Fourteen hundred and thirty-eight registered participants, and 50 registered observers from other organizations and the press packed into the Great Hall of Chicago's Pritzker Congress Hotel, Labor Day weekend of the founding convention of the National Unite Workers Organization. Workers came from every major industry and area of the country. There were garment workers from New York, San Francisco and El Paso, 200 electrical workers from Boston to San Jose; farmworkers from Salinas, Ca. and Hawaii. More than 130 steel workers came together from the mills of Seattle, Cleveland, New Jersey, Pittsburgh and other places. About 150 auto workers from Detroit, Wisconsin, Ohio, California and the East Coast joined miners from the coalfields of West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio. Veteran workers and young men and women of all nationalities stood shoulder to shoulder and thundered out enthusiastic cheers as the opening session was called to order. Excitement and the sense that this was an historic occasion could be felt throughout the hall. At the front of the auditorium, rising from behind the speaker's platform, hung a giant, two-story high, multicolored banner emblazoned with the symbol of the National United Workers Organization. Off to the right of the stage a specially built sound booth provided simultaneous translations in Spanish and Chinese to scores of participants. Bright banners ringed the hall from the back steps. "Put Together—Jalaloun Aunoo," "NYC Hospital Workers Say: Seek In to Thomason-Build a National Workers Organization! On to Chicago!" Two days ago the assembled workers met not in stores, shops, plenary sessions, and informally in the hallways and over meals to exchange experiences, discuss and debate how to carry forward the strength of the working class in a more organized and concentrated way against all the garbage people suffer at the hands of the class of rich owners who run society.

Workers fresh from hundreds of daily battles were in the hall and addressed the sessions. The feeling of the moment was being waged by workers on many different battlefields was given voice when the MC at the opening session on Saturday announced that there were workers present from picket lines all over the country—Exxon in Indiana, Signal Control in Milwaukee, Rylock in the San Francisco Bay Area, General Dynamics, the list went on and on as the audience picked it up, calling out the other strikers they represented.

Powerful Opening Session

Speakers at the opening session were given tremendous ovations, not only for what they said, but in recognition of the struggles each represented and the potential strength each was bringing to the formation of this organization. People felt that here were brothers and sisters, fellow workers who were standing up to fight for their class, standing up to the high and mighty, and their lackeys who dish out phony solutions and work to keep the working class divided.

Older workers, veteran class fighters, were received enthusiastically by younger workers who could see in them the determination and continuity of the working class struggle against exploitation and oppression. These veteran workers for their part could see the great importance of this convention. For the first time in several decades, the working class was going to have a nationwide, mass organization to mobilize its ranks and fight for its interests.

The rich always tell workers that they can never get together, that they are and will remain divided along nationality. This convention was living contradiction of these lies and people knew it. There was real excitement about the multinational character of the assembly. White, Black, Asian, Latin, workers of many nationalities were coming together as brothers and sisters, united in a common struggle against a common enemy. Workers of all nationalities felt the determination of this organization to fight all forms of discrimination and national oppression. The Proclamation issued by the con-

Continued on Page 2
 NUWOU...

Continued from Page 1

wision to the American working class said: "We have nothing in common with those who discriminate one nationality to keep all of us down!"

The crowd roared to its feet, cheering at the surprise introduction of Buddy Cochran, the worker who had smashed up the KKK rally with his car in Jimmy Carter's hometown last July 4. Chants of "Free Buddy Cochran!" boomed off the walls. His message was direct: "Now is the time for men and women of all races, colors, nationalities, the peoples whose hands are calloused just like mine, yours, to stand up against these people... Now is the time to take the rich man's Lynchtowns, like the KKK, and the Nazis and other such crud, to put them exactly where they belong..."

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What Type of Organization?

Throughout the weekend workers addressed the question of just what kind of organization this will be, what its purposes are and what it will do. People had come to this convention because they were fighters and because they saw the need to get their battles organized a lot better and more broadly. They wanted this to be a fighting organization and programs for action were debated and planned. The presentation was followed by a powerful demonstration on Sunday against the divide and conquer schemes and the threat of racist attacks in Chicago around the opening of schools (see accompanying story).

