

A MARXIST NEWSLETTER

Motion Forward Motion Forward Motion

JUNE 1984

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Dear Friends,

War and near war in Central America and the Caribbean .. Across the boards reversal on civil rights .. A national right-to-work labor policy ... Unrestrained nuclear militarism. Defeating Reaganism is both an urgent necessity and still unresolved challenge. This issue of Forward Motion explores the theme of "alternatives." In this election year, the Left faces tremendous pressure to shelve differences with traditional liberalism and bring its hard-working determination to the Democratic muster. The dilemma is in two parts: how possible is it to stop Reagan without a strong alternative and, further, will changing the occupant of the Oval Office mark the beginning of an end to the right-wing political shift?

Our two feature articles this month approach this organizing problem from two different vantage points. The first addresses the debate over industrial policy and economic alternatives to Reaganomics. Jonathan Hoffman argues that we should be part of the industrial policy debate, but trying to recast the goals in class struggle terms. Second, we asked Bill Fletcher, a Massachusetts Jackson worker, to give an account of that campaign's efforts to continue the Black and rainbow politics of Mel King's run for Mayor. Both articles offer insight into how the Left can begin to provide sharper definition to progressive politics today.

* * *

For us at *FM*, a complementary issue to the future of the progressive movement is the limits of progressivism from a Marxist perspective. Between the steady gains of the right and the Marxist left's own problems, the question of Marxist party organization has slipped to the back burner. In this *FM*, we begin a series of articles exploring the relevance of building Marxist parties today.

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Rounding out the "alternatives" theme are three other articles. A review of changes at the National Labor Relations Board updates Reagan's anti-labor record since the PATCO defeat. We include a report on a revival of student protest under Reagan and on the work of the Progressive Student Network. And a lively talk on "Double Trouble for Women of Color" reinforces what we hope is, on balance, an upbeat estimate of the challenges and possibilities ahead.

* * *

Production difficulties with our new format were even greater than we anticipated when we wrote the introduction to our last issue. But we are getting back on track now and would like to hear from new readers and subscribers about the newsletter, articles and format, or your own concerns.

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Industrial Policy and Socialist Strategy

A debate about economics is now underway in the United States. It is marked by comments like, "The problem with enterprise zones is that they don't create jobs; they simply redistribute them from one group of workers to another" or "The problem with industrial policy is that it doesn't create jobs; it simply protects the jobs of one group at the expense of others." This is not a great debate, and the conservative tilt in politics today has strongly imprinted it. Still, it is different from the debate of the 1970s when Republicans and Democrats sparred over details, yet Nixon's proclamation that "we are all Keynesians" held true. It is a debate about how the capitalist economy can revive itself over the rest of this century.

To be sure, the Right-led Republicans show little enthusiasm for facing up to the United States' long-term economic problems. Although some on the Right -- see Kevin Phillips' *Post-Conservative America* - disagree, most think the Right is doing just fine, thank you, playing on popular suspicions of big government.

When Republicans talk about reindustrialization, ideas like enterprise zones and the sub-minimum wage came up. In the guise of letting the private market take care of rebuilding urban areas, economic policy would favor low wage, low skill, non-union jobs in high tech and other light manufacturing. Republican economic strategy redirects tax resources toward certain big business groups (also called relying on the market). The Republican goal is *restoration* of world wide political and economic supremacy. The target is liberalism, both as government policy and as a symbol of unchecked big labor and oppressed nationality and women's movements. But make no mistake, in the twenty years since Barry Goldwater ran for President, Republican conservatism has filled out tremendously: it has a vision of the future of wide appeal.

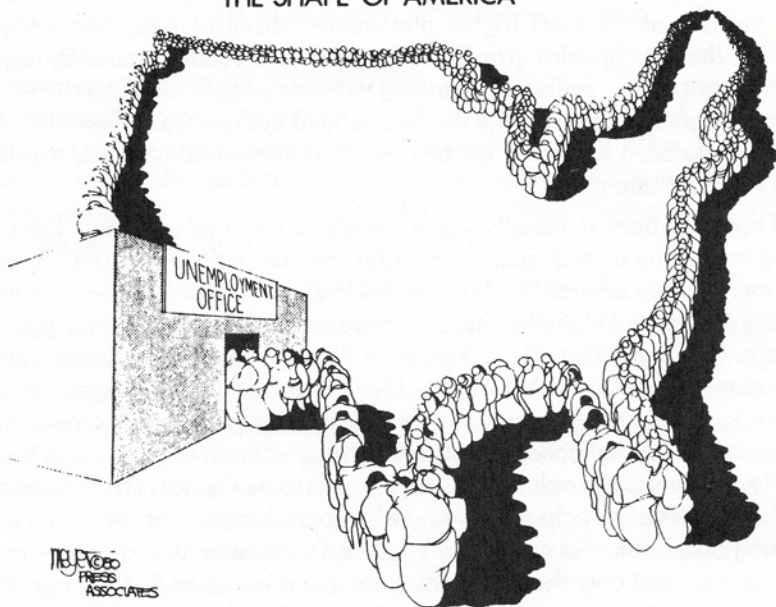
An Offer Labor Can't Refuse

For their part, the Democrats only began rethinking the future a few years back, and unfortunately within the framework of the Carter years. When the Democrats regained national leadership after Nixon and Ford, they found their options limited as the country stumbled through a series of economic setbacks. At the state government level, the welfare state was already in retreat, even under Democratic administrations. Instead of reversing that trend, Carter and the Democratic Congress embraced a "new realism" of reduced services, postponed labor legislation, eroded equal rights, but special deals for corporations in trouble.

None of this can compare with the damage Reagan has done since 1980, but it was in this increasingly unfavorable balance of forces that industrial policy began to take shape. Riding roughshod over union contracts and essential social programs, the "Big MAC" bank bailout of New York City opened the era. The Carter administration continued the experiment: trigger-pricing to limit competitive steel imports and the Chrysler bailout dominated the economic news. In better times, Democrats spoke of "fine tuning" the *overall* economy to help it over

rough spots. As the old policy framework broke down, *selective* assistance to industries or corporations in trouble has become the norm.

THE SHAPE OF AMERICA



Industrial policy took shape from three features of these experiences. First, these ad hoc negotiations among business, government and labor worked well enough to suggest to liberal business interests and Democratic Party leaders that ongoing government-sponsored boards should set policy, industry by industry. No one wants to call this national planning -- even picking economic winners and losers, as some put it, still has an unAmerican flavor -- but an element of German or Japanese-style planning would be involved.

Second, industrial policy would use money to buy respect -- a very American part of the idea. Industrial policy advocates favor a national development bank, to provide investment capital to needy corporations. Such a bank would build on the role banks now play in various bailouts and buyouts (such as the recent Weirton Steel employee stock ownership plan, negotiated by financier Felix Rohatyn of Big MAC fame.) Now a government agency would help pressure concessions from labor and indirectly from consumers (higher prices, weaker environmental safeguards) to ensure the profitability of its loans.

The third ingredient, as the last point hints, is popular sacrifice. Labor-management relations in the 1970s were increasingly all stick and no carrot, proceeding from recessionary austerity and inflationary squeeze to give-backs and concessions bargaining. With labor appropriately softened up and Republican policy even worse, organized labor finds the new "social contract" held out to it an offer it cannot refuse.

Arguments for a new social contract signal the end of the era in which liberals argued that both workers and business would equally benefit from growth. This is an important break with New Deal traditions: since Roosevelt, Democrats have promised that their growth-oriented policies would be the best guarantee of both increasing business profits and a rising standard of living. With the rise of the Civil Rights movement, social equality was added as another promised by-product of capitalist growth. By contrast, the 1980s apparently require a sharing out of economic burdens -- particularly among working people, both on the job and through reduced social programs. This was the theme sounded by *Business Week* in its June 10, 1980, special reindustrialization issue and echoed by economists and business leaders like Lester Thurow and Felix Rohatyn.

The social contract behind industrial policy is also a *national* contract. The sacrificing and semi-planning serve one overall goal -- restoring the competitiveness of U.S. industry in the world economy. If union activists find the aggressiveness of this national orientation new, its basic premises are not. Whatever its economic innovations, industrial policy represents *political* continuity with the New Deal. As before, liberal Democrats promise national unity for sustained economic growth. As before, the Democrats assure labor, minorities and women that allegiance to a policy of government sponsored national growth is their best bet.

For this reason, industrial policy is not just another economic policy. It is the *Democratic* response to Reaganomics not only because it happens to be Democratic politicians who seek a new slogan. Industrial policy only makes sense if a social bargain can be struck with organized labor, the Black and Latin movements, the women's movement and others in a position to challenge or disrupt, and only the Democrats are in a position to do that. For all the talk that the New Deal coalition is dead, industrial policy as *political* strategy aims to revive just that electoral mechanism. Similarly, for industrial policy to mean something for Democratic Party fortunes, it also has to be labor's policy, given organized labor's importance to the Democrats since the Depression.

This does not mean the Democratic Party leadership all stand behind a common policy. Back in 1981 and '82, the newspapers reported a split between reindustrializers and Atari Democrats, so named for their enthusiasm for a high tech economic future for the country. Gary Hart has been a leading spokesperson for that grouping, just as Mondale favors the industrial policy view. Yet for all the effort to tag Mondale with the "special interest" label and for all Hart's new ideas rhetoric, Hart (and others like Sen. Paul Tsongas) have muted their economic differences. After the much publicized layoffs at Atari, not only did the label disappear, but the debate itself faded. All the Democrats, Hart included, sought the AFL-CIO endorsement (except Jackson, who hadn't entered the race yet) and to one degree or another reshaped their economic proposals accordingly. Hart is still less favorable to protectionism (except in the case of big energy interests close to his Colorado heart) and still idealizes high tech, but as much as he can be pinned down, he apparently favors some kind of industry-by-industry brokering for economic revival. He has made more out of new ideas for new ideas sake than any real differences he has with Mondale's economics. Jackson's economic proposals also generally fall in the industrial policy ballpark.

When Reagan ran for president in 1980, Bush and the other candidates attacked his

embrace of supply-side economics. But in the end, all Republicans benefited from Reagan's rhetorical fusion of various slogans and half-ideas into Reaganomics. If the Democrats cannot make a similar symbol out of the idea of industrial policy between now and the fall, then they might as well stay away from economic issues entirely in this election.

Is this an overly political view of the current economic debate? I think not. For the Republicans, Reagan's anti-big government populism has been more of an asset than any permanent economic changes his administration has brought. Now with unemployment temporarily creeping downward again, the "Reagan Revolution" will likely continue its popularity, no matter how many critics worry about deficits and other problems to come. Similarly, among Democratic leaders, industrial policy is more a shared enthusiasm than a definite economic program. Whether the idea of a Democratic economic alternative catches on in 1984 is more important than how it would work later on.

An Opening For Activists

Labor and community activists ought to orient their work accordingly. This year and this election is not the time to work through the details of a democratic economic proposal, because the policy discussion will likely remain at the level of general slogans. Instead we too ought to focus on the political significance of industrial policy -- why it has emerged now, what it means to its advocates, what it could mean on the left.

Unions see industrial policy as a way to achieve goals that have otherwise been out of reach -- stopping the destruction of industrial communities, saving jobs, preserving living standards, protecting minority and women worker gains and rescuing environmental and occupational health regulations. The Left shares these goals, and we ought to try to march under the industrial policy banner where we can. Why?

First, in this conservative era, popularizing the idea of industrial policy can help in counterattacking Reaganomics. Despite its pro-American nationalism, the argument for industrial policy begins with the major, structural changes the U.S. economy is going through. Like the Democrats, we want to ask, if the world economy has changed dramatically, why shouldn't the country's economic future be a matter of public policy? Of course, the Democratic leadership sees this as a chance to regain favor among sections of capital as much as anything else. But with working people likely to bear the unplanned consequences of this transition, we have better grounds than in a generation to push for popular, democratic solutions to economic problems.

