

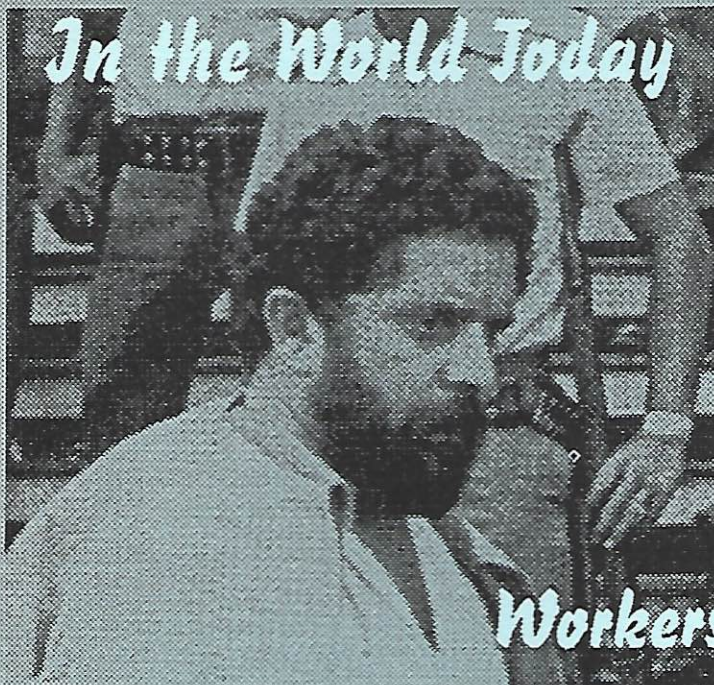
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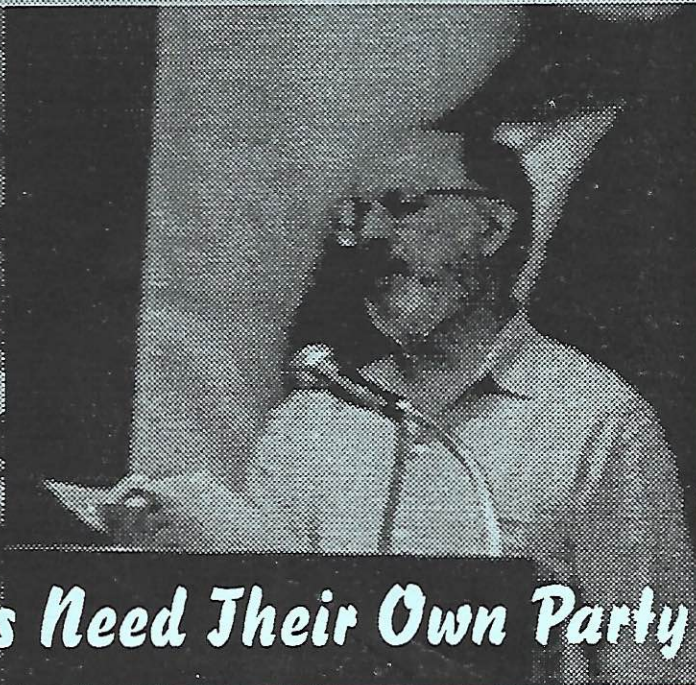
# In Defense of Marxism

\$3.00

*In the World Today*



Luis Inacio "Lula" da Silva, presidential candidate of the Brazilian Workers Party



Tony Mazzocchi, founder of Labor Party Advocates in the United States

*Workers Need Their Own Party*

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# Who We Are

*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is published by an independent collective of U.S. socialists who are in fraternal solidarity with the Fourth International, a worldwide organization of revolutionary socialists.

Supporters of this magazine may be involved in different socialist groups and/or in a broad range of working class struggles and protest movements in the U.S. These include unions and other labor organizations, women's rights groups, antiracist organizations, coalitions opposed to U.S. military intervention, gay and lesbian rights campaigns, civil liberties and human rights efforts. We support similar activities in all countries and participate in the global struggle of working people and their allies. Many of our activities are advanced through collaboration with other supporters of the Fourth International in countries around the world.