Everyone recognized that the numbers of workers gathered to form the NUWO, though significant, were small in comparison to the millions of working people across the land. But everyone also knew that the work at this convention reflected the aspirations of hundreds of thousands, even millions, more.

As a slogan used in building for the convention and repeated often throughout the weekend put it, people are "tired of being pushed around, driven down, and sold out!" What came clear in all the stories, discussion and experiences shared at this convention is that at every turn, in every aspect of society, the interests of the working class are different from, and opposed to, the interests of the class of rich owners, the parasites who do no work, but drive the working class like slaves and take the fruits of their labor.

The banner hanging from the Great Hall, proclaiming "Workers Unite to Lead the Fight Against All Oppression," came alive in the convention as a workers from all over the country saw that they face a common battle against the same enemy. And it became clearer to many that this same enemy is responsible for all misery and oppression in society. The speaker from the African Liberation Support Committee described the condition of 300 workers led by the Organizing Committee for a National Workers Union which had marched in Washington on May 28 under the slogan "Fight Imperialism and National Oppression from the USA (United States of America) to the USA (Union of South Africa)." And a coal miner told how steel workers marched shoul- der to shoulder with coal miners from Pennsylvania through the streets of New York in the closing of the Bethlehem Steel plant.

The conditions were ripe for the formation of this National United Workers Organization. The attacks on the lives and living standards of the working class and the masses of people are increasing daily. Faced with the threat of depression and another war, with continued inflation and the deterioration of the cities, schools and public services, confronting stepped-up racial discrimination, getting nothing but lies and empty promises from the politicians, people are looking for some answers—looking for a way forward.

Now Is the Time!

Right now, as the rich move with an ever heavier hand against the masses of people, at a time when the struggle of workers across the country is growing and experience has been gained in area-wide organizations like the United Workers Organizations in Milwaukee, New York and San Francisco Bay Area, as well as in a few industry-wide groups such as in steel and auto, the need is urgent and the possibility there to build the National United Workers Organization as a key force in the class struggle.

At the same time, as the Proclamation states: "the official labor movement talked about and promoted by the bosses is a disgrace." Unions once built through the struggle and even the blood of our fathers and grandfathers have been taken over by overstaffed, labor lieutenants of the employers, turned from fighting organizations of the working class by these traitors who each with their bosses, think only of profit and sleep with the bosses. Worker after worker got up to give examples of these attacks and the outrageous behavior of the so-called union leaders. The convention's Proclamation made clear the determination of the NUWO to fight to retake and rebuild the unions, to put them back into the hands of the rank and file, "We are not organizing to eliminate the unions," it says. "We are organizing for the purpose of eliminating that class of 'unions' which finds more common in the bosses than with the workers... We have nothing in common with the companies and the company men in general!"

The 110 workers who had gathered in Cleveland in February had called on fellow workers to "Seize the Time in '77" and build a national workers organization. The 1438 workers who came together in Chicago Labor Day weekend had come to see that it had to be done, that it could be done and they did it.

The NUWO will be an important weapon in the hands of the working class for organizing its struggle, for focusing and concentrating its forces on the most important battles and for fashioning the sparks of struggle that arise into classwide battles. In this way what are now small numbers, relative to the whole class of workers, will be able to build and lead big battles, and the active fighters who came together to form the NUWO will be able to reach out to thousands more and increase their ranks.

This was behind the resolutions passed by the convention to take up the miners' contract battle this year and the fight against dismantling unemployment insurance as major campaigns of the organization.

In the industrial workshops on Saturday afternoon, workers got a clearer picture of the direction of things.

Foux will forget the enthusiasm and militancy of the convention.
The NUWO and Anti-Communism

One resolution presented to the convention dealt with what the stand of the National United Workers Organization is toward anti-communism. Because of a lack of time at the convention, this resolution was not able to be discussed and was referred to the national steering committee to organize further discussion throughout the organization.

