

# RIZZO READY TO AMBUSH TEACHERS' UNION

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by JOE LEWANDOWSKI

A teachers' strike in the fall now seems inevitable. When the Board of Education passed a starvation budget for 1978 which slashed \$65 million from current programs, it set the stage for a life and death struggle in September. At stake are the lives of over 3000 teachers and school employees whose jobs would be eliminated by the budget cuts.

Also at stake is the very life of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT). The School Board wants to throw out the entire history of collective bargaining which has resulted in a 144 page contract and replace it with a four page agreement. The proposal would eliminate health and welfare benefits, seniority rights, transfer rights, and all provisions which give teachers a share in determining education policy and their working conditions. It would also maintain salaries at present levels.

Frank Rizzo has something at stake too, his political life. Despite public denials, the odds are high that Rizzo will attempt to force a city charter change that would allow him to run for a third term. Rizzo's hard line, inflammatory pronouncements on the contract negotiations show that he wants to provoke a strike for his own political benefit.

## RIZZO'S STAKE

There are a number of ways in which Rizzo stands to gain from a long strike ending in defeat for the PFT.

First, he wants to make the teachers' union and the city workers' unions the scapegoat for the financial problems of the city, including high taxes. If he can manage to do this he might be able to skirt some of the heat that he has been taking for the huge tax increases of a year ago, and for the incompetency and corruption of his administration. A defeat for the teachers would also set the stage for a big loss for city workers when their contract comes up a few months later.

Second, a defeat for the teachers' union would tighten Rizzo's grip on the labor movement in the city. At present Rizzo draws most of his labor support from the construction trades and a few Teamster locals. Many of the other major unions which are not enthusiastic about Rizzo have been intimidated into falling in line behind the strong Rizzo supporters. The PFT is one of the main anti-Rizzo unions in the city's labor movement. If Rizzo is successful in isolating the PFT during this

strike, it will be a major blow to the more progressive forces in the labor movement. Lack of active labor support will probably doom the teachers' strike.

Third, if Rizzo can cripple or destroy the teachers union his prestige will soar among the major business leaders in the city. John Bunting, president of First Pennsylvania Bank, is probably the single most powerful figure in Philadelphia ruling circles. His relationship with Rizzo over the years has been stormy, but his support could be critical to Rizzo's plans for a third term.

Bunting became the behind-the-scenes head of the School Board last year when the banks demanded a balanced budget as the price of a \$50 million loan to the schools. It is Bunting who engineered the school budget proposal and it is Bunting who is responsible for the union-busting attack against the PFT.

If Rizzo can manage to do Bunting's bidding more effectively than he has in the past, they might just patch up their differences. Bunting's support — direct or indirect — would be a tremendous plum for Rizzo.

## ATTACK ON STUDENTS

In addition to attacking the teachers' union, the Rizzo-Bunting school budget is a vicious attack on the educational opportunities of the 250,000 Philadelphia public school students. The proposed budget would close seven schools and eliminate programs such as Primary Reading Skills, and the School for All Ages. It would sharply reduce health services, busing, counseling, security, extracurricular activities and it would terminate varsity sports and the kindergarten program.

**Under the proposed budget class size would be increased and the use of textbooks and other educational material would be reduced. In other words, the school system which has greatly suffered under Rizzo's thumb for six years is about to be delivered another crippling blow, one which would reduce it to little more than a baby-sitting service.**

Rizzo claims that the teachers are the source of all the problems with the school system. He claims they "lack commitment" and are "greedy". But it is the Rizzo-dominated School Board which allows Edison High to sit and rot. It is the School Board which has cut back on even the most basic educational items, like textbooks.

"Lack of money" is given as the reason for the decline of the school system, but that's not the real reason. There is more than enough wealth to create better schools, let alone keep the present system afloat.

The trouble is that those who control the wealth are concerned with bigger profits and not better schools. The crisis in the Philadelphia school system is part of the larger crisis of the cities. Local, state, and federal governments are attempting to cut back funds for social services. With industry leaving, many property owners fleeing to the suburbs and a shrinking tax base, municipal governments are running deep in the red. Their creditors, the banks, are demanding more cutbacks to protect their present and future loans.

The cutbacks do not fall evenly on all areas of city spending. They reflect the priorities of the city's rulers. There is money for massive urban renewal projects like Market St. East, and the Center City Commuter Tunnel, but there is "not a dime more" for the schools. There is always money for projects which benefit big business, but services for working people have to go.

These policies reflect the callous racism of the Rizzo administration and the city's business community. Black students account for 62% of the student population and Spanish surnamed students are another 6%. The School Board and the city's banks, under the leadership of Bunting and Rizzo, simply don't care what kind of education is available to these students.

They are prepared to write off a whole generation of young people. By cutting the throat of the school system the business elite is consigning the bulk of public school students to a future as part of a permanent underclass of unemployed and marginal workers. The capitalist drive for profits and the racist policies of the city's ruling circles are the real reasons for the annual funding crisis.

## GREEDY TEACHERS?

**What about the claim that the teachers are greedy and out to stick up the school system?**

The starting salary for a teacher with a bachelor's degree is only \$9,390. A teacher with eleven years seniority grosses

\$18,534. These figures are lower than the salary levels of people with similar skills in other industries and professions, including many unskilled production workers.

