of their jobs or denial of any increase for three years.

Under such conditions it looked like even less of a package for the transit workers this year than in previous contracts—something possibly approaching an "estimated cost" of \$20 or \$25 million which could reduce to \$10 or \$15 million in actual money terms over the next two years.

There were other lesser factors favoring a strike apart from the workers' own determination to fight a sellout (the main cause of the walkout). One was the absence of a Democrat in City Hall for the first time in twenty years. The labor movement, habitually tied the Democratic Party in the City, was not averse to embarrassing newly-elected Republican Mayor Lindsay in order to make deals with him thereafter (at the workers expense) as had been done with the Democrats for so long.

Another factor was the unique character of Quill himself. Despite his turn to the right 15 years earlier, he had managed to maintain a fighting front by calling strikes first on the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1961, shutting down the country's largest road for 12 days in a job security dispute, as well as on the privately-owned

bus lines in the City on several occasions.

These lesser factors helped push the workers over the top on January 1st when the TA and the City, fronting for the bankers, refused to budge from their position, hardly making an offer at all. The workers shut down the City's subways and buses tighter than a drum at 5 A.M.

Then the pressure really mounted. The TA took the TWU leaders to court, getting an injunction under the Condlin-Wadlin Law and jailing Quill and eight other officials. The press and TV, spurred by dictatorial pronouncements from Lindsay about not selling the City to "power brokers," began to whip up an anti-strike frenzy among the rest of the workers, who underwent a certain amount of hardship during the strike. All the blame was placed on the TWU, with Quill serving as an autocratic image, but with the effect being felt by the transit workers.

The labor leadership, instead of pointing the finger at the real culprits—the banks who are the actual owners of the transit system and who are bleeding it dry—went hat in hand to City Hall asking for the release of Quill. They did nothing to mobilize the City's two million union members on the transit workers' side, nor did they attack the banker-owners. AFL-CIO President Meany kept issuing statements about an "imminent" settlement, which made the union appear at fault if a contract were not signed immediately.

Despite this mis-leadership, the workers turned out 15,000 strong to surround City Hall on January 10th, in one of the most militant strike demonstrations seen in New

York in recent years. Workers from many other unions marched with them, shouting such slogans as "*Lindsay and O'Grady Are Unionbusters*," (O'Grady is the TA Chairman), "*Strike Till Hell Freezes Over*," and "*Jail Lindsay, Free Quill*."

This was their answer to President Johnson's dispatching Labor Secretary Wirtz to NYC to see that the "national interest" wage freeze was maintained; to Lindsay's accusations about "power brokers" and to Rockefeller's veiled hints that he might consider calling out the National Guard to run buses if the strike were not ended soon.

Finally the TA and the City came up with an offer which the union officials felt would be accepted by the workers—estimated at \$52 million by Lindsay, \$60 million by the TA and \$70 million by the union leadership. After the TWU Executive Board endorsed the package, the workers went back on the job (before being allowed to vote on it—this came later by mail ballot.) The strike had lasted 14 days and shut down the world's largest mass transit system; it had City Hall on its knees.

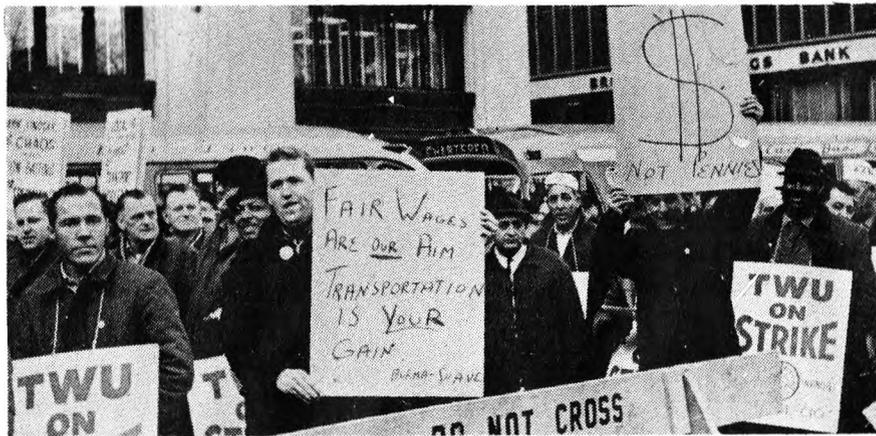
The announced terms included:

- * A four per cent wage increase for 1966; another four per cent for the first six months of 1967; and seven per cent more in the final six months of next year;

- * Pension improvements worth \$3.2 million;

- * Bus drivers' and conductors' uniforms to be paid for by the TA (worth \$800,000);

- * Increases in health and welfare benefits (worth another \$800,



000 more);

* An "adjustment" in working conditions (to be determined) worth \$1 million in 1966 and \$2 million in 1967.

While this was no "big deal" for a group of workers who had been taking it on the chin for 15 years, it was more than their previous contract (seven per cent increase over two years) and it was certainly much more than might have been obtained without striking (without measuring the enhanced power the workers would feel towards the TA once having shown their ability to shut down the system.)

Despite the fact that (as shall be shown shortly) the cost of the contract is far less than "estimated" by Lindsay, the TA or the union, the results produced an immediate effect throughout the country, signifying its importance. Johnson, in delivering his *State of the Union* message, inserted a passage, not in the original text, in which he alluded to the necessity to ban strikes in "essential industry." Both he and Wirtz loudly lambasted Lindsay for "permitting"

the "national interest" guidelines of a 3.2 per cent annual increase to be broken.

The chorus of dismay from the mis-leaders of labor was even louder. Auto worker union president Walter Reuther, number two man in the AFL-CIO, blasted the walkout and called for a ban on "strikes in public service industries." Reuther continued, in as classless a condemnation as possible that "'Society' cannot tolerate strikes that endanger the very survival of society.... We cannot live in a situation where a few workers who are denied their equity can paralyze an entire community."

No criticism was levelled at all by this mis-leader of labor against the Morgans and Rockefellers who will extort at least \$140 million in interest alone—*pure profit*—in the next two years, out of the people of New York—*FOUR TIMES* the cost of the contract won by the transit workers. Nor did he, or Johnson, or any other "representative of the people" condemn the real estate interests or big department stores who make millions from the existence of the

subways but pay next to nothing to keep them running.

Yes, the workers *did* smash the "national interest" guidelines; they *did* nullify the anti-strike Condon-Wadlin Law; but, at the same time, it must be said that, realistically speaking, they did not gain anywhere near the \$52 to \$70 million variously estimated as the cost of the settlement.

To figure out the amount of the projected wage increase, we will use the last reported gross payroll (including high-paid supervisory personnel as well as unionized workers—the TA gives no quick breakdown) of \$244 million for the year ending June 30, 1965. While this does not include the wage increase granted for the last six months of 1965 under the old contract, it *does* include the unusual amount of overtime during the 1964-1965 World's Fair, which will not be a factor during the coming two years.

Therefore, we will use the \$244 million figure as a starting point. A four per cent increase over this amount for the 12 months of 1966 comes to \$9.76 million. Another four per cent increase over this new gross payroll of \$253.76 million, for the first six months of 1967, comes to \$5.07 million. And the final seven per cent increase for the last six months of 1967, figured on the new gross payroll of \$258.8 million, adds to \$9.05 million.

The total wage increase then becomes:

1966	\$9,760,000
Jan.-June 1967	5,070,000
July.-Dec. 1967	9,050,000

TOTAL, two years \$23,880,000

To this total of nearly \$24 million in wages and salaries, we add \$3.2 million in increased pension benefits, \$800,000 for welfare benefits, \$800,000 for uniforms for conductors and bus drivers, \$3 million for "working conditions" and their estimate of \$8.5 million for the bus drivers and mechanics of the *Manhattan and Bronx Surface Transit Authority* (which operates separately from the regular Transit Authority.)