The proposed resolution would bar membership to members of fascist organizations like the KKK and the Nazis. The resolution declares that membership in the NUWO would be open to all and who stand for the interests of the working class of people, to all fighters who have shown through their actions which side of the fence they're on.

The resolution goes on to point out, "...we refuse to be suckerized into the bosses' tricks of trying to lump together fascism and communism. We stand against anti-communism and red-baiting. Both are tried and true con games used by the rich over the years to split our ranks."

This resolution hits the nail on the head. Anti-communism is a weapon in the hands of the bosses used not only to drive communists, who are fighters for the working class, out of the NUWO but also to attack all militant fighters and to stifle the NUWO. For these reasons, it is important that the National United Workers Organization get into the thick of struggle and help to lead it forward it does not contribute to the enemy's red-baiting and anti-communism.

As what ideology and long-range goals are in the interests of the NUWO and the people—that is a question which the workers should address themselves—to without any red-baiting interference from the capitalists.
Convention Maps Battle Plans

The heart of the two-day conference was the discussion around what stand to take on the major issues and struggles of the day and how the National United Workers Organization is going to enter key battles to carry out its work.

The convention voted to take up two major national campaigns—one demanding union jobs at union pay for the unemployed and an end to the cuts in unemployment benefits, and the other in support of the miners in their upcoming contract battle.

Now, with the formation of the NUWO, the working class can begin to deal with issues like these that affect it. They can do this on a scale impossible before this convention.

In the plenary sessions and the workshops, as people spoke about their own experiences and other struggles they had known, a single picture began to emerge: a picture of a system that has caused a million wrongs which cry out to be righted. Yet at the same time, the participants were also confronted with the fact that the NUWO was to enable active fighters scattered in different industries around the country to unite and begin to arouse and organize the strength of the working class in its millions, the new organization would have to focus on a few key battles, drawing the fine between the interests of the ownership class and the working class, as to unite the millions against them around a fighting program.

The campaigns are around burning issues which affect a great many workers directly or indirectly. They are on strikes which workers across the country can link up with each other as part of a broader workers movement, building their understanding, organization and ability to fight. This, in turn, will both strengthen and be strengthened by the ability of the industrial sections of the NUWO to carry out campaigns within particular industries, and it will help strengthen the ability of workers to take up the battles that arise in their own shops.

In this way, the tremendous unity and power which was harnessed by the cooperation of 1500 workers can become a force through which the relatively small number of active workers can swing millions into motion.

Campaign on Unemployment

The campaign on unemployment will be aimed squarely against the government and its attacks on the unemployed. The cutbacks in unemployment benefits from 65 to 39 and 26 weeks, Carter's phony "jobs" program and his welfare program which are meant to force the unemployed to accept minimum wage jobs and in many places replace higher paid union labor—all this is designed to make the unemployed even more desperate by removing the few benefits which stand between them and the street, using their desperation to undercut employed workers' wages and working conditions. Instead of opposing him, Meaney and the rest of the AFL-CIO chiefs have all supported Carter in these moves.

Workers listen attentively to the proceedings.

In conception, the NUWO convention resolved "that we demand:
1) No more cuts in benefits. That the unemployed receive benefits as long as they are out of work.
2) Down with Carter's slave wage law and all other rules and regulations which force the unemployed to take low paying jobs. All government jobs programs including workfare must be union jobs at union wages."

To put teeth into these demands, the NUWO will join with the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee (UWOC) in a mass demonstration in Washington, D.C. in January when Carter gives his State of the Union speeches. Building up to this demonstration there will be other demonstrations in October on a regional level, and a petition which will be taken out to the broadest number of workers possible along with the demand that Carter and the Congress meet with the representatives who will present this petition.