What we have in common is our commitment to the Fourth International's critical-minded and revolutionary Marxism, which in the twentieth century is represented by such figures as V.I. Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and Leon Trotsky. We also identify with the tradition of American Trotskyism represented by James P. Cannon and others. We favor the creation of a revolutionary working-class party, which can only emerge through the conscious efforts of many who are involved in the struggles of working people and the oppressed and who are dedicated to revolutionary socialist perspectives.

Through this magazine we seek to clarify the history, theory and program of the Fourth International and the American Trotskyist tradition, discussing their application to the class struggle internationally and here in the United States. This vital task must be undertaken if we want to forge a political party in this country capable of bringing an end to the domination of the U.S. imperialist ruling class, establishing a working people's democracy and socialist society based on human need instead of private greed, in which the free development of each person becomes possible.

*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is independent of any political organization. Not all U.S. revolutionaries who identify with the Fourth International are in a common organization. Not all of them participate in the publication of this journal. Supporters of this magazine are committed to comradely discussion and debate as well as practical political cooperation which can facilitate eventual organizational unity of all Fourth Internationalists in the United States. At the same time, we want to help promote a broad recomposition of a class-conscious working class movement and, within this, a revolutionary socialist regroupment, in which perspectives of revolutionary Marxism, the Fourth International, and American Trotskyism will play a vital role.

*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* will publish materials generally consistent with these perspectives, although it will seek to offer *discussion articles* providing different points of view within the revolutionary socialist spectrum. Signed articles do not necessarily express the views of anyone other than the author.

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## UTU Strike on Soo Line

# A Crucial Test for All Rail Labor

by David Jones

On July 14, 1,500 rail workers represented by the United Transportation Union (UTU) struck the Soo Line Railroad. Some 5,000 other rail workers in various unions on the Soo Line are honoring the UTU's pickets and refusing to go to work. The UTU struck in response to the imposition of new wage and work rules by management after the expiration of a 30-day "cooling-off period" mandated by rail labor law. The National Mediation Board (NMB), a government body that has jurisdiction over rail labor disputes, declared an impasse in negotiations on June 13. Under the law either party is then free, after 30 days, to exercise "self-help," meaning management can promulgate its proposed rules without union consent and the union is legally free to strike.

The *Journal of Commerce*, an authoritative national transportation daily, reported in its August 2 issue: "The 3-week-old strike on the Soo Line is causing massive delays from Canada to Mexico, leading to expensive rerouting and fears that newly won international business may be lost." The strike is the longest in the rail industry in 16 years. A 1978 strike by railroad clerks on the Norfolk and Western lasted 82 days.

### Background to the Strike

The UTU, which is the largest of some 16 rail unions, primarily represents train service employees in the crafts of switchmen, brakemen, and conductors. In 1991, after a brief national rail strike, Congress imposed a three-and-a-half-year contract on rail workers on most U.S. railroads. The management of the Soo Line, however, elected not to participate in the national bargaining that preceded the 1991 settlement. It negotiated separately with the Soo Line unions, all of which, with the exception of the UTU, signed agreements in 1991 that were even worse than the national agreement imposed by Congress that year.

As a result, the UTU members on the Soo Line continued to work under the wages and work rules established in the 1985 national agreement while on-again, off-again negotiations proceeded from 1988 to the present. During this period Soo Line management tried to promote acceptance of a so-called Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) similar to the arrangement recently consummated between United Airlines and its unions. Such agreements create a facade of employee ownership while control remains in the hands of the real bosses, with the so-called employee owners getting a few powerless representatives on the board of directors. In recognition of their new stake in

the company, the workers are supposed to accept far-reaching concessions that were previously unacceptable.