Second, the fight for industrial policy is part of a wider political activism in the unions today. Since the 1820s, labor organizations in the United States have turned to politics when the economic struggle was running against the working class, so the AFL-CIO's steps today should not surprise anyone. But the new labor political action comes at a time of particular importance in electoral politics. Whether or not Humpty Dumpty can be put back together, the old Democratic coalition has fallen apart. Meanwhile, prompted by the successes of the Right, activists in the various mass movements are taking a new look at electoral strategies. For the Black movement, this is becoming a time of new breakthroughs both locally and nationally. Since before the 1980 election, talk of new coalitions and progressive political realignment has grown.

The unions' new political course will have an unmistakable impact on both the direction and success of these organizing efforts. The unions' organizational strength, stable (if sometimes contradictory) presence among working people, and sophistication in dealing with Left partners guarantee this impact. Solidarity Day 1981 attracted the full range of movement support for a multifaceted organizing campaign against the new Reagan administration. Afterwards, the AFL-CIO held the reins tightly and pulled as much of this energy as it could into traditional lobbying and electoral politicking. Its close-mindedness toward the Jackson campaign is one retrospective indication of its Solidarity Day goals. Most visible in the new labor political action has been its Mondale endorsement (by independents like the UMW and NEA as well as the AFL-CIO, although the National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees broke the ice and endorsed Jackson).

For many local officers and staffers who have built up a range of independence in their own local affairs, the pressure to organize Mondale fund-raisers and the like has been humbling, to say the least. And this is just the point, because the pre-primary endorsement process has been a largely organizational adventure, designed to firm up the unions' centralized apparatuses from within. *The emphasis has been on bringing the liberal frontrunner to the ranks, rather than bringing a distinctly labor view to the selection process.* Aside from increasing the number of trade unionist convention delegates, the AFL-CIO shows little change in its view of or aims in the Democratic Party: it is still the unions' substitute labor party.

Endorsement of industrial policy could be a different story. The AFL-CIO views industrial policy as labor's contribution to the coalition process. But the current economic debate is new, it is open-ended, and it has to include a challenge to a generation of liberal truth handed down. Given this, the unions have entered into an arena of debate and struggle in which activists in the unions as well as in the Black and Latino movements, the women's movements, peace and anti-intervention in Central America movements and others can challenge and perhaps begin to recast labor's strategic views.

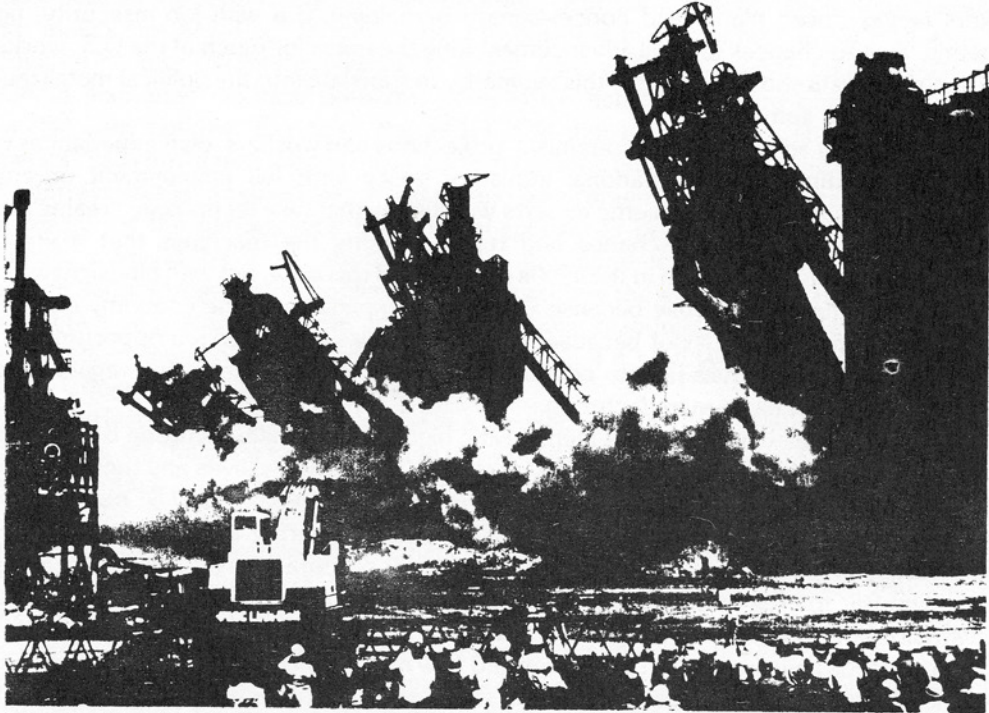
Reading Economic Trends

Industrial policy provides an opening in mainstream politics for a progressive economic critique, but organized labor's position so far does not seem capable of leading us in. The arguments are defensive at a time when the unions already have been tagged as too self-interested to help economic recovery. At the same time, the emphasis on foreign competition more or less lets U.S. corporations off the hook.

Shuttered factories and boarded-up main street shops, uprooted young families and despair at middle age -- the old mill towns and industrial cities across the Midwest and Northeast face precipitous decline. For many, the callousness of the "free market" economic cycle has become a personal experience. It is the unspoken lesson of countless human interest stories in the press and on TV for all working people.

For the unions, this decline is a life-and-death crisis of membership, of collective-bargaining strength, and of basic self-confidence and political identity. But the unions have not separated out the assault on people's lives and communities, for which there is tremendous public sympathy, from the assault on a way of life.

An era is passing. In the twentieth century mass production era, some workers in some parts of the country could reasonably expect to finish high school, enter the factory, put in a lifetime of hard work and in return aspire to middle class security and life in the suburbs or the better part of town. Steel and auto, and industries like trucking that supported them, symbolized this opportunity, and the unions in those industries spoke for labor.



Even at its height, this middle class dream applied only to a small proportion of U.S. workers. Twenty-five years ago in *The Crisis of American Labor*, Sidney Lens talked about a gap between Big Labor and Little Labor. On one side stood the large, bureaucratized unions with national contracts, new cost-of-living protections, and expanding benefits. On the other stood the majority of *organized* labor, in smaller unions or working under local contracts, struggling in the service or public sectors and so on. Lens described this gap as more important than any lingering differences between the now united AFL and CIO. Since then, union membership as a whole has shrunk. Then on top of this, the inflationary 1970s hit workers in the major bargaining groups differently from all other workers, with workers in smaller, newer or weaker unions better off than but closer to the pattern of unorganized labor more than those in the majors.

This gap between big labor and little labor owes more to the historical disunity -- racial divisions particularly -- of the U.S. working class than to greed and corruption of officialdom, inevitable bureaucratic pressures, etc. About the most valuable contribution left activists

could make to the present labor fightback would be to bring these historical problems to bear, specifically and strategically.

For most U.S. workers, the era that is passing in the old smokestack industries is either one they never enjoyed or else did not experience in the inflated middle class terms the media portrays. There is wide sympathy for the hundreds of thousands and perhaps millions of workers facing closed plants and concessionary bargaining. But with job insecurity, tight budgeting, limited chances for skill advancement long the norm for much of the U.S. working class, labor activists shouldn't expect this sympathy to translate into the political mobilization already lacking for some time.

This is especially so when both economists' projections and workers' own experiences run counter to equating any new national industrial policy with full employment or equal opportunity. Some workers and some experts will still say that new technology creates more jobs than it replaces (in maintenance and repair, making the machines that make the machines, etc.) Early automation in the 1960s encouraged this view, but with hindsight we can see that employment levels rose because the overall expansion of the economy outpaced technological improvement -- not because new technologies expanded job opportunities. In today's much tighter, crisis-ridden economy, there is little prospect of regaining old employment levels in basic manufacturing.

One of the reasons why last year's Democratic high tech-old manufacturing battles faded was that both sides discovered they needed each other. No one believes any more that high tech industries can keep growing nation-wide to the point of becoming the U.S.' new industrial base. Instead, high tech segments are expanding now by gearing their products to basic manufacturing, office automation and the ways the major corporations do business generally. More ominously for full employment prospects, the big corporations recognize that any reindustrialization today will be a high tech reindustrialization: to be competitive world-wide, U.S. capital needs new production processes and new management systems to support them.

Displaced workers' own experiences over the years confirm this. In New England, for example, it was the sons and daughters of working class families in the old textile and shoe towns who found their way into the 1950s and 1960s electronics boom -- not the displaced workers themselves. Today, unions are *beginning* to talk about retraining programs and the like after so many of the jobs are already gone. Meanwhile, the technical schools, community colleges, and military training feed a new generation of workers to the new skilled opportunities. Beyond this, global labor market competition and new technologies strongly suggest few manufacturing jobs overall and both in manufacturing and in other sectors, fewer skilled jobs.

Labor's Strategy

Progressives don't have to roll over and play dead in the face of these trends. Unfortunately, organized labor's rush for a national consensus leads it to brush over the problems and try to be all things to all people. The AFL-CIO's program centers on restoring basic manufacturing jobs -- its own base. To avoid a self-centered appearance, the labor federation does two things; one, it assumes the appropriate new policy combination can recreate the ever-expanding U.S. economic machine. Two, it assumes that given the right governmental context, differences

over new technology can be resolved between labor and management without undue antagonism.

In this conservative era we are in, who can blame the unions for trying to appear responsible (appropriately concerned about corporate profits)? And in the present crisis atmosphere, it is almost besides the point to say closing off avenues of political independence for a generation is what makes the AFL-CIO so subordinate to business in Democratic Party coalitions. The unions *do* have to dig themselves out of a hole now, and they have to begin somewhere.

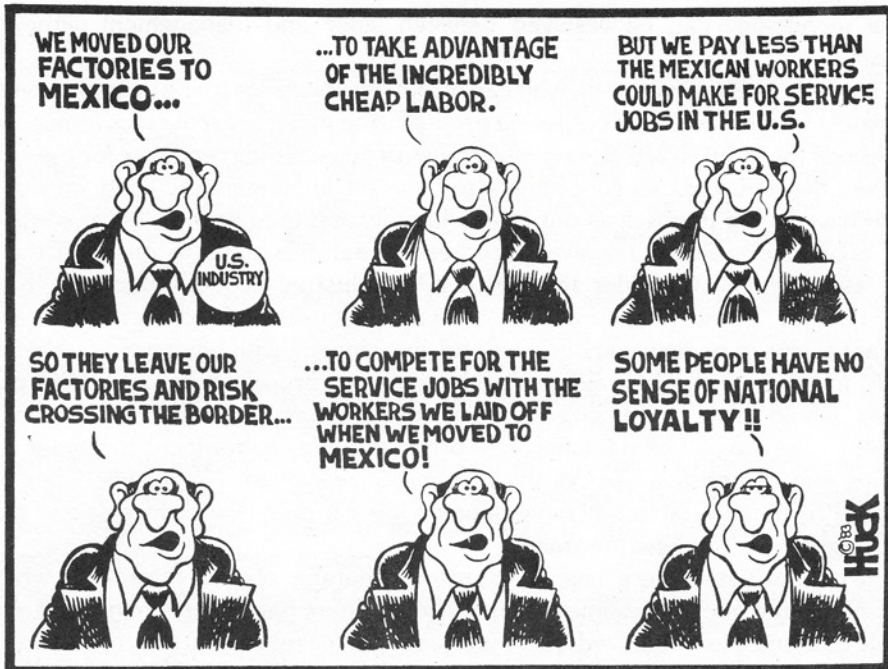
Given economic realities, however, progressive activists have to question the unions' strategic assumptions. Consider the AFL-CIO's industrial policy statement. "Rebuilding America" calls for "a new kind of social contract among business, labor and government." Yet the contract seems to be between business and government, with labor a passive beneficiary. To qualify for the various new government-sponsored programs the AFL-CIO proposes, companies would have to promise to do any number of good things, from ending discrimination, foregoing union-busting, and protecting the environment to vaguer goals like "productive and responsible use" of the new public resources. *No specific labor pledge is mentioned.* Presumably, labor will have done its job if it puts Walter Mondale in office and lobbies Congress for the new programs.