The total package (including the high-paid supervisors as well as the TWU members) comes to just over \$40 million. From this we must deduct \$5 million in wages and benefits, an amount the workers will *not* get paid for the two weeks of the strike. Therefore, the *actual* payroll cost of the package comes to \$35 million—\$17 million less than Lindsay's figure of \$52 million and \$25 million less than the \$60 million estimate of the TA and the TWU leaders.

Despite this lower amount, it still represents a five per cent increase for 1966 and a 7.8 per cent increase for 1967—thoroughly smashing the 3.2 annual limit set down by Johnson's "national interest" guidelines. And it also means that every transit worker still on the job at the end of next year will be making 15 per cent more per hour than he was earning before the new contract.

But the transit workers did more than break Johnson's wage freeze. They also exposed those labor mis-leaders who constantly settle within these guidelines. That is why the Reuthers and Meanys become so frantic about this walk-out. The transit workers demonstrated to other workers that a militant rank and file can over-

come a leadership that drags its feet and submits to the bosses. This could conceivably lead to the emergence of new leaders who would fight for the workers' interests. That would be a solid blow against the "secure home front" that U.S. imperialism must maintain in order to be able to carry on its wars of aggression against other workers abroad. No wonder Johnson and the ruling class were all tied up in knots over the spectre of 35,000 workers in "essential industry" ignoring all the phony patriotic appeals and walking out in the face of drummed-up, overwhelming opposition.

Once again, the innate power of the workers was demonstrated, especially in those key industries on which the economy depends. Merely through unity around a basic set of demands, the transit workers turned off production, in spite of all sorts of threats and warnings from the ruling class: *none of those threats could start the subways and buses running again!*



An added feature was the fact that the workers struck against the City, shattering the old adage, as the welfare workers had done the year before, that you "can't strike against the government." And they broke a law that was specifically directed against government employees in New York State—the Condon-Wadlin Law—which prohibits strikes among City and State workers.

So effective was the walkout that when a State Supreme Court Judge—Irving Saypol, who, as a federal prosecutor had helped frame and murder the Rosenbergs—honored a court suit which attempted to nullify the gains won in the new contract, the State Legislature was forced to pass a law specifically exempting the transit workers from the provisions of Condon-Wadlin. In fact, so worried were the bosses' legislators that the transit workers might walk out on a wildcat strike, that they voted for this exemption while at the same time lamenting the fact that its very passage was unconstitutional!

They claimed they were loathe

to do this but had no choice as the transit workers "had a gun at our heads." So not only did the workers break the ruling class' law, but they forced the ruling class to break its own law also!

Given this kind of result from the unity and determination of just 35,000 workers, what might be the result if all the workers who were out on militant, rank and file fostered strikes in the past three years—auto, longshore, mining, aerospace and armament had fought together? This is the big worry—and potentially the Achilles heel of U.S. imperialism—that while it is off fighting wars of aggression against the workers in Asia, Africa and Latin America, its own workers here at home will begin a major fight against the seat of this imperialism, in fighting for their own class interests.

A fundamental lesson of the transit strike is that to defeat the ruling class, even on economic demands, the unity of the *entire* working class is necessary. Had that unity existed in New York, the transit workers would have won far higher increases, better conditions, and in a shorter time. The major stumbling block to this unity was the division between the transit workers and the rest of the workers (the "public") on the fraudulent grounds that the workers who ride the trains must pay for the wage increases of the workers who operate them.

As has been described, based on the establishment of the Transit Authority, a phony boss, fronting for the bankers, a built-in basis for this fraud was created, and the myth spread by all the politicians and the kept press. But, of

course, there *are* other sources, beside the riding "public," that could pay for an adequate standard of living and decent working conditions for the transit workers (and all other government employees, for that matter), and make the subways less accident-prone than they are now.