The workers on the Soo Line who were not taken in by this scam generated enough skepticism and resistance that the deal fell through. Shortly after this, the Canadian Pacific Rail System (CPRS, or CP for short), which had held 51 percent ownership in the Soo for many years, acquired 100 percent ownership, and CPRS management in Montreal began to take a direct role in day-to-day operations, supplanting the old U.S. management based in Minneapolis and beginning a process of total integration of the Soo Line into the Canadian Pacific. The Soo Line itself had acquired the former Milwaukee Road in the mid-1980s, and these combined properties, operating in an 11-state area in the Midwest, are now officially known as the CP Heavy Haul Division, with the Soo Line identity reserved for purposes of labor negotiations, and for attempts to convince the workers that the Soo Line, although part of the billion-dollar CP corporation, is losing money and needs concessions.

After becoming sole owner of the Soo Line, CP management began a campaign for an inferior agreement with the UTU similar to the one the other Soo unions had accepted in 1991, and openly told the UTU that if it did not agree, CP would impose its conditions unilaterally and, in the event of a strike, CP would operate the railroad without the UTU. CP warned that other rail crafts would cross UTU picket lines and go to work during the strike. CP chief negotiator Cathryn Frankenberg predicted that 35 percent of the engineers, represented by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE), would cross the picket line.

UTU offered to settle with the Soo Line on the basis of the same reduced crew agreement negotiated on the Burlington Northern railroad in 1992, and asked for a 10 percent retroactive wage increase equal to the one received by other U.S. rail workers as a result of the 1991 imposed contract. The UTU's perspective was that such an agreement would allow it to get back in step with national rail negotiations, which are opening up again in anticipation of the expiration in early 1995 of the wage provisions of the 1991 national contract.

### Company Remains Adamant

CP has remained adamant that UTU had to accept wages and working conditions permanently below the national standard. Soo's offer, rather than bringing its UTU employees up to prevailing national wage standards, would

mean wages of \$20–25 less per day than on the neighboring Burlington Northern (BN), for example. The railroad is also demanding the unilateral right to eliminate all brakemen on trains, leaving only the engineer and conductor. Of all major U.S. railroads, only the Chicago and North Western (C&NW) has this right, which was extracted after a Congressionally imposed settlement in 1988 forced the UTU to negotiate this concession. Even then the union received a substantial wage increase, where Soo management is offering a cut in pay.

Soo-CP is also demanding the union opt out of the national railroad health insurance agreement and enter one in which the railroad's chief executive officer would be the "impartial" arbitrator of any dispute over claims!

### Strike Preparations

Around the time that the NMB declared an impasse in negotiations, UTU locals in the Twin Cities, now the Soo's main terminal (Chicago, Milwaukee, and Kansas City are other key terminals) went on a big propaganda offensive to prepare for the impending confrontation, including major efforts to convince the other crafts on the Soo Line that the UTU's struggle was in their direct and immediate interest. Since the agreements that the other Soo unions signed in 1991 are expiring in January 1995, a UTU victory would strengthen the other unions in next year's bargaining. Conversely, a defeat would greatly weaken the position of the smaller unions, especially the non-operating unions such as clerks, maintenance of way workers, and shop crafts.

In mid-June the UTU put up a billboard on the road leading to the major Soo-CP yard in St. Paul. It said "Stop the Cut in Pay!" with the "C" and "P" (for "Canadian Pacific") highlighted in red. The billboard also announced a solidarity rally scheduled for a few days before the strike date. The UTU issued T-shirts and bumper stickers with the "Stop the Cut in Pay" slogan and published numerous leaflets explaining the issues in the strike. In cooperation with the UTU leadership, a special Soo Line edition of *Straight Track*, the popular rank-and-file rail workers' paper, was rushed to some 10,000 subscribers in the 11-state area served by the Soo Line.

On July 11 some 400 Soo workers and supporters attended an enthusiastic solidarity rally in St. Paul addressed by the president of the Minnesota AFL-CIO and others. Pledges of support were received from the other Soo unions. A rally of several hundred was held in Chicago, and others have occurred in North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Iowa.

### Impact of the Strike

The strike began at midnight July 14 and immediately shut down most of the railroad's operations, even though CP, to try to keep the line running, had mobilized managers from across its North American system (in violation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, incidentally). It also conscripted untrained non-



union office workers to try to fill in as train service employees. Nearly a month into the strike the Soo Line is operating only about 10-30 percent of its normal traffic, and the strike is clearly costing the corporation tens of millions of dollars. Looming ahead in the next few weeks is the beginning of the harvest of what are predicted to be bumper grain crops across the Midwest, beginning with wheat in North Dakota and followed later by corn and soybeans in Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin. There are not enough trucks on the planet to move these crops to market. Trains are needed. There is the potential for a major agricultural transportation crisis.