Over the last few years, there have been a growing number of confrontations in which union concessions are the price for maintaining union jobs. There have been a handful of marginally reasonable outcomes for organized labor, such as in the recent mutual concessions negotiated at Eastern Airlines, and a much larger number of unilateral givebacks and unsuccessful strikes over these issues. This reflects the balance of class forces today. While the AFL-CIO may believe that enacting industrial policy legislation may tip the balance the other way, it is much more likely that the balance of guarantees and obligations *within* successful industrial policy legislation will mirror the wider political balance. Companies may have to promise job-creating investments, but work conditions, training and promotion rights, environmental protection, consumer product pricing and so on will likely be on corporate terms.

Labor is not likely to achieve through this electoral battle what it has not otherwise been able to achieve unless and until the fight for industrial policy is a *movement* struggle to change the balance of political forces. And from that point of view, the strategic orientation that organized labor brings to the current economic debate has major flaws.

In the AFL-CIO's industrial policy scheme, there is little that arms people for a fight against corporate policy. In fact, "Rebuilding America" is not cast in class terms at all. The title itself suggests its frame of reference: "*Rebuilding America: A National Industrial Policy.*" American economic decline is the central concern: even the plight of the displaced worker is presented as a symptom and a concern in this decline, but it is the national decline itself that is the starting point and overall framework.

From the AFL-CIO's point of view, labor struggles in the first place against foreign competition. Greedy (short-sighted) capitalists and wrong-minded Reaganauts are a secondary target. The AFL-CIO criticizes the big corporations mainly for displaying too much of a penchant for the fast buck in recent years -- not modernizing, shipping jobs overseas, buying cheaper parts abroad and so on -- rather than any fundamental shortcomings. Similarly,



the labor federation scores Reaganomics for its heartlessness, but as an economic policy, their main complaint seems to be that, like the corporations, Reagan has not targeted foreign competition sufficiently.

In trying to arm a popular counterattack, labor does not target the multinationals in general, much less the system of multinational-based production. This means that whatever industrial policy may do for the *economy*, it holds no guarantee for improving conditions for the people.

The AFL-CIO compounds narrowness of vision with limited democracy. As mentioned earlier, the nature of the crisis gives organizers a good basis for appeals for participatory democracy. "Rebuilding America's" overwhelming emphasis, however, is on national boards. While industry-based and regional committees are mentioned, the actual decision-making would be done nationally. In addition, the unions favor their usual tri-partite structure of "government, labor and management," with top union leaders speaking for not just unionized workers but all working people. The process would only be "aided" by "broad public input." It is interesting that the policy apparatus as a whole would include many boards, committees, experts, and so on, reaching down to the industry level, but not to the plant level. Yet for the most part, the AFL-CIO is a strong booster of quality circles and other plant-based production-raising projects, so long as they aren't explicitly union-busting in design. At the very least, why couldn't the AFL-CIO have tried to integrate that kind of locally-based structure into the planning process? The AFL-CIO's partnership approach to capital in the reindustrialization process leaves mass politics out of the calculations. Yet given the actual contradictions in the economy today, progressives are going to need to assemble an army to achieve anything

positive. This means combining workplace-based mobilization with tapping the wide range and growing sophistication of community-based economic and environmental action groups as well as organizing in the Black, Latin, and Asian communities.

Alternatives

For many, reports and debates over industrial policy are so much abstraction. We hear one or another mix of ambitious promises and lofty democratic structures, but imagining how to force the corporations to do anything they weren't already planning to do is as hard as ever. For this reason, in this article, we tried to look at industrial policy politically -- as a component of a political strategy. And we have argued that this makes sense in 1984 with coalition-building and electoral momentum so much on activists' minds.

A political strategy has to answer the question, where does class struggle focus at this time? Without deciding who our target is and what leverage we have against it, it matters little how many good things we have in our program. As we have argued, organized labor focuses its struggle on international competition. As much as Reagan and big business come under criticism, it is mainly for emphasizing short-term gains for themselves at the expense of the U.S. people and the economy. The AFL-CIO imagines a national alliance, including labor and management, to restore the economy to growth.

A growing number of radical economic policies for the 1980s and beyond have appeared. Along with trenchant critiques of current policies, such as Robert Lekachman's *Reaganomics: Greed is Not Enough* and Piven and Cloward's *The New Class War*, are the beginnings of economic alternatives. Arguments like those of Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison in *The Deindustrialization of America* and Samuel Bowles, David Gordon and Thomas Weisskopf's *Beyond the Wasteland* avoid the label "industrial policy." Yet they share a commitment to new governmental intervention and democratic policy-making on the economy. And the mainstream economic debate grants them legitimacy. For the radicals, the class struggle focuses on the corporations or on capitalist economic imperatives, and this makes all the difference in the world for organizing today.

Take, for example, *Beyond the Wasteland*, probably the most comprehensive of these radical critiques. The book is very detailed and so far is only on sale in hardcover, but the authors' arguments have been summarized widely in magazines and newspapers. Bowles, Gordon and Weisskopf reject prevailing wisdom that United States industry failed to undertake timely modernization, whether because profits were squandered or whatever, and now suffers from a capital shortage. They therefore oppose remedies, including the AFL-CIO's which basically feed public resources (taxes) to corporations for capital accumulation. For them, the problems in the U.S. economy "may be traced to the costs of maintaining a faltering system of private corporate power, not to a failure of technique or a dearth of productive machinery" (p. 4). Low productivity stems from corporate waste, none the least of which is the tremendous burden of repressive management on the job, high unemployment, discrimination, etc. -- labor's grievances also. Instead of a pro-business strategy based on an alleged capital shortage, they call for a democratic economic strategy to cope with this "slack economy."

Two problems frame this and other radical critiques. First, changing the focus from growth to jobs. The AFL-CIO and others emphasize the job-creating potential of their economic proposals, but then again, so do the Republicans. In Democratic thinking, jobs remain where they have been since the New Deal -- a function of a wider economic boom, with stop-gap public works programs on the side. Breaking out of this subordination to corporate power is the beginning point for most radical critiques.

Newer and less explicit is striking a second balance -- between jobs and work. It is not just that sections of the country are losing jobs to other sections or other countries or that low pay jobs are replacing high pay jobs, and we should try to get them back. In this process, and in the steps toward restabilizing itself U.S. business is now taking, the nature of work itself is changing. Dramatic technological changes now reach into virtually every economic sector. Equally important and perhaps the governing factor is what *Business Week* recently heralded as "A Work Revolution in U.S. Industry" (5/16/83). The changes in work rules and working conditions generally are business' answer to hopes for a more democratic workplace in what could shape up as a new and major era of struggle. How do we overcome the evolved conservative balance between capitalist growth and workers' jobs? What will be the future of work, and who will decide? A sequel to this article will look at both these problems for democratic economics.

**--Jonathan Hoffman
March 1984**

The Jackson Campaign In Massachusetts

Rev. Jesse Jackson's entry into the presidential race this year has changed the national political map. Jackson is not the first Black person to run for President: Frederick Douglas and Shirley Chisolm had also been presidential candidates in years past. Yet the Jackson campaign has a viability (which does not necessarily mean win-ability) which prior campaigns lacked. A Forward Motion editorial characterized the Jackson campaign as "pro-equality populism" (December, 1983). This accurate assessment helps explain the Jackson campaign - a progressive breath and path-breaking development in the U.S. political scene.

An essential message of the Jackson candidacy is the need for broad popular unity for social justice. This unity, termed the "Rainbow Coalition," is somewhat different from the earlier New Deal Coalition in a few ways. For one, though the Jackson Rainbow Coalition exist and acts within the realm of mainstream politics, it is in many ways anti-Establishment (e.g., anti-corporate Establishment; anti-Democratic Party National Committee Establishment). It is also a movement for the empowerment of the disenfranchised, specifically oppressed nationalities. Additionally, the Rainbow Coalition has actively sought out relatively newer social movements, such as the gay and lesbian rights movement and the environmental movement, to join forces with the more "traditional" movements of oppressed nationalities, women and rank-and-file labor.

This political potential attracted a number of Massachusetts activists to the notion that a viable local campaign could and should be built. The following is a look at this campaign, and some observations concerning its results.

The Setting

The most important feature of the setting for Massachusetts was the campaign and organization in 1983 to get Mel King elected Mayor of Boston. Within the Mel King campaign were a cross section of political activists from various nationalities, classes and political movements. The existence of the Mel King campaign prepared the basis for a Jackson presidential campaign and organization.

Within the Black community informal discussion developed during the summer of '83 concerning the implications of a possible Jackson presidential campaign. As in other cities, discussions here were informal for the most part: a potential Jackson candidacy was never debated in an open and organized manner. Individuals and sometimes groups decided on the matter separately. Exploratory committees formed in several states to consider the possibility of such a campaign, but rarely were these open to a broad range of activists. Some former members of the Boston Black United Front were interested in seeing the National Black United Front (NBUF) sponsor a gathering to promote discussion on the campaign and to attempt to come to some common view. Due to the pressure of the King campaign, however, nothing could be done to turn these hopes into anything more than indirect communication

with the sisters and brothers in New York City.

For many people involved in the King campaign, the possibility of a Jackson candidacy raised many difficult questions. At one end of the political spectrum there were questions such as what to make of a progressive candidate running for the *Democratic Party nomination*, and could leftists and other progressives have any impact on and utilize a *national* presidential campaign. On the other end of the spectrum, questions arose as to whether Jackson would be a "spoiler" candidate taking votes from Mondale and thereby weakening the chance of defeating Reagan in November '84. As will become clear, these issues had an important impact on the character of the Jackson campaign and organization.

The Mel King campaign had an overwhelmingly positive effect on the unity, political consciousness and organization of Boston's Black community. Additionally, it helped move many of Boston's progressive activists in a productive and united direction. But little organization for Jackson could get discussed, let alone gel until after the November '83 run-off between King and now-Mayor Ray Flynn.

Throughout November and early December rumors were flying concerning the nature of a Massachusetts Jackson campaign organization. One of the biggest difficulties for many Jackson supporters was unclarity as to who was responsible for calling such an organization into existence -- *if anyone*. The names of former Mayoral candidate Mel King; noted psychiatrist Dr. Alvin Poussaint; and Rev. Charles Stith, pastor of Union United Methodist Church, were each mentioned as being potential convenors of a state-wide organization. The national campaign office gave conflicting signals as to who was responsible, and each of these figures appeared to have a somewhat different understanding themselves.