The convention concludes and the discussion around it both put special emphasis on the crucial importance of taking this campaign "into every plant, every factory in the country to build broad support and mobilize our fellow workers to stand and fight." This will mean, in addition to organizing employed workers to come to these actions, to take the petition and finding other ways to make it an issue and build support in the factories, and fighting within the unions to get them to endorse the campaign and support it in concrete ways like raising money to send official delegations, and the formation of employed/unemployed committees in the unions as key weapons in the fight against unemployment. These committees, made up of laid off workers and their fellow union members still on the job, will help concentrate the struggle of the working class as a whole in this fight. Campaigns taken up by the industrial sections, such as the one against layoffs and shutdowns in steel will be linked to this overall national campaign.

Campaign on Miners Contract

The importance of the second campaign, on the miners' contract, was brought out by a speaker who called for the NUWO to "spread the sparks developing in those coalfields to the rest of the working class in this country." As another speaker pointed out, the whole working class is not on the front line of battle all the time, but rather, at various times various groups of workers surge ahead like a forward battalion in battle, where their strength and ability to make gains is in large part determined by the backing they get from the battalions at the rear. In turn, these advanced battalions can win victories which can help the whole working class advance.

There's a war going on in the coalfields," explains the resolution, referring to the thousands of wildcat strikes since the signing of the 1974 contract and the three big wildcats (including one taking place just before the NUWO convention) on the one hand, and the coalfield contract, taking away of medical benefits, the injunctions, jailings, blackmail and red-baiting of the bosses on the other. In trying to smash the miners' wildcat movement and rob them of the right to strike altogether, the capitalists are not only trying to poison their profits in the coalfields, they are also reaching in fear faced with the powerful example and inspiration the miners struggle provides all workers. This makes it all the more important that the National United Workers Organization, as an organization of the working class, take up the battle around the miners' contract which expires December 6.

The capitalists have already launched a propaganda campaign to divide the miners from their fellow workers. They spread the lie that the miners just don't want to work, that their strikes are just an excuse to go fishing. Especially in the various industries directly related...
Songs of the Struggle

"Whish Side Are You On?" was the theme of a night of entertainment at the National United Workers Organization founding convention. The song, still sung today, was written by Florence Reese in the time of the struggle to build the United Mine Workers Union. Today members of the NUWO and their families kicked off the program with this song. The music of the different nationalities and different regions of the country were represented, and there were poems and a dramatic reading. The program was highlighted with a set by Prairie Fire, who have released two singles and an album. The material was all produced by activists in the different struggles and to serve the overall goal. Many of the groups participated in events and plant gate rallies to build for the convention.

Of good artistic quality, and reflecting the aspirations of the people, the entertainment showed the growing potential of working class culture as a joy to the people and a true weapon in the fight against the enemy capitalist class.

Battle Plans...

Continued from Page 4

to coal, like steel, they blame layoffs on the miners and try to pit steel workers against them. They issue warnings about how the wildcat movement is fueling inflation making the "energy crisis" worse. They even appeal to the miners to give up the fight for their interests in the name of "national unity."

But as worker after worker brought out in the discussion, miners and other workers have everything in common with each other and nothing in common with the capitalists and their politicos. The resolution on the miners' contract was defended by an auto worker who spoke to the strong effect the miners' strikes have had on the people in his plant. A worker from Milwaukee spoke about how his father, an iron miner, would not have died if he had had the same medical benefits the coal owners are now selling back from the miners today. A worker from Atlanta spoke about how much she and others who work in her hospital hate the coal owners for what they've done to the miners they see in the wards every day.

The campaign on unemployment, the campaign on the miners' contract will also emphasize taking the issue into the factories, mills and other workplaces, reaching out to broad numbers of workers through leaflets and so on, battling with the so-called "leaders" of the unions to get them to stand up for a strike and mobilizing the rank and file to take whatever actions are possible.

In turn, this campaign will have a powerful effect on the miners themselves. As one miner explained, "Sometimes when you're on strike it seems like everybody's against you—the courts, cops, newspapers, the companies, even our own union officials. But it's obvious to me today that it's just the rich and their flunkies that's against us. When we go back to the coalfields, we're not going in just under our own banner, we're going to fight as part of a mighty army."