It is clear that CP has planned for this confrontation for several years, accepting that it could only conduct a severely reduced operation during the strike, placing priority on service to key industrial customers like the Ford assembly plant in St. Paul (Soo Line's third largest shipper) and on moving the CP's highly profitable "intermodal" container and piggyback trains. CP has banked all along (and said so openly) on an extended strike eventually cracking the united front of rail labor.

### Canadian Pacific's Strategy

CP hopes for an eventual defection by some craft which, under increasing financial pressure and seeing no hope of a resolution of the strike, would cross the picket lines en masse, whether as an official action or not, and thus start a back-to-work stampede that would force the UTU to capitulate. Such an event would have far-reaching effects on all rail labor. For at least 60 years, in the aftermath of the defeat of the 6-month national railroad shopcraft strike in 1922, a strike by one rail union, even the smallest, has meant that no unionized craft went to work, unlike in most other industries with multiple unions, such as construction and, notably, the airline industry. This is a deeply imbedded, and even institutionalized tradition, partly dependent on the more favorable conditions extended to rail unions as a result of the 1935 amendments to the 1926 Railway Labor Act.

If Canadian Pacific succeeds in breaking this united front and forcing UTU to compromise its struggle to regain parity with workers on other Class 1 railroads, the tens of millions of dollars the strike has cost CP will be an investment returned many times in value in years to come. Although during the period preceding the strike many Soo Line union leaders characterized the CP action as that of a rogue corporation seeking to undercut the costs of competing U.S. railroads, it is evident that CP's Soo Line strategy has the support of other U.S. railroads, politicians, and the financial interests that control them. In the national rail strikes and lockouts of 1991 and 1992 — not to mention the 1988 strike on the Chicago and North Western, an operation that largely parallels the Soo Line — there was a hue and cry in the press and in Congress about economic disruption, loss of jobs, etc., and the eventual imposition of government-dictated settlements. But this time, as the Soo Line strike

## Major Rail Union Joins LPA — as LPA Calls for Founding a U.S. Labor Party in 1995

The significance of the Democratic-Republican steamroller that rammed NAFTA through Congress over the intense opposition of organized labor, as well as the bipartisan consensus among Democrats and Republicans that imposed the 1991 contract (by a 400-to-5 vote in the House of Representatives), the defeat of striker replacement legislation, and the continuing farce of health care reform efforts have not gone unnoticed among rail workers. There is increasing hostility expressed on all levels of the rail unions to the collection of funds by the various political action committees for the benefit of importunate politicians.

Recently the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE),

representing railroad track repair workers, voted by a 7-to-3 margin, after a vigorous debate at its July national convention, to endorse Labor Party Advocates, becoming the third national union to do so, joining the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) and the United Electrical Workers (UE) in this position.

BMWE has been in a state of flux for the past dozen years or so, replacing several national presidents and increasingly influenced by a strong group of secondary leaders seeking more militant policies. Similar changes, although not so advanced, have been occurring in other rail unions over this period of severe setbacks implemented with the complicity of national union leaders.

drags on, there is a deafening silence from these sources. It is also probable that a secret mutual aid pact has been arranged by the carriers, to share the burden of CP's expenses in assaulting the UTU. Such arrangements, set up through a bank in Puerto Rico, were uncovered by the unions during the strike against Norfolk and Western in 1978.

### Significance for All Rail Workers

It is obvious that imposition of the CP demands on the UTU would set the pattern for national rail negotiations next year. As the August 3 *Journal of Commerce* reported: "If it settles for anything less [than the 1991 national standard], the UTU believes that other carriers will whipsaw it into further concessions in the next bargaining round that begins later this year. The union is 'correct' in its position."