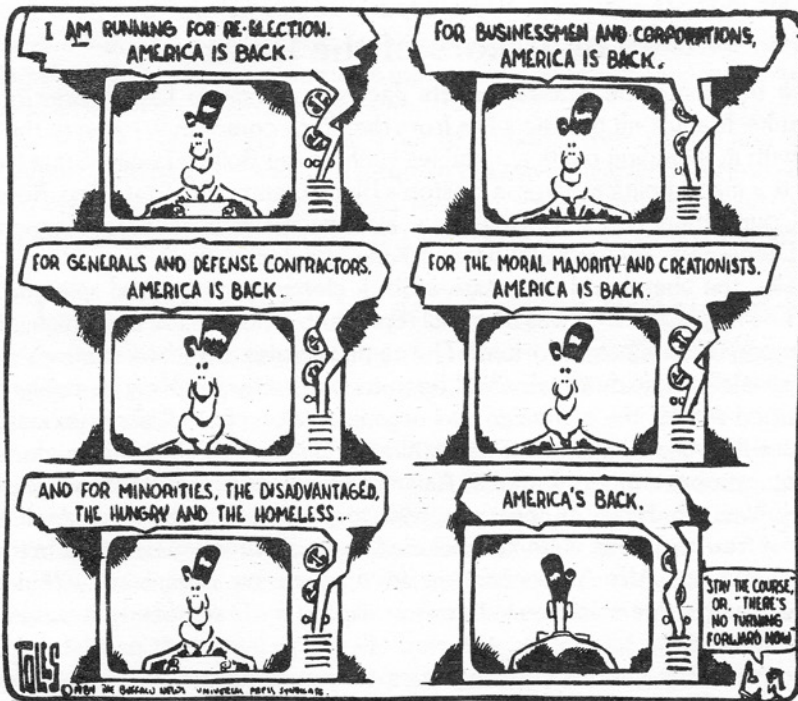
Events surrounding the King campaign aftermath may have compounded the confusion. Following the run-off election, the King campaign called a sum-up meeting. This meeting began efforts to transform the Mel King Rainbow Coalition into a permanent city-wide organization. Developing a proposed structure and statement of purpose consumed many hours. In addition, the Black community organization of the King campaign created a possibility for an independent Black grass-roots political organization. Many activists who had been involved in the King campaign from the Black community felt the need for independent political organization in the Black community, an effort which would ally with other groups. Between 60-100 activists showed up at a December community meeting to discuss formation of such an organization. Since the 1981 demise of the Boston Black United Front, there has been no such organization in Boston. The King campaign helped bring together the forces necessary for a new effort.

The Campaign Gets Organized

The unclarity over structure, leadership and general direction of a Jackson campaign came to an end on a snowy December evening. The first meeting of the Mass. Jackson-for-President campaign organization took place at Boston's Harriet Tubman House (a well-known community center in the racially mixed South End). Contrary to the hopes of many activists from Boston's King campaign, the entire leadership and structure for the campaign organization was presented to those in attendance. Co-chairing the Mass. campaign were

Dr. Alvin Poussaint and Mel King. Boyce Slayman served as State-wide campaign coordinator and Pat Walker was in charge of Field Organization. (Slayman and Walker both served analogous functions in the King campaign). In addition, several other community activists from the King campaign served in various positions within the Jackson organization, including as Congressional District coordinators, and constituency coordinators. Though activists from other parts of the State attended, the horrible weather prevented a number of folks from Western Massachusetts from making the meeting.

The presentations that night were to the point. Their thrust was that while Mass. was not the crucial state to win, a strong turn-out here, in conjunction with New Hampshire, could set the tone for future primaries. Additionally, large-scale fund-raising here would contribute to the national campaign.



The strength of presenting a ready-made organization to the public lay in its “get-to-work” orientation, i.e., cutting short time-consuming debate. And time was of the essence since there were roughly 90 days left until the Mass. primary. At the same time, many King activists had outstanding criticisms of some King campaign leaders and organizational practices. The resurrection of much of the King campaign organization as the core of the Mass. Jackson organization left some activists uneasy. As one example, it appeared that the Boston “Rainbow Coalition” went on hold and/or became the Boston Jackson organization. This was particularly confusing for those members of the Boston “Rainbow” who hadn’t yet decided what stance to take toward the anti-Reagan presidential candidates.

As the time-clock ticked away toward the primary, the Jackson organization was coming together with activists from the King Mayoral campaign at its core. But the organizations were not identical. First, the criticisms of the King campaign organization combined with fatigue and burn-out to keep some King campaign workers away. In addition, there were the political differences mentioned earlier over the nature of an anti-Reagan challenge in '84. Despite many similarities in platform and orientation between King and Jackson, this in and of itself was no guarantee as to where King activists were to find themselves in the presidential contest. Perhaps, ironically, a number of progressive activists who had sided with Ray Flynn in the controversial Boston Mayoral race, now energetically joined the Jackson campaign. Finally, this shift in organizational base was most notable in the overall absence of support for the Jackson candidacy from most of the progressive-led unions which had courageously sided with Mel King in the Boston race. We will touch on this below.

The Colors of the Rainbow

From the beginning the Massachusetts Jackson campaign had diverse representation within its ranks. Many long-time activists from the Black community came to the first meeting and stuck with it, including political notables such as the Bolling family. State Senator Royal Bolling, Sr. is a major political actor in Boston's Black community. State Rep. Royal Bolling, Jr. and City Councilman Bruce Bolling have also been vocal. Although generally seen as traditional Democrats, they vocally backed King and Jackson.

Additionally, the liberal and progressive Black clergy held a critical role and voice in the campaign. The organized Left was also well represented both in the campaign infrastructure, as well as among the campaign workers. The campaign also attracted relatively new people to its ranks, especially individuals who had been mobilized by the King campaign in Boston.

As mentioned earlier, the campaign was organized along both Congressional District lines (with various subdivisions) and along "constituency" lines. Constituencies included students, clergy, peace groups, women, Latinos, Asians, Arabs, gays and lesbians, and labor. Each constituency was to have its own coordinator, overseen by a general constituency coordinator. Afro-Americans were not included as a constituency because, in the view of the campaign leadership, Afro-Americans would tend to be organized within the District structure. Although some objection to this was raised at the first meeting, it was apparently not pursued.

The response of the various constituencies to the Jackson campaign was very uneven. Students and the Black clergy were very active and always seemed to be on the move. Students were not only mobilized within Massachusetts, but were also anxious to volunteer time and energy to campaign in New Hampshire (whose primary date was two weeks earlier). The clergy, while having an independent organization within the campaign, performed a variety of functions in the campaign. It was within the clergy that the Nation of Islam continued and developed a contribution to the electoral struggle which they began in the King campaign. The support given nationally to the Jackson campaign by Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam was translated into hard-working members of the local campaign (though always working as the Nation of Islam). Many Arab-Americans also rallied to the campaign in

large part because of Jackson's recognition of and respect for a distinct and legitimate Palestinian national question in the Middle East.

The response of other constituencies was far more complicated. While active committees or personnel were established within each constituency, peace groups, for example, divided up among several candidates. The organized women's movement had ambivalent feelings regarding Jackson based on his personal anti-abortion stance (though Jackson made it clear that he supported women's right to choose). Some white members of the organized women's movement were also turned away because of some of Rev. Jackson's criticisms of the organized women's movement for being white and insensitive to the demands and needs of women of color. While Jackson was not (is not) anti-women's movement, he does have very direct criticisms. Many area activists were less than interested in pursuing the campaign after the appointment of Barbara Honniger to a campaign position promoting the interests of women's issues. Honniger, a former Reagan Administration functionary who defected to the Jackson campaign, did not impress women's movement activists as being very much in touch with the needs of today's women's movement.

Jackson made concerted efforts to reach out to activists from the gay and lesbian rights movement. While Jackson did speak at a forum in Boston concerning gay and lesbian rights, work in that constituency did not proceed very far. And, while coordinators were appointed to work with Latinos and Asians, the work did not seem to get a real foot-hold in those respective communities.

Labor: Roadblocks and Engine Problems

Perhaps the most difficult constituency organizing was in labor. The source of the problems came from both inside and outside the campaign, though the major obstacles were clearly external to the campaign.

The major obstacle to reaching workers within organized labor was the top-down decision of the AFL-CIO to endorse Walter Mondale. The problem was not the endorsement as such, but the manner in which it was made and the implications for the local level. The shifting alliances mentioned earlier, specifically with regard to labor, were in large part related to this endorsement. With very few exceptions, the matter of local endorsement for anyone other than Mondale was a closed book. While some former Mel King supporters in Boston supported Mondale on their own (generally from the standpoint of Mondale being able to defeat Reagan, a proposition which many activists question), what was heard more often than not was a strong reluctance to break with the AFL-CIO line.

What was at stake was not a matter of personal courage: there was no question of the commitment of the unionists who supported Mel King in the Boston Mayoral race. In order to make the King endorsement, for example, several unions went out on a limb, and in at least one case, faced a decertification threat by more conservative members. In the presidential race, however, the pressure was mainly coming from the top (the Internationals; Massachusetts State Labor Council) to fall in line and back Mondale. There were a number of implied threats for breaking with the official line. This repressive AFL-CIO support for Mondale forced the soon-to-form Jackson Labor committee to adopt a less-than-effective strategy to make some headway within the unions. More about this below.

Interest in developing a labor component of the Jackson campaign preceded the formation of the Massachusetts campaign organization. Both the national campaign office in Washington and local figures identified with the Jackson candidacy were approached about pro-Jackson work with labor. As with other matters, ambiguous responses were given. Efforts toward the organizing of a Jackson Labor committee received a boost when two local union presidents offered their *personal* endorsement of the Jackson candidacy. Plans were made to hold a labor press conference to coincide with Rev. Jackson's appearance at a campaign breakfast February 4th at Rev. Stith's Union Methodist Church. What made the press conference a special event was that it would also be a chance for a representative from the National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees to deliver an endorsement of Rev. Jackson for that organization. This breakfast and press conference was also taking place at the same time as a large pro-Mondale rally sponsored by the Mass. State Labor Council. Needless to say, the contrasts were striking. The Jackson Labor press conference featured endorsement speeches by the presidents of Local 26 (Hotel and Restaurant Workers) and United Steel Workers Local 8751 (the school bus drivers), along with the speech by the representative from the N.A.P.F.E. Standing behind the speakers were about 15 male and female union members from various Boston area unions and themselves representing different races and nationalities. Remarks by Rev. Jackson capped the press conference. The press conference did receive local press coverage, though it was dwarfed by the State Labor Council's rally. The Council's rally was overwhelmingly white and was organized from the top-down.

Serious efforts followed to build a Jackson Labor committee. With the appointment of a coordinator, efforts were made to contact local Boston labor activists, as well as reach out to labor activists in other cities. The basic orientation adopted by the Labor committee was the following: (1) *Since official union endorsements will be very few and far between, the committee needed to reach the rank-and-file directly,* (2) *the committee should attempt to reach organized and unorganized workplaces (particularly those with some history of struggle),* (3) *the committee should promote voter registration literature distribution, fund-raising, soliciting volunteers for the campaign, and networking to get people to the polls on election day.* The biggest constraint the committee faced was time: little more than a month till the primary by the point that the committee was formed, and far less time for voter registration. The absence of a clear Jackson platform regarding labor also hindered the labor committee's work. Rev. Jackson delivered an interesting and informative speech to a conference of Local 1199 (Health and Hospital Workers), and there were some points which the committee took from that, but it was still felt to be insufficient. In preparation for a statewide literature drop, five members of the labor committee prepared a statement regarding labor based upon various speeches and platform points delivered by Rev. Jackson. Unfortunately, the final version of the tabloid produced for the drop included very little of the committee's draft statement.

With time getting very short, the committee concentrated its collective energy on efforts to pull off a gospel fund-raiser. The fund-raiser was a marginal success, but one point which was striking was the reluctance of many rank-and-file union activists to stand on stage when Dominic Bozzotto, president of Local 26 (Hotel and Restaurant Workers) delivered a labor-

oriented pro-Jackson speech. There was no question but that the AFL-CIO had succeeded in discouraging many progressive unionists from voicing the Jackson cause.

