

# WHERE IS 65 BEING TAKEN ?

142

This letter concerns the disaffiliation of District 65 on April 15 1969 from the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, AFL-CIO; and the explanation given rank and file workers, by the present Livingston leadership, that this disaffiliation was necessary in order to press on toward organizing unorganized and oppressed minority workers.

Let us say, first of all, that all this talk about '65' workers "increasing their bargaining power through organization" and organizing oppressed workers is mostly a cruel hoax perpetrated on the membership by Livingston to head off militant opposition by Black and Puerto Rican 65'ers to the do nothing policy of Livingston and to substitute Reuther and the fake Alliance for Labor Action for the rotten George Meany.

It is inconceivable that any honest trade-unionist can feel anything but disgust for George Meany, who has become a symbol for all that is rotten, corrupt and reactionary in the labor movement: he is so bad that many people who should otherwise stand firm behind labors' struggles mostly fold their arms in the face of vicious ruling-class inspired anti-labor action and legislation, seeing no difference between labor and the 'establishment'.

Secretary-Treasurer Cleveland Robinson stated the case well against Meany when he called him the agent of Lyndon Johnson's war machine; "who stands on the side of our oppressors" and is intransigent in the movement to organize those left out since labors last great surge in the 30's. It was indeed understandable that Robinson could say, and militant unionists wholeheartedly agree with him that "It is obvious that 65'ers can have nothing in common with those programs and policies that threaten our very existence", Robinson should have said that this opposition is not merely confined to 65'ers, but to militant unionists everywhere. But stop a moment, where was David Livingston when this bureaucratic insensitivity was going on? Where was Walter Reuther? Don't those indictments of labor leaders include them too?

The state of affairs that Robinson condemns didn't all of a sudden one fine day drop from the clouds: its been the status quo for the past 20 years! Robinson makes a big pitch to break with this and go along with Walter Reuther's ALA. He "forgot" to mention that the Executive Committee of the AFL-CIO, which he excoriates has had for years as one of its members the very same Walter Reuther! And while Meany was leading U.S. trade unionism into the swamp, what was Reuther doing? Was he opposing it, fighting it, voting 'no' at the meetings when this course was planned, threatening to take another program to the workers he represented, trying to change the whole course? On the contrary, he went along. And the record shows it.

During the cold war, Reuther went along with Meany. Now there has been a social explosion in this country, workers are no longer passive, wildcat strikes are increasing, opposition to the war is widespread, oppressed minority workers are demanding change, all the social evils of the past twenty years can no longer be covered up but are breaking out into the open. All the symbols of the status quo, and in particular George Meany are beginning to smell rotten. That's why Reuther broke with Meany! He doesn't want to be covered with the stench.

And what is true of Reuther is true of Livingston too: he wasn't born yesterday. And militant unionists shouldn't act as if they were born yesterday either. Look at whom Livingston is in league with. The Teamsters, under attack from the government, yet with unused potential for labor power, have since the early 50's been one of labor's most narrow-minded craft unions. And what has Walter Reuther been doing in his union that he deserves the name "progressive"? Well for one thing he's been negotiating away working condition rights and protection against the speed-up in auto plants for a small salary package that was certain to be eaten up by inflation. When some of his locals around the country rebelled at the sell-out, Walter put them into receivership. The same Walter Reuther also has been trying to crush the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in Detroit, a movement of militant black unionists who have begun fighting the complacency in the UAW, but which has so far not progressed beyond the error of racial exclusionism.

Workers in '65' should form caucuses around a militant trade union program to struggle for such demands, as a shorter work week for the same pay, for internal union democracy, for a sliding scale of wages to be controlled by labor and most important for a break from the Democratic and Republican parties as the parties of the bosses and fight for an Independent political party based on the unions. Somehow, even though the Livingston leadership likes to proclaim its independence, it always manages to support the Democratic party. To accomplish many of these aims, labor fakers such as Livingston and Reuther, who run the movement now, and who apparently are interested only in setting up their own independent basis of power, in order to simply replace Healy, must be exposed for what they are and thrown out!

So if the AFL-CIO is a conservative, bureaucratic organization, the Alliance for Labor Action (ALA) is a fake. It would be a crime if the Reuther-Livingston-Teamster alliance got away with their public relations ploy. A policy of struggle for militant gains within the trade union movement is necessary, but its not going to be made by the smash and grab ALA tactics run by a bunch of cynical labor fakers!

28 May 1969

New York City Spartacist League

SUBSCRIBE TO SPARTACIST

6 issues, 50 cents     12 issues, \$1.00     free 3 issue sub

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Return to ; Spartacist

Box 1377, G.P.O.

New York, N.Y. 10001