Many rail workers hoped that after years of concessions the government-imposed national contract of 1991 would establish a floor for the future. Instead it is apparent that the carriers see that as the ceiling, and the demand for concessions is continuing. Thus the Soo Line strike has tremendous significance for all U.S. rail workers, and not only U.S. workers. The UTU in Canada, where CPRS has 75 percent of its operation, is stalemated in negotiations with this same corporate giant, which is demanding far-reaching concessions north of the border as well.

### NAFTA and Industry-wide Restructuring

Underlying this struggle is the beginning of a basic reorientation of a large part of the North American rail system in a north-south, instead of an east-west, direction — with major North American railroads, including the Burlington Northern and Union Pacific as well as CP, driving toward rail connections with Mexico in anticipation of huge profits to be reaped as a result of the recently enacted NAFTA, the im-

pending General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the industrialization of northern Mexico by U.S. corporations. In fact, U.S. railroads are reporting record traffic and earnings, part of a sustained upsurge in the industry in the 1990s.

The BN and Santa Fe railroads recently announced plans to merge, making that combined road the biggest in North America and giving it access to Mexico through the Santa Fe. In July it was announced that the Illinois Central had acquired the Kansas City Southern, a major regional carrier with connections to Mexico. And in the first week of August a merger of Conrail and the Norfolk and Southern was announced. The Union Pacific now holds a majority of stock in the Chicago and North Western and is in the process of gradually absorbing C&NW altogether. It is known that Canadian Pacific is seeking to acquire further U.S. rail lines to extend its southern reach from Kansas City, its present terminus, toward Mexico and the Gulf. "The two major Canadian railroads are turning from an exclusively east-west orientation," according to the February issue of *American Shipper*. CPRS, a privately owned corporation (and the sixth largest railroad in North America), and the Canadian National Railroad, owned by the Canadian government and the only other major railroad in Canada, are in the process of merging their eastern Canadian operations. It is probable that by the end of 1994 most Class 1 regional carriers will have disappeared and the U.S.-Canadian rail industry will consist overwhelmingly of 6 mega-railroads.

The Soo Line is also part of sweeping changes projected by Canadian Pacific in constructing a new and faster transcontinental route. CP plans to send traffic from the port of Halifax in eastern Canada to Vancouver, operating into the U.S. from Ontario through Chicago and back into Canada over the former Soo Line.

*Continued on page 33*



# Rail Solidarity and the Soo Strike

by Jim Miles

*The author, a member of UTU Local 1597, assesses the strike from the Chicago end of the Soo Line.*

Over 500 rail workers and their families rallied near Chicago on July 17, showing the solidarity of all rail unions in the face of the Soo Line railroad's scab operations against strikers organized by the United Transportation Union (UTU). The strike by 1,500 train service employees on 5,000 miles of the Canadian Pacific-owned Soo Line is shaping up into a major contest of strength between rail union solidarity and international rail management collusion with the Soo Line's union-busting tactics. The outcome of this strike will determine the fate of union contracts in the U.S. and Canadian rail industry.

The initial response of the leadership of rail union locals organized by the UTU in Chicago has been good. UTU local chairmen from the Illinois Central, the Burlington Northern, and the Belt Railway attended the July 17 rally in Franklin Park and spoke out in support of the strikers. This solidarity is vital to the success of the strike since it is the switchmen, brakemen, and conductors organized by the UTU who, along with the engineers, actually move the trains. The Soo Line has demanded the elimination of the jobs of all switchmen and brakemen.

Only two days after the rally in Chicago, the Chicago *Sun-Times* reported that Soo Line management personnel operating a freight train had run a red signal on one of Chicago's Metra commuter lines. Although Metra management denied that any commuters were placed in danger by this flagrant safety violation, the *Sun-Times* reported that the commuter line was shut down for several hours as a result of this incident. The UTU is closely monitoring the actions of management-operated trains on the Soo Line for report to the Federal Railway Administration (FRA). According to UTU International Vice-President Bruce Wigent, quoted in the August issue of the *UTU News*, "There are so many FRA violations, we can't count them all."