We also got limited help from some key workplaces in the City of Boston. This may have been due to the reluctance of some of these activists to buck the AFL-CIO, but it also related to insufficient outreach on the part of the committee. An independent union with a largely Black membership (United Labor Union 1475) was never contacted despite the fact that they may have been able to play a more direct role in the campaign. Had the committee had more time, some of the difficulties faced could have been resolved.

(The All-People's Congress, a component of the labor committee, did obtain a "Labor Bus" to visit different job sites and promote Jackson. The A.P.C.'s manner of operating in the committee, however, aroused a good deal of criticism and resentment. Essentially, they would do what they wanted to do and go around appointed leadership.) Efforts to coordinate and work on a state-wide level were nearly impossible given time and organizational constraints. Networks did not exist to build upon. Instead, networks had to be built and contacts had to be made. With no one working full-time to do this, the committee could only rely on phone and mail contact.

Each of these factors -- AFL-CIO arm-twisting for Mondale, a lack of time and established networks, no paid staff -- contributed to the committee reaching few rank-and-file workers with its message.

The 'Hymie' Incident: Mortal Wound to the Mass. Campaign

Opinion polls from New Hampshire surprised most observers in early February. Some estimates of Jackson's support hovered around 15% in a state with a very low oppressed nationality population. There was talk that Jackson might come in third in the primary. In both New Hampshire and Mass., the campaign felt as if it were on a roll. Then, in mid-February the bomb dropped.

Much has been written regarding the "Hymie" incident, and I will not go over it all again except to say this. On Jackson's part the "Hymie" comment betrayed an insensitivity toward Jews and toward Black-Jewish relations (which especially since the mid-1960s have been tense). Whether or not the comment was personal and made in anger matters little: it should not have been made. Second, the entire incident revealed a naivete inexcusable on the part of a presidential candidate. Little if anything said by a presidential candidate -- *especially a Black presidential candidate* -- is sacred and secure. Third, the manner in which the incident was handled was deadly, both for the candidate (in New Hampshire and Massachusetts) but also for the campaign organization. The denials, followed by semi-denials, followed by admission, disoriented many campaign workers. While there were no mass resignations from the campaign, morale hit a real low.

This said, the "Hymie" incident was not totally of Jackson's creation. Many people in the media, along with pro-Zionist forces, had been hounding Jackson ever since he announced his candidacy. Jackson's progressive position on the Palestinian national question was the only subject for many of these elements, and anything less than total and boot-licking support for

Israel was condemned as anti-semitic. Prior to the "Hymie" incident, some people in the media tried to nail Jackson on the Arab League's contribution to the PUSH Foundation. Jackson's response was very good, and the incident fell on its face. In the "Hymie" incident, Jackson fell into a trap, and in his poorly thought-out moves to remedy the situation, the trap got tighter around the neck. Black candidates, just as Black activists, and for that matter all Black people generally are under intense scrutiny by the larger white society. It is this which Jackson seemed to forget for a crucial minute.



Jesse of Arabia

EXAMPLE OF ANTI-JACKSON MEDIA BIAS

To Jackson's supreme credit, his February 26th statement in Manchester, New Hampshire on the incident was one of the most moving and personal self-criticisms which someone could have written. It was not a simple apology, which the U.S. public is so use to hearing from established politicians. The media, pro-Zionists, and many white liberals and progressives, however, were not willing to accept this. At every opportunity this incident was reraised, so much so that even editors from the *Boston Herald and Globe* had to take issue with the witch-hunt style of criticisms of Jackson.

The problem which faced white liberals and progressives was well summarized in a March 17th article in *The Nation* by Philip Green. He commented:

Finally , and above all, white members of the coalition have an obligation too. It is, first, an obligation to understanding. As a black colleague has written, "Jewish and other white supporters of Jackson's programs and goals are now in the position that black Americans have been in for decades, i.e., forced to assess the importance of a candidate's policies while conceding the candidate's shortcomings. Blacks have never

had the choice of a white Presidential candidate who stood unequivocally for black aspirations and who was not without some taint of racial antagonism or insensitivity. Coalitions across racial lines are burdened by three hundred years of history."

The question for white liberals and progressives was whether they would place the goals and objectives of the Rainbow Coalition first, or would they abandon this in view of their criticisms of Jackson-the-person. The poor showing Jackson received in New Hampshire was an omen for the Mass. campaign.

One could not have asked for worse weather on primary day. Massachusetts had a windy and messy snow storm which resulted in one of the lowest voter turnouts in years. State-wide Jackson received 5% of the vote. In several places, the campaign did rather well, however. 24% of the Springfield vote went to Jackson; 21% of Amherst; and 16.5% of Boston (75% of the Black vote in Boston went to Jackson).

The vote indicated a few things. For one, Gary Hart's excellent showing in New Hampshire probably influenced many uncommitted voters. Second, the McGovern vote was estimated by many campaign workers to have been increased by defectors from the Jackson campaign (after the "Hymie" incident) in addition to the nostalgia connected with the McGovern candidacy. McGovern had some of the most interesting and hard-hitting TV commercials of any candidate, blasting U.S. foreign policy. One of his commercials raised the issue of what would have happened had McGovern been elected in '72. Many McGovern supporters when interviewed stated: "I voted for him in '72 and I'll vote for him again." Mass. was the only state to go for McGovern in '72. The McGovern vote, while a peace vote, was not a vote for a movement. Rather it was a vote of "conscience".

The black community did come out to vote for Jackson. From the beginning, campaign strategists felt Mass. would not be a critical state for Jackson, especially with its relatively low oppressed nationality population. At the same time, had it not been for the "Hymie" incident and the snow-storm the turn-out would undoubtedly have been higher.

First, fortunately, Mass. was not the kiss of death for the campaign. Jackson went on to do well in the South, Illinois and New York. He has not, and probably will not totally recover from the "Hymie" incident, but he and the campaign have shown themselves capable of weathering a terrible storm. To borrow from the title of a New York Times article of April 13th, "Jackson candidacy is Giving New Shape to Politics in U.S."

Second, in Mass. the Jackson campaign extended the political atmosphere which had already been electrified by the Boston Mayoral campaign of Mel King. The Jackson campaign has meant a large-scale and very sophisticated entry into the political arena of Black political activists and the Black electorate.

Third, the New Hampshire and Mass. campaigns both show that the "Rainbow" has a ways to go before it can completely unite various constituencies. Part of this is related to the objective conditions in the U.S., i.e., white racism and competing "interests" among various groups of critical importance. It has been shown that, at least at this point, whites are still very reluctant to follow Black leadership. The "Rainbow Coalition," on the other hand, should it outlast the '84 race, will have to achieve a greater sensitivity and appreciation for the needs and objectives of various movements and constituencies. The Coalition must make serious efforts

to solicit greater support from legitimate representatives of various movements.

Fourth, and related to the national and local situation, the Jackson campaign must be seen as greater than Jackson the individual. The Jackson campaign has not been, nor should it be a campaign of conscience (a la McGovern) but a movement. Nor can it be a movement based solely on the credibility and charisma of the candidate. The "pro-equality populism" of the campaign, i.e., the broad-based popular unity for social justice with a cornerstone of pro-equal rights and pro-oppressed nationality political power, can be a viable movement for the U.S. political scene. Rather than tired liberalism or "new realism" of the Democratic Party, pro-equality populism may be one step in creating a dramatic shift in political alignments. Pro-equality populism can and should be put before the masses of U.S. people as a new, exciting and mobilizing agenda for the '80s and '90s.

Fifth, and specific to the Mass. campaign, the time crunch was one of the greatest obstacles facing our overall work. It may have been unavoidable given the prior Mel King race, but it put the pro-Jackson forces at a tremendous disadvantage compared with the other candidacies. Additionally and related to the Mass. campaign, was the problem of appointed leadership in cities other than Boston. In New Bedford, for example, where there remains bad feelings as a result of factional strife which destroyed the For The People newspaper and organization several years ago, the campaign leadership was insufficiently sensitive to the problems of that area when choosing local campaign leaders. This led to tension and a reluctance of many progressives to work directly with the campaign.

Sixth, the Jackson campaign could have been an even greater opportunity for the overall Left, and specifically, the Black Left to reorganize, concentrate its collective forces and make some breakthroughs. The Left, by and large, participated in the Mass. campaign as individuals or separate groups. The NBUF for example, was not able to get the mileage which the Nation of Islam has been able to get even though Rev. Daughtry (chairman of the NBUF) is a close supporter of Rev. Jackson. The Nation of Islam has been able to build the campaign, publicize and legitimize their own group, and not come off sectarian in the process. On the other hand, some of the best work in the campaign was done by left-wing activists plugging away, but rarely viewed as part of a larger whole. The Jackson campaign, especially given its overall progressive character, offered the Black Left an opportunity to reassert itself on the national level.

The Jackson campaign has indeed reshaped U.S. politics. Old assumptions about what the Black electorate will or will not do are out the window. Based on this awakened and energized Black electorate, the embryo of something new may be implanting itself in diverse social movements looking to build a "new majority". The question for the left is whether we can help to shape and direct this motion in a way that assists things to grow.

**--Bill Fletcher
April, 1984**

Bill Fletcher was the Labor Coordinator for the Mass. Jackson Campaign organization.

On The Death Of Ahmed Sekou Toure

On Monday, March 26th, Ahmed Sekou Toure, president of Guinea and noted international statesman, died in a Cleveland, Ohio hospital as a result of apparent heart failure.

Sekou Toure began his career as a union official, later becoming the leader of Guinea's struggle for independence from France (in 1958). Toure rose to international prominence when he voiced Guinea's refusal to remain connected with France after independence was proclaimed. The French, led at the time by Charles de Gaulle, had planned on granting formal independence to Guinea (and the other French African colonies) while keeping it controlled indirectly through economic ties. Toure personified the Guinean, and in fact, the African demand for total independence and full respect from Europe for Africa. Toure sought aid without outside domination. The French were so infuriated by Guinea's boldness that they withdrew *all* aid, including light-bulbs from sockets.

Rejected by France and ignored by other Western powers because of Guinea's attempt to chart an independent and socialist path of development, Toure sought allies elsewhere. Toure requested aid from the Soviet Union, though as the years passed, he became increasingly more disenchanted with the objectives of Soviet policy and the insufficient assistance which they were providing. Toure also sought Chinese assistance, and was in fact one of the first African leaders to visit the People's Republic of China, where he established friendly relations between the two nations.

In an attempt to strengthen those African forces resisting the pressures of neo-colonialism, Toure promoted an effort to ally Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Algeria. These efforts were frustrated by an untimely series of -- probably CIA sponsored -- military coups which in a period of about 1 year overthrew Nkrumah in Ghana, Keita in Mali and Ben Bella in Algeria. In addition to fighting neo-colonialism, Toure made Guinea available as a base area for freedomfighters of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and the Cape Verde Islands (P.A.G.C.) waging a national liberation war against Portuguese colonialism in Guinea-Bissau. This costly and courageous support subjected Guinea (Conakry) to constant Portuguese attacks and "covert" terrorist assistance to anti-Toure dissidents.

For many activists in the USA, Sekou Toure came to be known by his writings as well as his anti-imperialist practice. Toure's articles in *The Black Scholar*, were made available to a large English-speaking audience. These writings, along with his presentations and discussions with numerous African-American activists, encouraged the growth of a Marxist trend within the African-American people's movement.

Africa, and the world, have suffered a tragic loss with the death of this great statesman, theoretician and committed fighter for Africans' true independence. His passing will be mourned.