Other Important Battles

In addition to these two national campaigns, a third resolution committed the NUWO to "take a stand against fascist groups—whether it is the KKK, Nazis, or whoever— they are tools of the rich who use them to divide our ranks. Whenever they raise their heads and spout their message of race hatred and terror we will stand up against them."

Many workers have already taken such a stand, some as members of the Organizing Committee for a National Workers Organization which gave birth to the NUWO, and some as individuals. The NUWO decided to take up the defense of Buddy Cochran, who used his car to break up a Klan rally in Plains, Ga.—and whose appearance at the NUWO convention was met with a standing ovation; the six people indicted in Columbus, Ohio for "kicking the sheets off the Klan"; and the 14 Black marines at Camp Pendleton, California who face the briag for trying to break up a Klan meeting on the base. Plans are being made for a speaking tour to build up support and raise money across the country sometime in the early winter.

A resolution on war and war preparations states, "the NUWO stands in solidarity with the people of the world fighting for freedom. We believe that the working people throughout the world must stand united against our common enemy, the capitalist ruling class. We extend our hand in unity with our class brothers and sisters fighting the ruling exploiters in the Soviet Union and especially to those with people who are living in countries occupied or dominated by the U.S. government."

This resolution calls for the NUWO to fight "against the treachery of the top AFL-CIO muffin men in promoting war... calling for more military spending... raising slogans like 'Buy America'... just as they betray us and tell us our interests lie in submitting to the employers in the shops, so too they tell us that our interests lie with our rulers in another war. This we do not accept and we will actively fight against, opposing their war propaganda in the unions and exposing them for the traitors to the working class they are." Along with this, the convention decided that the NUWO would participate in the demonstrations around African Liberation Day on May 23.

A final resolution called for an end to all deportations of so-called "illegal" immigrants and denounced the ruling class' efforts to throw the blame on "illegal" workers for unemployment and the miners' struggle, while also taking up other major battles, the NUWO will be able to unleash the fury of the working class against the capitalist enemy.

Tom Walsh, Auto Worker, Cleveland, Ohio

I'm one of a number of people who were recently indicted for going down to Columbus, Ohio and kicking the sheets out of the Ku Klux Klan. All of a sudden the KKK is a legitimate organization, they get something to say to the people, at least according to the media, to the bigwigs who run this country. You see them in the newspapers, on the TV, you see 'em on the radio. They get permits for their demonstrations and their marches. They are being allowed by the rulers of this country to stick their noses into volatile situations and stir up race hatred, try and divide us Black against white while so that we're fighting each other instead of standing united against the people who are responsible for the way things are going in this country. We've got to take a stand against them. We've got to go... and kick the mad dogs and also take a good yank at that leash and let the master know he better start sleeping light.

Veteran Steel Worker

I am a veteran steel worker. I've been a steel worker for thirty years. I was one of twelve men in Los Angeles that were brought up before the Un-American Activities Committee for activities in the union. I've been union president and vice-president. When I was president we had a strike that was very militant—no scabs crossed our picket lines and we got out in jail. When I was president our local was put in receivership. That says to me we did something right. If we had had an organization that we could draw together for our struggles and experiences, we could have done a lot more. If we can get this organization moving there isn't a damn thing that can stop the workers of this country.

People felt the potential strength of the NUWO during the nighttime demonstration.
NUWO...

Continued from Page 2 in each industry. The workshops on steel, electrical, auto, garage, mining, meatpacking, textile, agriculture and others were set up so that workers could share their common experiences and to discuss the main battles facing them. Participants tried to center on a few key ones that the industrial sections and the whole organization could take up, and try to get the struggles better coordinated within each industry.

But while this organization will be rooted in the shops, mines and mills, it will also be organized on an area basis to be able to take up all the issues and battles that affect all the class in all spheres of activity. In this way also, workers who may not be working in a plant represented by one of the industrial sections of the NUWO should be able to link up and become part of the organization.