Despite initial reports that the strike shut down 90 percent of Soo Line operations, causing a major loss of business, Soo Line continues to move and switch trains with the help of management and other railroad carriers. In Chicago, the Belt Railway, a small industrial railroad that makes up and switches out trains for most of the big national railroads, has been interchanging trains with the Soo Line since the beginning of the strike. Some of these trains are two miles long. The Indiana Harbor Belt (IHB) in Chicago is likewise assisting the Soo Line in moving freight and staying in business. Both the Belt and the IHB are unionized.

Older rail workers in Chicago have begun to draw comparisons between the Soo strike and

the strike on the Florida East Coast Railroad in 1969, in which the UTU and other unions were busted. After the defeat of the strike, the "innovations" of the Florida East Coast, such as the elimination of cabooses and the reduction of operating crews to conductor and engineer only, set the pattern for the concessions wrested from the UTU by the major rail carriers in the 1980s with the backing of Congress.

Even before the nationwide rail strike in 1991, the government threatened rail unions with the prospect that if they made use of their right to secondary picketing of other railroads in a regional strike, they would lose their right to secondary picketing. The UTU national leadership's strategy to avoid implementing secondary picketing in the Soo Line strike has been reinforced by the very real concern that secondary picketing would force federal government intervention to end the strike and impose a settlement favorable to the carriers. While saving the union, this could possibly impose a contract worse than the disastrous Presidential Emergency Board Decision 219 in the 1991 national rail strike.

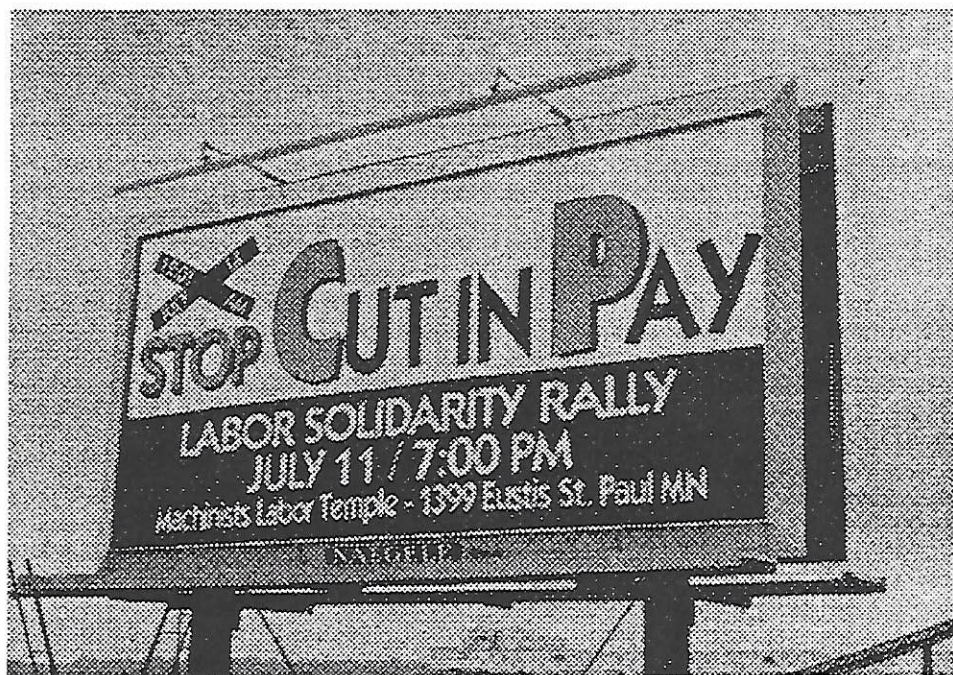
But as the strike has dragged on, sentiment among Soo strikers in Chicago is growing for secondary picketing of the Belt, IHB, and Chicago Metra commuter line to force a settlement with the Soo Line. Some older rail workers on

the Belt, many of whom remember the 109-day strike they went through alone in 1968, were openly cynical about the Soo strike at the beginning. But as the number and size of trains that the Belt interchanges with the Soo Line has steadily grown, so has the frenzy of Belt management. Belt management, in open violation of union contracts, has begun switching out and moving Soo Line trains over Belt main lines when no Belt UTU crews were available.