LA LUTTE SE CONTINUE/ THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

(Background: Guinea, located in W. Africa on the Atlantic Coast has its capital in Conakry. Population: 5,275,000 people 2/3 of which are followers of Islam. The Peuls (Fulani), Malinke (Mandingo) and Sousou are the largest of the approximately 18 different ethnic groups. French is the official language, although there are 8 traditional languages recognized as national languages. Guinea has rich deposits of bauxite and aluminum, which are the basis for the country's mining industry (mining accounts for about 20% of the Gross National Product). Guinea also has large reserves of gold and diamonds. The majority of the Guinean people are involved in agriculture (which accounts for about 40% of the GNP). Until the recent military coup following Toure's death, the country was ruled by the Guinean Democratic Party. There was a National Assembly of 210 members, elected for 7 year terms.)

--R.T. Sims



Double Trouble For Women Of Color

There is a saying that goes, "A woman's place is barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen." Well, I'm not barefoot, and I'm not pregnant but I and lots of other women are still in the kitchen, doing what men call "women's work." I work in the belly of Boston City Hospital, preparing the food trays for the patients' meals.

And at the hospital, you get placed in jobs according to your sex. Women are still doing the traditional stuff: we're serving food, we're sweeping the floor, we're giving sick people baths, we're changing their beds, we're taking messages and answering phones. What aren't we doing? We're not fixing the plumbing, we're not on the medical staff, and we're certainly not in charge of labor relations or employment policies. Most of the job categories, except for nursing, that have large numbers of women in them are at the lowest end of the pay scale. In Local 1489 where women are either kitchen workers, housekeepers or nurses aides, the average salary is only slightly over \$10,000 a year. Now that ten thousand isn't a little extra gravy to supplement hubby's income; a great many of us are single heads of households, supporting ourselves and our kids as best as we are able.

And if that's not bad enough, women of color are in double trouble because there is job segregation not only by sex, but by color as well. In my Department, all the Dieticians are women, and all of them are white. But out of the 12 women who prepare the patient trays, none are white. It hurt to find out that fully employed white women earn only 59¢ for every dollar earned by fully employed white men. But it adds insult to injury to know that fully employed women of color earn only 47¢ -- less than half! -- of every dollar earned by white men.

Besides job segregation, another problem for people of color at BCH is that they have less seniority and less job security than whites. We began to be hired in significant numbers only 10 years ago, after federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination were extended to the public sector. In the kitchen, of the people working here ten years or more and who are permanent Civil Service 81% are white, while 75% of the recently-hired workers without Civil Service protection are people of color. Still another problem is language. People who speak Spanish, Portuguese or Haitian are found mostly in housekeeping and in the kitchen, and without language skills, they are going nowhere fast. So in terms of getting hired, getting promoted, having job security, and gaining the skills necessary to advance, women of color are in double trouble.

What Have Unions Done

What have unions done to solve our special problems? Unfortunately, up to now, not much. Unions -- even those with mostly women members -- are dominated by men, who think it's fine for us to stay in the kitchen. And for women of color, we see union leaders who think it's fine for

us to stay on the plantation or want to put us back on the boat home. When the Chinese first came to America and tried to get jobs in mining or on the railroads, it was the labor movement in California that terrorized the Chinese and succeeded in getting them legally excluded. The Exclusion Act of 1882 gave the Chinese the distinction of being the first immigrant group to be denied entry and citizenship to this land of immigrants. In the 1930s, a time of intense labor organizing, 26 national unions put into their constitutions that if you're black, you could not become a member. And in 1982, the Firefighters' and Teachers' Unions filed suit against their own minority members saying that strict seniority should be used in lay-offs, even if it means that all minority members would lose their jobs and even if it means that there would be no teachers of color in a school system that is now 60% non-white. With these examples in our peoples' histories, many of us are wary of organized labor. Too often, labor has been organized against us. And like women in general, people of color don't want to be the white man's buffer against unemployment.

On the other hand, there is a lot unions can do and we hope will do to help us gain equality, and that's why some of us have joined the union movement.

Especially now, with the right-wing attacking all working people, it's important for us to join with other working people to mount a defense. Reagan tells us we're experiencing trickle-down economics. But we know what trickle-down means: as a friend of mine put it -- "You can't piss on me and tell me it's raining!" We all know from daily experience at the grocery store trying to get George Washington to stand up and support us like a man that he can't. That dollar bill just doesn't do much for us anymore. Two years ago, during contract negotiations for City Hospital, Mayor White didn't want to give us any raise at all -- 0% -- he just wanted to throw us a bonus that would let us get out of debt to Santa Claus. It was the power of the union to negotiate that got us all a raise, men and women, black and white.

We turn to the unions, too, because this right-wing government will not protect us as women or as people of color. Under Reagan, the gains of the women's movement and the Civil Rights movement are being turned back -- not by revoking the laws, but by camera tricks worthy of a class C actor. Before, you could prove discrimination with facts like those at City Hospital. For example, there are no women in Maintenance. If a qualified woman applies and is denied, that's discrimination. No, says Ronnie, that's not good enough. He wants you to prove the employer had a conscious policy of keeping women out. Before, the laws asked for specific quotas -- promises that certain numbers of women and minorities would be hired by a certain date. Now, Ronnie says, he won't require the numbers or the dates, because he trusts the management's good intentions! Well, it's as easy to see what this does to our employment opportunities as it is to see the wrinkles behind Ronny's make-up. And so, working in the unions is part of our strategy to resist a government that has only the employers' interests at heart.

At Boston City Hospital in Local 1489, part of the movement for reform within the local came from women who did not want a union dominated by white men only. Two elections ago, the four top officers were all white men, and all security guards! Now, three of our four top officers are women, and two are women of color. How did this come about? A coalition of people who all supported the idea of a union leadership that is democratic and representative of the membership was formed.

Changing The Union

Our first task was to gain credibility as union leaders, and that meant taking an active part in all union struggles: organizing for a better contract, mobilizing against Proposition 21/2, fighting grievances -- not just becoming specialists on women and minority issues. Then there was a lot of education to be done. We wrote articles in the union newspaper, talking about how the only sacred union principle is not seniority but the principle of equality; how sometimes in the fight for equality, those who have been left out in the past need special attention; how affirmative action programs barely begin to make up for the effects of past discrimination. We introduced resolutions for the newsletter to be translated into Spanish, and it was with difficulty that that motion was passed.

When the leadership wanted to support the minority teachers' demand for constructive seniority in lay-offs -- whereby people of color would be assured the same proportion of teaching slots before and after the lay-offs -- the meeting became a shouting match. But when the furor died down, everyone left with the feeling that even so, we are one union and can work together. The other campaigns worked on in the past were remembered. Gradually, people got used to the idea that this group of union activists was out to improve working conditions for all, but especially for those who need the improvements the most. When our last contract came up, we were ready to make some demands for greater equality.

Because the Reagan government is taking the teeth out of affirmative action, we wanted to put it back in our union contract that any discriminatory employment practice, regardless of the intent to discriminate, is grievable. We didn't win it that time around, but it's on the table and we will bring it up again. We did get a seat on the hospital affirmative action committee.

Most of us are not in the dream job we said we wanted when our third grade teacher asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" With kids at home and making \$10,000 a year, you can't afford to go back to school to better yourself. The hospital had a tuition reimbursement program, but it stipulated that courses you took had to be related to your present job. Well, it's hard to find courses on scooping mashed potatoes! We changed the rule to say you can be reimbursed for education and training for any hospital-related job. We got two free slots in the EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) training program for members to be selected by the unions. And we are looking into other training programs that we can get free of charge for our lowest paid members. To help those that don't speak English, we're providing an English class. People will learn English skills, medical terminology, and learn about the union at the same time. These are some avenues out of the kitchen. After years of work, especially by our sister SEIU local, we now have a commitment from the hospital to provide space for an employee day care center. This makes it easier for women with children. Finally, we got protection for mostly women and minority members who are not permanent Civil Service, so that they can no longer be laid off without order or explanation.

All these things are just a beginning. They are there on paper, but now it's up to us to make sure that we use them to our advantage. There is lots of hard work ahead. But our biggest victory is simply in having a membership that is united behind the demand for equality.

Another project that some of us have worked on is to organize union activists of color from around the city to take the issue of equality off the back burner. We are tired of being told, "Wait until more prosperous times to ask for equal rights; we'll help you when the jobs of white men are more secure." Or, "Don't talk about discrimination; that will just turn people against you." We pay union dues too, and want to be heard! But by definition, we are in a minority in most unions, so we felt a city-wide organization would give people of color a louder voice.



Union Members for Jobs and Equality, an all-minority organization of union activists, has tried to popularize the issue of affirmative action and to rally people in its defense. We have tried to build an alliance between unions and people of color, defending unions in minority communities, and defending affirmative action in the unions. Women have played a leading role in the work of this organization.

Women as a group are a "minority" in our society, not in terms of numbers, but in terms of their power. Women know what it means to be kept in the kitchen just because they happen to be female. They are fighting to take an equal place beside men at all levels of society. People of color are also fighting for equality: and the dismantling of anti-discrimination rules is hurting both groups. So women have a special interest not just in fighting for equal rights for women,

but for equality for people of color as well. If a new women's movement and a new civil rights movement would join forces, and then if women and people of color could unite in the unions with all working people, we could move mountains!

In his book *Rank and File*, Staughton Lynd interviewed Jesse Reese, a black steelworker and union activist in the 1930s. A union official said to Jesse, "I like Negroes, but I like to see them in their place." Jesse said, "I agree. Every working man should know his place ... and my place is here in the labor movement." I work in a kitchen -- and I'm proud to work in a kitchen if its a job I've chosen. But women's minds are no longer "in the kitchen". Like Jesse, working women of color know their place -- our place -- is in the labor movement, and in the women's movement, and any place where we can fight for workers' rights, and for full equality.

Meizhu Lui

Party Up

About the last thing Marxist activists want to hear about these days is the revolutionary party. Like the once daily dinner guest from whom you no longer accept phone calls, the idea of a revolutionary party often brings hoots of laughter, much rolling of the eyes, and not a few bitter recriminations. Everybody has a story to tell about central committees they have known or this or that pompous revolutionary leader who could dish out harsh discipline and harsher criticism when times were better but could take neither when things turned sour.

A lot of the jokes are at our own expense, along the lines of how dogmatic or out of touch we were back then -- just imagine, we were party-building! Self-mockery is sometimes especially corrosive. It silences thought. Just as a lot of popular humor mixes the experience of working for a living with procapitalist lessons, so jokes about party-building often quietly endorse traditional assumptions of ruling class culture. Pretty soon "out of touch with U.S. conditions" sounds a lot like "unAmerican".

Because many of the young Marxists who belonged to the anti-war, Black, Latin, Asian and women's movements of the 1960s and 1970s became caught up in a never-never land of founding party congresses, of raids on other progressive organizations in the name of building the party, of boasts about what "founding the party" would automatically accomplish and because any possibility of a significant Marxist party is so far off, Marxist activists today have put off hard thinking about revolutionary parties. They react in what a historian once called "the atmosphere of recrimination which commonly attends a retreat." Just as we become irritated by things that in other times we didn't notice or wouldn't bother with -- personal traits of other beleaguered activists or differences in lifestyle that once might have been the subject of joking remarks and now gnaw at us -- so talk about building a party brings out more personal grievances than balanced reappraisals.

The rightward swing in politics, culture, education and the media hasn't abated. The Administration's contempt for the oppressed nationalities and for the women's movement is undisguised. Resistance in this country to naked U.S. aggression in Central America is sporadic and mainly ineffectual. The labor movement has suffered an almost unbroken string of defeats at the bargaining table and in the political arena. In this situation, talk about building a Marxist party can appear surreal. We all wish we had the energy that many people put into proclaiming a leadership for the class struggle to put into the daily battering that passes for the class struggle today. Compared to other capitalist countries, we have weak party traditions and weak party loyalties. Politics is a bad word. Party politics is worse. Many left activists, particularly those active in working class contexts, have given way before the anti-party reflexes of American political culture. But what they ignore is that you are either implementing an agreed upon approach to Marxist politics or an approach you haven't agreed on. Like it or not, every Marxist collective, and even every Marxist, has a party-building line.