Saturday evening there were workshops on discrimination, nepotism and the connection between white supremacist organizations and the local unions. These workshops took up these broad social questions and discussed the stand of the working class and the NUWO on them. And the convention participants showed a lively and deep interest in the solidarity message given by Al Canforo who had been a student, and then a leader in Kent State during the uprising against the Cambodian invasion and was admitted with national guard bullets. Similarly during the discussion on war many of the participants made the connection between the war in Cambodia and the struggle in their communities.

Still, the convention marked a historical advance for the working class movement founded on a structure and stand that will enable it to move into action around key issues. Workers returning to their own cities and regions will bring with them the determination to organize the members of the national steering committee of the National United Workers Organization and to further discuss and plan how to carry out the particular resolutions passed by the convention. These will be a forum for further debate and struggle over some of the questions not discussed at the meeting. As workers struggle to reach greater unity to move into action. As workers left the convention to return home, the gesture of solidarity of people that they had connected in building an organization of their own, that a great deal had been accomplished.

The first National United Workers Organization has tremendous potential. It is an organization that will take up both economic and political questions. It will be rooted in the plants, mines, and mills, taking up the struggle there and working to turn every factory into a fortress of struggle for the working class. It will take up every major conflict, concentrating its strength on the key battles at any given point. It will fight all forms of oppression that the rulers lay against the masses of people, from the legalized murder and brutalization of oppressed minority nationalities to the fight for a decent education for our children and opposition to the rulers' plans for a new round of strikes.

Throughout the weekend of this founding convention of the National United Workers Organization the banner was put up strongly and clearly. The movement of the working class has nothing in common with the owning class except a common battlefield and a protracted war. No other mass movement is capable of running an organization, an important weapon in this war.

Skip Culano, Coal Miner, West Virginia Fellow Workers,

The Movement to Strike Committee is proud to join with this founding convention of this National United Workers Organization. For the last ten years those of us who have been on strike have been on strike against cutsbacks in our medical benefits. If anything has become clear in the last few weeks, in the last few years, it's this: the rank and file has no choice under this system, you either stand up and fight or you're crushed by the bosses.

Al Canforo, Kent State

I am a son of the working class. My father was a textile worker in Akron and Goodysar for 27 years and I have lived in the industrial town of Barberton, Ohio all my life. So I know what the working class is and I know what we need. And one thing we need is a National United Workers Organization.

In 1970 when Richard Nixon announced the invasion of Cambodia, the criminal invasion of Cambodia, we took to the streets to take action to say that we opposed that invasion. Millions of students and people all across the country stood up and over three hundred universities shut down and people said we're not going to let you invade Cambodoia and take place on us. We went on strike to pay a fair price. Four people, two beautiful brothers and two beautiful sisters, aged 19 and 20, were shot down and killed and nine others were wounded and myself included. Although my wound was relatively minor, when I was shot through the wrist, I came to understand that when you get shot down on a college campus for doing something that is right, for standing up for the peoples' struggle, that something very serious is wrong in this country and something very seriously wrong with the entire way that things are run around here. . . . They covered up what happened at Kent and what happened at Jackson State, although everybody knows that it was wrong. The courts, the federal government and even the university refused to admit what happened . . . They've covered it up every other way now they are trying to cover it up once and for all with a massive $8 million gymnasium . . . But we're not going to allow that to happen . . . I myself have been arrested twice and members of my family have been arrested on numerous occasions, including my mother and father. Almost three hundred in all have been arrested. . . . They can't shake us off. They can't shake us off. It's the neutron bomb on this spot if they wanted to because they got all the power. But our power is in the numbers and mass action. . . . We cannot let them desecrate that site that is sacred to the people's history and to the memory of what happened in 1970. We want to prevent the lessons of the 1970s. For we had a mass movement that rose up in this country and they don't want us to remember that. And the don't want us to remember that what was their war and their hands are still bloody from that war and they want to cover it up. We want that land to be preserved as a permanent memorial to the cause of the people's struggle and to remind us of what this system is all about.