While Rizzo is intent on being tight-fisted with the teachers, no one can really accuse Frank of being a penny-pincher. In the past month Rizzo asked for and got a 27% salary hike for the top officials in his administration. That's as much as a \$10,000 raise in some cases. Generous to himself as well as his close friends, Frank has never been known to deprive himself of things like imported Italian marble bathrooms, \$400 doorknobs, limousines and a palatial half-million dollar estate in Chestnut Hill. Rizzo complains about teachers getting an hour daily for preparation time and in the very next breath will brag about the \$45,000 yearly pension he will get when he retires. Is it the teachers who are greedy?

The problem is not the teachers' salaries, nor is it the amount of money the city spends on the schools. The city actually pays for less than half of the cost of the public school system and spends less on schools than seventeen other major cities.

The real problem is where the tax dollar comes from. Three-quarters of the city's revenues for the schools come from real estate taxes, a burden that is shouldered mainly by working-class homeowners.

Rizzo is unwilling to raise these taxes because he realizes that such an tax increase would be politically unpopular and would doom his third term ambitions.

The Rizzo-School Board solution is to cut the school system to ribbons; to rob it of the teachers, facilities, programs and textbooks it needs to educate our children.

**This is no solution to the school problem. The school system needs more resources, not less. But the money which the schools need must come from a different source. It must come from the profits of the large monopoly corporations and banks like John Bunting's First Pennsylvania Bank.**

At the beginning of his first term, Rizzo torpedoed the city's corporate profits tax. The corporate profits tax should be revived and other taxes on investment and commercial real estate should be established as the primary base of support for the schools.

There are only a few months before the teachers will be forced to strike and close the schools in September. It is now time for the teachers union, parents, and other progressive forces in the community to chose ranks to fight the teacher layoffs and school cut-backs together.

# BUSINESS NOT BANKING ON FRANK

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by JOE LEWANDOWSKI

The stars will not be with Frank Rizzo on November 7 when Philadelphia voters will most likely decide upon a city charter change that would allow him to run for a third term. At least that is the opinion of the "Astro-Profile" recently published in the *Philadelphia Daily News*. Rizzo's astrological chart shows "limitations in the areas of finances and friends."

But you don't have to be an astrologer to see that the stars haven't been shining for Frank in the past few weeks. The stars we are talking about don't twinkle or form constellations of rams, bulls or scorpions. These stars are the bright lights of the Main Line and Chestnut Hill, the so-called "movers and shakers" of the business and banking establishment. Recent events have shown that they have decided it is time to "move and shake" Rizzo right out of City Hall.

## BUSINESS OPPOSITION

In June, three prominent business-civic groupings announced their opposition to a change in the City Charter. It was not so surprising that the Committee of 70, a "good government watch-dog" group of businessmen and lawyers announced its opposition to the third-term amendment. The Committee has had run-ins with the Rizzo administration in the past over numerous instances of official corruption, patronage abuses and voting irregularities.

**A little more surprising, and more revealing, is the opposition that the Charter change is facing from two other groupings of corporate heavyweights. One, the Greater Philadelphia Partnership, is the "activist" wing of the business establishment. It is often at the center of corporate plans for commercial development and it coordinates its planning with local and state governments.**

Even more significant is the formation of an ad hoc umbrella organization called the "Charter Defense Committee" which pulls together the front line of Philadelphia's blue-blood leadership. Included in this committee is Thatcher Longstreth, president of the Chamber of Commerce, and the very influential Richard C. Bond, outgoing chairman of the John Wanamaker stores and a previous Rizzo supporter.

Also included on the fourteen member steering committee of this group is James F. Bodine, executive committee chairman

of the First Pennsylvania Corp.; and William S. Fishman, board chairman of ARA Services Inc. Fishman was a "substantial" contributor to Rizzo's 1971 campaign.

The Charter Defense Committee has promised to raise a quarter of a million dollars to finance an advertising campaign to defend the present two-term limit on the mayor's office.

**This unusual display of ruling class unity in opposition to a third term for Rizzo will probably have little direct effect on how Philadelphia voters will cast their ballots in November. Pronouncements by the ruling elite of the Main Line usually don't hold much water in the wards of North Philadelphia, Kensington, South Philly and West Philly. Rizzo, of course, knows this and has said as much.**

But Frank Rizzo can't be sleeping very well these nights. The Charter change issue has given the ruling circles an opportunity to make its break with Frank without openly opposing him. All of the groupings swear that they are not taking a stand for or against Rizzo, but merely taking a stand for "good government."

Nevertheless, the result for Rizzo will be less money, probably a lot less money for his campaign coffers. It could also mean that even if the charter change was approved, Philadelphia's ruling circles may decide to sabotage his candidacy before the 1979 election.

It's pretty clear that the ruling class is, at the present time anyhow, opposed to a third mayoral term in principle. They didn't learn that "principle" in a high school civics class, however. For them it is a practical matter. Philadelphia's City Charter gives the mayor's office a great deal of power, more than is accorded mayors in any other large city.

There is the real danger, from their point of view, that the mayor could establish a power base on his own through the patronage system, the manipulation of city contracts, the use of police power and through political popularity based on demagoguery. They see these developments in the Rizzo administration and they have decided that such developments threaten "enlightened" corporate control of city government and may have serious impact on their own business interests.