The Progressivist Option

Working towards the goal of party construction seems mainly irrelevant. What is *apparently*

relevant is progressive organizing. Progressive organizing is something everybody agrees on, from Marxists through the mildest of municipal reformers. Since we all agree on the urgent necessity of building progressive coalitions against Reaganism and the corporate offensive, we should shelve our separate little agendas and devote every energy to the common progressive cause. Besides, progressive organizing doesn't leave us isolated. Progressive organizing doesn't leave us feeling like zombies from Planet X, with our weird language and funny habits, and most of all with our selfish and exploitative Marxist organizations, feeding off the living body of the progressive movement.



There are some very respectable versions of this progressivist position. One version goes like this: ultra-leftism among the 1960s and 1970s revolutionary Left discredited Marxism on the Left and among those sections of the people whom the revolutionary Left reached. In order to establish revolutionary Marxism as a political alternative for the masses of people, revolutionary Marxism has to prove itself. To do this means that those who call themselves revolutionary Marxists have to prove themselves as activists, activists who are not sectarian manipulators, crazies, or fly-by-night types, but solid, committed and reasonable people. Once that is done, once we have carved out an identity in the mass movements, then we will have the credibility to say a few things about socialism, etc.

A second version of the progressivist position goes a little differently. It says: revolution is not around the corner; our main task today is helping the people organize themselves in the reform battles. This has and will occupy most of our time. In the immediate struggle and also in our long-range reform goals (whether formation of a people's party or the achievement of extensive reforms) we are not that different from many other progressives. We have to begin to adopt the approaches and methods of struggle best suited to the reform struggle, and these are basically those developed by democratic socialists and liberal democrats. Most of the ways we approach problems are tainted by ultra-leftism (for example, "base-building" in the unions or communities; "from the bottom up" organizing as opposed to having a more flexible approach to union staff positions and towards attempting to win union leadership from within the union apparatus).

Both these "back into the woodwork" attitudes that go under the name of "back into the mainstream" are very prevalent among the remnants and former activists of the revolutionary Left today. They have three problems, all relating to the problem of the Marxist party. Even when raised as a reaction to "party-building," it represents a definite party-building line.

Demonstrating That Socialism Works

The main problem with the first version of progressivism is that the remedy, even if successful, won't cure the problem. It is true that revolutionary Marxism is discredited on the Left and among the people. Progressive organizing does a lot to gain a hearing for us as individuals. But a hearing for individual socialists and a hearing for socialism are two very different things. Progressive organizing can combat some of the things that discredit revolutionary Marxism: adventurism and sectarianism, for instance. Progressive organizing is therefore a necessary condition of Marxist politics. But it cannot hit at something else: what people call the "crisis of socialism" or the "crisis of Marxism."

The crisis of Marxism involves the gaps and shortcomings of Marxist theory. But it is also a mass issue. A mass issue in the sense of the profound doubts and fears most working people, most students, most professionals, most people period, have about socialism. In the last decade, we have had months of the Vietnamese and then the Cuban boat people, Kampuchean refugees and the revelations about the Pol Pot-headed government, all the changes in China, the invasion of Afghanistan, Poland, etc. Progressive organizing is only going to take them so far. The reforms fought for by socialists will begin to win greater support, but if we restrict ourselves too much to just progressive organizing, socialism won't win corresponding support. To combat the discrediting of Marxism and of socialism, we have to be talking about Marxism and socialism. To combat the past problems with revolutionary parties and groups, we have to reflect on that history, develop analysis and policy, and build revolutionary groups.

Right now there are more ex-revolutionary leftists than revolutionary leftists. As the film *Seeing Red* has made many people aware, a million people in the U.S. belonged to the Communist Party at one time or another. There are millions of people in this country who have believed in socialism or still do, but are so disorganized and confused by the realities of the Soviet Union, Kampuchea, China that they find it difficult to get involved in very much. There are millions more who sympathize with the aims of socialism, hate the rich and powerful, but are convinced that socialism can't work. Unless we can demonstrate to people that socialism can work, that a socialist movement can work, even if on a very small scale, we cannot begin to rouse people at all. But we also have to tackle the political questions about socialism on the minds of people -- and among those people, most Marxists and most activists.

Progressivism-to-gain-respectability doesn't provide a way to deal with these problems. It says only what Marxists have always said: pitch in in the reform struggles, and through them, begin to win people to socialism. Again, that is indispensable. But it is not enough. Marxists have been doing that in this country since the turn of the century, and occasionally before. There have been all sorts of revolutions since 1917. We cannot pretend it is 1911. And we cannot ignore that one of our tasks -- one of the tasks of a Marxist organization in the reform struggle -- is to point out the limitations of the reform struggle, without running so far ahead of people that we are sabotaging reform struggles by our criticisms. If you could reform capitalism, national oppression, or women's oppression out of existence, none of us would be Marxists. Since you can't, we need to build an organization that can help the people see

collectively the limitations of reform solutions. Part of our task in the reform struggle is therefore building the future party.

The second, suit-the-times version of progressivism has a related gap in its strategy. We are often the ones helping create the spontaneous struggle. Because of the decrepit state of the labor union leadership, the weak organizations of established Black leadership, the low level of struggle generally, the reform struggle needs Marxists. Without them, sometimes nothing would happen. Marxists tend to be very hard-working, very committed, not very concerned about what is in it for them, experimental in their approaches to problems and usually have spent more time reflecting on past experiences of reform movements than many other people. Further, the crucial fact of Marxist organization allows Marxists both to magnify their own efforts and to see ahead of many others the need for popular organization.

The contradiction in this type of progressivism is that it says the reform struggle needs Marxists, but then in its prescriptions for what we should do, it does not allow any resources to speak of for the building up of specifically Marxist organization. In other words, if the reform struggle needs us, then it needs 100 or 1000 times more people just like us. If that is so, our strategy has to allow for the constant reproduction of Marxists, not simply their being absorbed in building a more class-conscious progressive reform struggle. In other words, we need a flexible, consistent party-building line.

The third problem with progressivism is evident from the last few years of the "back into the woodwork" line. Social practice determines ideology. If all you do is talk that progressive organizing talk, read that progressive organizing literature, do that progressive organizing, and try to convince people about doing more of it, pretty soon your Marxist politics have about as much reality as your high school class ring. Pretty soon, you start saying things like: Marxist books and articles are too foreign to our traditions, are written in an academic way, are elitist and undemocratic. At the same time, you start thinking that the debates in liberal Democratic think tanks about reindustrialization are not written in an academic way, are not elitist and are not undemocratic. One day, you wake up, look in the mirror, and you see a progressive organizer and nothing more.

The reaction to the "party-building" of the 1970s has to be a more realistic, more Marxist party-building in the 1980s.

**--Charles Sarkis
April, 1984**

The Student Movement and the Progressive Student Network

The Progressive Student Network (PSN) was founded in 1980 at a nationwide conference of student activists at Kent State. The PSN is a network of progressives who share information and creative organizing ideas with each other in an effort to continue the tradition of the student movement as a force for progressive social change. The PSN National Office acts as a clearinghouse for information and offers such services as a speakers' bureau and a film library. At the regional and national conferences, students get together to learn from one another and plan joint campaigns for the future. In this report, some PSN activists share their observations on the state of the student movement today and the work of PSN.

A Look At The Student Movement Today

A generally conservative climate prevails on college campuses today. Over the last year or so, however, there has been a definite rise in progressive activity. A wave of organizing was precipitated by the invasion of Grenada; but there has also been increasing political concern over the ongoing war in Central America, the deployment of Euromissiles, and the presidential election.

Over the past two years, the Progressive Student Network (and the student movement in general) has experienced a downturn. This recent wave of organizing is a promising sign. Yet the Progressive Student Network of today has a very different identity than when it started in 1980: not only in personnel -- less than 10 percent of those attending a PSN conference this year attended a similar conference four years ago -- but also in politics. The revolutionary Left activists off the campuses who largely dominated the earlier network in the 1970s are by and large gone now. The activists in the Network today are a somewhat different breed. They are much more rooted in campus struggles. Their consciousness is more reform-minded, less revolutionary, less radical, even. The broader, more diffuse political character of PSN today is seen in the prevalence of debate over the more traditional liberal issue of free speech and a pacifist orientation towards international issues. A lot of students see disarmament as THE most important political issue. This is different from the view held by more revolutionary-minded students who tend to see Third World revolution as the most important issue. Many new members of the Progressive Student Network have questions about socialism and don't see it as the goal of their struggles. If any ideology can be attributed to PSN beyond anti-corporate progressivism, it is feminism. Its influence runs through most everyone's ideas.

The broader peace movement on campus shows a similar diversity of views. The anti-intervention crowd tends to be older and more closely resemble the revolutionary Left of the 1970s, while the activists principally involved with issues of disarmament and anti-militarism in

education (Department of Defense weapons research on campus, ROTC, etc.) tend to be younger, grounding their arguments more in moral than strictly political terms.

Organizationally, the Progressive Student Network faces several challenges. We need to reach out to activists from single issue groups and special focus groups to broaden our base. In particular, we need to overcome the existing separation between predominantly white progressive students and minority student groups. Finally, we, like other student

IT'S OUR FUTURE AND BOMBS WON'T SAVE IT

STUDENT RALLY

MAY 12 1984
12:00
ON COPLEY SQUARE
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SPEAKERS:
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US REPRESENTATIVE
MEL KING
RAINBOW COALITION
VICTOR WEISSKOPF
PROF. OF PHYSICS AT MIT
ROBERTA SNOW PRES
EDUCATORS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
JOHN PASTORE MD
INTERNATIONAL PHYSICIANS FOR THE
PREVENTION OF NUCLEAR WAR
MONIKA EISENBUD
PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

ENTERTAINERS:
THE FREELANCE PLAYERS
BREAK DANCERS FROM CRLS
DAWNA HAMMERSGRAM
PRIME RIB BAND
BETSY ROSE
GARDON

organizations, are plagued with the old problem of a shrinking number of very committed people, with people growing older, graduating and moving away, and difficulties in training new leaders and involving new people. Though the periphery continues to grow, the core is not. This persistent problem won't go away until we solve it.

Speaking of things that won't go away, the campus Right is making a comeback. Perhaps the main event which galvanized this movement was the hostage crisis in Iran. For the Right, the

US. had become a great helpless giant being pushed around by inferior nations. Conservatives have been spurred on not only by Reagan's victory and the general conservative trend in politics in the U.S. today, but by the fact that the economic and political crisis which propelled Ronald Reagan to the presidency and boosted the rolls of the New Right has a direct impact and reflection in academia. Even traditionally liberal schools have been affected. Budget cuts have fostered a climate of caution and conservatism on campuses. Coupled with a sense that education fell apart into the 1960s, this has led to a series of calls to bite the bullet and push for excellence in education. This usually translates into policies which push out women and minorities and the poor, mean the acceptance of more funds from ROTC and the Department of Defense, and raise admissions standards and tuition while lowering the boom on experimental areas of study like women and ethnic studies.

All of this has proven to be a healthy environment for campus conservatives. There are a host of organizations active today including the Young Republicans, Young Americans for Freedom, Christian groups of the evangelical type, like Campus Crusade for Christ (Billy Graham's group), various New Right groups, particularly the Right-to-Life groups, and various Christian cult groups such as the Maranathas and Moonies. To give you some sense of the Right on the move: one of the Young Republicans' targets right now is the Public Interest Research Groups (PIRG) which have sponsored a number of progressive campaigns on environmental and other issues. Of the 56 campuses that have a PIRG, 37 have campaigns going on to take away the mandatory fee system on which PIRG has been built. (Incidentally, USSA and PSN are listed in a recent letter from Young Republican headquarters as potential future targets.) Fortunately for us, organizations on the Right seem to have an even rougher time than progressives in maintaining their organizations and developing new leadership.