The Soo strike has begun to transform Belt management's recent relatively laid-back liberal management style to a military discipline mode. As Belt management has shifted its attitudes in the wake of the strike, so have the workers, whose sympathy for the strike has grown. No one today expresses any cynicism about honoring secondary picket lines from the Soo Line strikers on the Belt.

The longer the Soo strike drags on, the more the complicity of both big and small railroads in breaking the strike will become apparent as they assist Soo Line management in switching out trains, interchanging freight, and loaning money for the Soo to weather the strike. The UTU international now has an important decision to make, whether to go to secondary picketing and force a settlement by shutting down the railroads assisting the Soo, or risk a major defeat for all rail unions. In the long run the UTU and other rail unions will have to build a social strategy that reaches out not only to other unions but to working people in general. Only the active solidarity of all working people will ensure that rail unions will be able to effectively stand up to government intervention and prevent the continual erosion of working conditions and loss of jobs in the rail industry. □

August 7, 1994



United Transportation Union billboard in St. Paul, Minnesota

Photo by Straight Track



## Call for Protests Against Election Fraud

# Zapatistas Sponsor National Democratic Convention in Rebel Territory

by Rosendo Mendoza

**T**housands of trade unionists and social activists representing every sector of the mass movement descended on the southern state of Chiapas August 6-9 to attend the National Democratic Convention (CND) called by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN). The event culminated weeks of preparatory discussions in assemblies held throughout the country, largely based on the points contained in the Zapatistas' original Declaration of the Lacandón Rainforest and a series of additional points raised by the EZLN prior to the convention.

### Delegates from All of Mexico

Following a full day of workshops held in the colonial city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, more than 6,000 delegates and observers from throughout Mexico braved army checkpoints and poor roads to travel into EZLN-held territory for the final two days of the convention. In every village and town along the route, hundreds of villagers turned out to applaud the delegates, many holding up signs supporting the central demands and proposals raised by the EZLN prior to the event. The site of the general assembly was the new town of Aguascalientes, carved out of the Lacandón Rainforest by rebel troops. Named after the central Mexican city where revolutionary forces led by Emiliano Zapata and Francisco "Pancho" Villa held a convention in 1914, the site boasts a 7,000-seat amphitheater, library, press center, and communal dining hall.

### Mass Action Perspective and Constituent Assembly

Despite torrential rains and numerous other logistical challenges, the delegates successfully concluded their deliberations, adopting a series of resolutions calling for nationwide protests — or in the terms of the EZLN, a "social insurrection" — against the ruling one-party state and a perspective of mass mobilizations to frustrate the efforts of the governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to extend its rule through fraudulent elections August 21. The CND approved Zapatista proposals to fight for a government of transition to democracy and a Popular Constituent Assembly to draw up a new Mexican Constitution.

The convention also served to enrich the Declaration of the Lacandón Rainforest's platform of social and political demands, based on proposals and position papers presented by social activists and political organizations. Reject-

ing efforts by ultraleft sects to turn the event and the EZLN struggle into an endorsement for a generalized perspective of immediate armed struggle, delegates approved a mass-action perspective.

Zapatista leaders have repeatedly insisted that their decision to take up arms was imposed on them by the specific situation in Chiapas and have never advocated a generalized guerrilla perspective for the country. Instead, they have stressed the need for activists to adopt the content of their radical social demands and calls for unyielding opposition to the existing regime.

### Rejection of PRI "Peace Proposals"

The EZLN issued the call for the convention in June after conducting an extensive process of consultation with its supporters regarding a supposed "peace proposal" presented by the PRI government in early March. The proposal consisted mainly of promises of increased government spending and social programs in the region as well as suggestions of a series of minor legal reforms regarding the rights of indigenous peoples. Assemblies were held throughout the region controlled by the EZLN, where the exact content of the government proposal was read aloud in the various Indian languages. The absurdity of the proposals often provoked laughter, and a region-wide vote rejected the government's initiative by a resounding 98 percent.