One tremendous untapped reservoir is an increase in the real estate tax on large corporations and landholders back to the level of what it is 30 years ago. In 1934 real estate taxes accounted for 84 per cent of the total City tax income. In the present City budget, these same real estate taxes account for only 37 per cent of the total income from taxes—a proportional decline of more than half. If this real estate paid its old share of the City's income, nearly two billion in additional tax dollars would be available to pay not only for the *entire* cost of the transit system (making all subway and bus rides *FREE*), but for increased wages and benefits for all City employees, and for better conditions in schools, hospitals, and other public services.

Another source of income could be drawn from those big businesses that benefit directly from the existence of the subways, such as the large department stores. During the transit strike, *Macy's* was crying to *Gimbels* about all the money they were losing. But a search through the records at City Hall reveals that *Macy's* Herald Square site—the largest department store in the world—was assessed at a value of \$23 million in 1942; yet 20 years later, with property supposedly sky-rocketing, that choice spot in

the heart of Manhattan, was actually assessed at *lower* value: \$19 million! Will profit wonders never cease?

Still another source—probably the biggest—of funds to pay for essential services for the people is the Johnson war budget. From New York City alone more than six billion dollars is collected in taxes by the federal government. Of this, two-thirds, or four billion, is spent on wars of aggression around the globe, and maintenance of the largest military arsenal in history. In other words, New York contributes four billion dollars to swell the war chest of the U.S. billionaires. That's enough money to wipe out all the slums in all the five boroughs; to build enough schools, hospitals, and transportation facilities to make New York into a model urban community. But it

won't be used for that purpose until all the working class meets the war-makers in a head-on all-out battle; and it is the only class powerful enough to win that battle, since—as the transit workers amply demonstrated—it is the only class with the power to turn production on or off.

If this kind of information was spread among the people before and during the transit walkout, there might not have been any necessity for one in the first place. (Just an inkling of what this means was seen in the warm reception given by the 15,000 workers who demonstrated in front of City Hall on January 10th to a flyer containing such information, printed by *Challenge-Desafio*, the New York organ of the Progressive Labor Party.)

It was exactly this kind of pro-



gram that the mis-leaders of labor avoided like the plague, not to mention all the "liberals" in City Hall and among the press.

Despite that weakness, which helped divide the transit workers from the rest of the population, the strike—in busting Johnson's wage freeze and splitting his "national interest"; by thumbing its nose at the politicians, the bosses' anti-strike laws, and the mis-leaders of labor in the trade union movement—paved the way for all workers to have more militant actions and bigger victories when ready to unite and fight as did the bus and subway workers.

There should be no underestimation about this fear struck in the hearts of the ruling class by even this limited victory of the transit workers. As Judge Saypol cried in his anti-strike decision: "Submission today to this unlawful misconduct... could lead to

disaster...(for) the continuing existence of 'our' form of government." Unfortunately for the bosses, the State legislators were forced to bow to that "unlawful misconduct" and grant the workers their limited increases, because these workers, by possessing the power to shut the transit system, "held a gun at their heads."

Woe to these rulers when all sections of the working class master the art of using the "gun." And the laws of capitalism, driving it toward maximum exploitation at home, as if faces increased opposition abroad, will inexorably push the worker to pull that "trigger." Then even the mightiest nuclear arsenal will collapse as a paper tiger before the onrushing strength of an aroused American working class battling, united, in its class interests.

This pamphlet was originally written as an article for the Progressive Labor Party bi-monthly magazine PROGRESSIVE LABOR. It originally appeared under the pen name "Frank Scott," used by different writers working in the trade union movement. It is our particular pleasure to introduce Walter Linder as the author of this particular work.

This pamphlet reprint is issued by the Trade Union Section of the PLP in the hope that wider section in the labor movement will read it, criticize and learn from it. Comments and criticisms are welcomed and desired and should be sent to: Trade Union Section, Progressive Labor Party, G.P.O. Box 808, Brooklyn, 1, New York.

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