Campus Protest Against The Invasion Of Grenada

Students were more vocal than most other sectors of U.S. society in denouncing the invasion of Grenada. The Grenada protests on campuses were organized largely by older, politically experienced students. The Guardian newspaper reported that there were 100 emergency actions in response to the invasion. PSN was in touch with at least 25 centered on campuses in the Midwest and on the East Coast including Chicago, Minneapolis, Amherst, Iowa City, Ann Arbor, Ames, Osh Kosh, Cedar Falls, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Kent and others. Unfortunately, the student protests were greeted on a large number of campuses by organized Right-wing counter-protests.

Student sentiment was roughly divided between those staunchly opposed to any invasion; those in the middle who, while nervous about the Cuban/Soviet connection and the safety of the American students, didn't like the invasion because of the press black-out and the danger of a bigger war; and the more backward students who bought the whole Administration package, some of whom attended the rallies organized by the Right groups. Despite the prevalence of counter-protests, we generally found that we could win over the majority of people in the middle.

Some campuses experienced only a flurry of activity, but in some places we saw

organizing on the scale of the 1980 anti-registration and draft protests. In many places, those protests had been explosive in character and involved a whole section of the student population in sustained political activity for the first time. While the protests around Grenada were on a similar level in some places, they did not result in the kind of consistent, ongoing activity which characterized the response to the call for draft registration. Where the Grenada invasion has resulted in ongoing activity, it has fed into the work of existing anti-intervention-type groups. Also, not that many new people became involved, probably because some of those who became active in 1980 were still organized.

Confronting U.S. Involvement In Central America

U.S. involvement in Central America and the future of revolutionary movements there are an important feature of campus organizing today. In El Salvador, the forces of the FDR/FMLN are steadily making progress, chalking up one victory after another on the military front. Having virtually liberated over one-quarter of the countryside, they are making bold attacks on the bridges and communication system, army bases, and even into major cities. They continue to enjoy broad popular support. Despite difficulties in reconstructing their country's economy and the political desertion of some bourgeois members of the FSLN, the Nicaraguans continue to handily defeat the 10,000 plus strong CIA-backed "Contras".

The bourgeoisie here and in Central America are deeply divided as to how to deal with these revolutionary movements. The U.S. bourgeoisie continues to keep its options open, but it seems unlikely that an invasion is imminent -- at least before the 1984 presidential elections. Gradually escalating intervention seems more likely. If and when an invasion occurs, this would surely become the central focus of our work on campus.

There have been two kinds of organizing going on around Central America in this country: anti-intervention work and solidarity work. The anti-intervention organizing has a broader mass appeal: people may be willing to oppose U.S. involvement in a war in Central America for a lot of different reasons and need not necessarily support the revolutionary movements leading the struggles there. Solidarity work is based on explicit support for the goals and leadership of the revolutionary movements. Inasmuch as there is a contradiction here, and a choice to be made in terms of a basic orientation, we have focussed on the anti-intervention approach. But we see the solidarity work of groups like CISPES as a necessary and important part of organizing around U.S. policy in Central America. In our work, we have emphasized education above all else. Other aspects of organizing -- involving people in protests, etc. -- follow from that.

Enthusiasm For Jesse Jackson's Campaign

A number of PSN members are enthusiastic about Jesse Jackson's candidacy. We see a number of important reasons why we should work in his campaign wherever possible. His decision to run as a Democrat seems necessary since there is no viable basis for a third party candidacy in 1984. Jackson's campaign is a crucial step in strengthening the position of Black

people in the electoral process and contributes to the goal of breaking up the Democratic party and the formation of a progressive, Black/Labor party. His presence in the campaign pushes the Democrats to the left. His platform is that of a true pro-people progressive, miles ahead of any other candidate except McGovern, and then McGovern was really strong on just a few issues. His campaign will help project the dissatisfaction of the American people, especially those who, in his absence, might not vote at all.

--J.I.

If you would like more information about the Progressive Student Network, just write to us care of Forward Motion, and we will be glad to tell you about upcoming events and chapters in your area.



Labor Update: The NLRB Under Reagan

The National Labor Relations Board has recently issued a series of bad decisions. These decisions will make organizing more difficult and will leave workers and the labor movement with less protections against the more aggressive maneuverings of management.

These decisions are not surprising given the composition of the Board. Reagan has appointed three of the five Board members. Two of the three Reagan appointments are viciously anti-labor. One is the chairman of the Board, Donald Dotson. His "impartial" view of unions was demonstrated when he likened collective bargaining to a "labor monopoly, the destruction of individual freedom, and the destruction of the marketplace as the mechanism for determining the value of labor." The other is Robert Hunter, former counsel to Senator Orrin Hatch. The third Reagan appointee is a management attorney, Patricia Dennis. She is not known to be as outrageously anti-labor. However, it is expected that she will vote along with Dotson and Hunter. So much for even an appearance of neutrality.

One of the things the Board recently did was to overturn a long-standing legal precedent. It decided that a worker who files a complaint about working conditions with a government agency on behalf of all the workers is not protected from being fired. For example, prior to this case (Meyers Industries), filing a complaint with OSHA about a health and safety hazard effecting other people at work was considered to be a protected concerted activity under the National Labor Relations Act. So that if an employer fired someone for filing such a complaint, the Board would order reinstatement and backpay. Now, because of the Meyers case, this type of activity has lost its protected status. This decision will not only discourage people from filing complaints with government agencies about their employers' violations of the law, but it will also encourage employers to fire workers who do so.

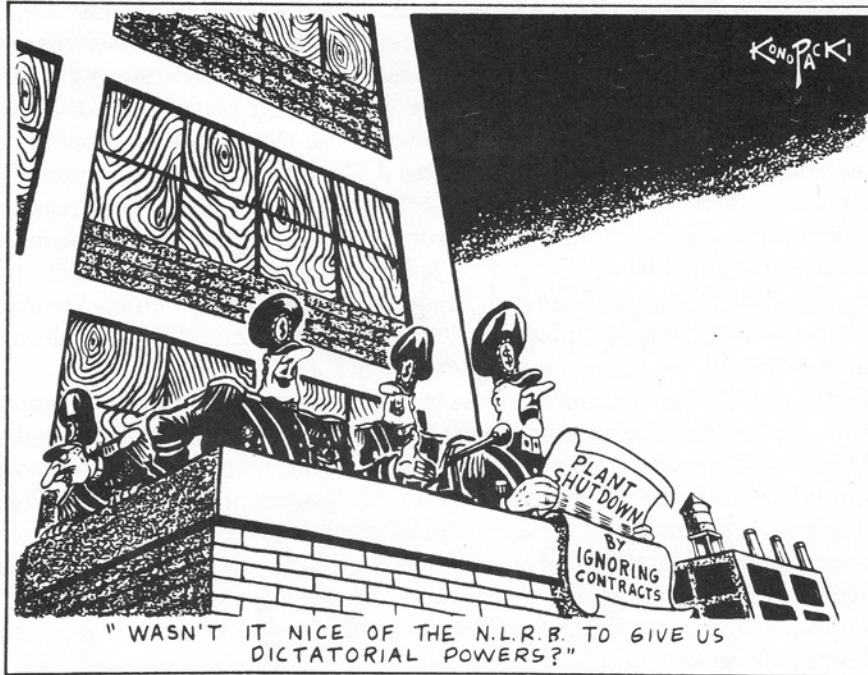
In another bad decision (in Milwaukee Spring II) the NLRB overruled a previous decision, Milwaukee Spring I, the NLRB ruled that an employer was able to ask the union for mid-contract concessions. But if an employer did not get them, but moved its operations anyway, that was considered to be an unfair labor practice, even if the employer had a legitimate business reason for doing so. In such situations, it might even be possible to have the Board order the employer to return its operations to the plant from which it moved. Since one of the most likely reasons for an employer to move is to shift its operations from a unionized plant to a non-unionized plant, Milwaukee Spring I was a very helpful decision. But now under Milwaukee Spring II, an employer can avoid its obligations under a contract and move. All it has to do is bargain with the union, not come to an agreement, and then move.

In other recent decisions, the Board ruled that a union cannot prohibit its union members from resigning during a strike. This obviously could have a disastrous effect on unions.

The Board also ruled that it will not review an arbitrator's decision upholding a discharge where someone was fired for a reason that was an unfair labor practice as well as a contract

violation, but the unfair labor practice was not raised at the arbitration hearing.

There are lots of reasons for not raising an unfair labor practice issue at an arbitration hearing. One of them is that arbitrators are familiar with collective bargaining agreements; they are not particularly familiar with the laws of the NLRB. This decision also means that the Board is refusing to remedy illegal firings under the National Labor Relations Act in certain cases where union members are concerned.



The Board has also just made a decision that will make union organizing more difficult. It ruled that District 65, U.A.W. could not organize just the 850 clerical and technical workers in Harvard University's medical area. The Board said that this group of workers was not an appropriate bargaining unit. Instead, if the union is going to organize Harvard's clerical and technical workers, it must organize all of Harvard's 3700 clerical and technical workers campus-wide. One of Harvard's campuses is in Cambridge, Mass., the other is in Boston. They have almost nothing to do with each other. Twice before the NLRB had ruled that the medical area clericals and technical workers were an appropriate bargaining unit.

While the NLRB has been doing its handiwork, the Supreme Court recently handed down a decision that also will have a bad effect on labor. The Supreme Court ruled that an employer can reject or modify a union contract after it has filed a petition for bankruptcy. Doing so does not constitute an unfair labor practice. In this decision, the court clearly decided who it wished to protect when economic hardship faces a company and its workers. Reorganization plans under bankruptcy laws are designed to put a company back into a healthy financial condition.

Now the Supreme Court has said one of the ways a company can try to achieve a better economic position is by rejecting a collective bargaining agreement without getting the union's consent to do so, or without giving the union an opportunity to bargain.

Historically, the Board has not always been labor's best friend. In fact, we could argue that the NLRB should always be regarded with suspicion because it helped create and perpetuate the myth that labor and management are equal entities. In addition, there have been periods of time when the NLRB has been used to help stifle the labor movement. This happened when the Board was used to enforce the anti-communist oaths during the McCarty period. There have also been other periods of time when the composition of the five-member Board has been conservative, and anti-labor decisions were more the order of the day. But the fact remains that pro-labor decisions help. Good NLRB law can sometimes help make the difference between winning or losing an organizing drive. It also may help get fired activists back to their job or help a union require management to divulge information about occupational safety and health problems or other information.

We are going to have to weather this period. NLRB law like all law is not abstract. Good law has been made into bad law before. Whether we are experiencing the packing of the NLRB by Reagan or a longer-term onslaught against labor remains to be seen. One thing is clear, however. Even a more pro-labor NLRB is not going to strengthen the labor movement. Good law may help, but it is not what makes the labor movement strong. In labor's battles over new technology, job rights, equal rights and a changing economy, labor must first find the means to organize itself. If it does not do this, all the best labor decisions in the world are not going to help it win these battles. Only a clear understanding of what is happening in this world and a commitment to organize itself accordingly will give labor the strength to win.

--Claire E.
April, 1984



Forward Motion Forward Motion Forward

▶ ▶ updates: nlrp under reagan --- the student movement
▶ ▶ ▶ the lure of progressivism ▶ ▶ ▶ & more ▶ ▶