### Convention To Be a Permanent Body

The convention's significance resided not only in the fact that delegations were widely representative of significant sections of the mass movement and included a considerable number of prominent intellectuals, artists, and political commentators. A decision to convert the CND into a permanent body, armed with a platform for struggle that includes a perspective for well beyond the coming federal elections, provides the most radicalized sectors of the mass movement and the Zapatistas with a common organizational framework.

In this respect, the CND also helped restore the EZLN to the center stage of Mexican politics and the front pages of the daily press after having been somewhat eclipsed by the March 23 assassination of Luis Donaldo Colosio and subsequent events. Undercut for the time being was the threat that the Zapatistas might become politically and geographically isolated, thereby

clearing the way for a renewed military offensive by government troops.

As a radically democratic and plebeian force emerging out of one of the most oppressed and exploited segments of society, the Chiapas-based rebels have enjoyed widespread sympathy as the most radical challenge to the PRI's one-party state and the economic interests it serves to defend. But earlier EZLN calls for "civil society," the "movement for democracy," and the Mexican left in general to build a national movement had produced few results.

The mass sympathy and moral authority the EZLN enjoys was also reflected in the responses of government officials who worked to defuse the radical impact of the convention. In place of the earlier denunciations of "masked bandits," the top officials rushed to offer guarantees of safety for convention delegates and hailed the Zapatistas' willingness to promote a peaceful solution to the country's political conflict. Even conservative National Action Party (PAN) presidential candidate Diego Fernández de Cevallos demagogically referred in campaign speeches to the convention-goers as "men and women in the mountains of Chiapas who, like ourselves, want the best for Mexico."

Only the government's tiny satellite parties, such as the Stalinist People's Socialist Party (PPS) and the Workers' Party (PT), dared to openly denounce the event. The PT's presidential candidate, Cecilia Soto, who once presided over the Mexican operations of Lyndon Larouche, has repeatedly denounced the EZLN and the convention as a provocation. The PT was essentially created in 1990 by the Salinas administration, carved out of the remnants of the former Maoist left and massively bankrolled as a way to cut into the vote for the PRD.

### Role of Cárdenas and the PRD

The overwhelming majority of those attending the event were supporters of the presidential campaign of Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD)'s Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, and many PRD leaders actually attended the event. Nevertheless, Cárdenas and most of the PRD leadership expressed alarm at the idea the CND might directly endorse his candidacy and have made efforts to distance themselves from the convention proceedings. The presidential candidate praised the CND's nonviolent perspectives and has promised that, if elected, his government would undertake a direct dialogue

*Continued on page 29*



# Rwanda, Nigeria, and the Role of Imperialism

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

**R**ecent events in Rwanda and Nigeria are symptomatic of a general crisis faced by most of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Twenty-nine of these countries, since 1987, have been introducing "economic reforms" (austerity programs) prescribed by the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development). Such unpopular policies require dictatorial regimes. The rule of the generals in the former British colony of Nigeria has been in place for years, although under mass pressure the military finally agreed to elections last year, only to declare them invalid and refuse to give up power after all. The dictatorship in Rwanda has had the support of the former colonial powers, particularly France.

## The Events in Rwanda

Rwanda is a region the size of Vermont, with a population of 8 million, the second most densely populated state in the world after Bangladesh. Its government was dominated by Hutus, the ethnic group that constitutes the numerical majority of the Rwandan population. But what was important to the Hutu ruling group was not their ethnic connection, but the lucrative French connection. (A valuable article on this connection is in the April 21 issue of *Rouge*, newspaper of the French section of the Fourth International; an English translation is in the June 1994 *Socialist Action*.)

An opposition guerrilla movement, the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), grew up in recent years to resist the dictatorial puppet regime as well as France's neocolonial domination. The RPF fighters were not just of the Tutsi ethnic group, and their concern was not just to reestablish the onetime Tutsi minority domination over the majority Hutus. Although active in rural areas of Uganda, on one side of Rwanda, they were also in touch with Lumumbist guerrillas in Zaïre, across Rwanda's western border, and they absorbed some of the radical social and economic influences still alive among the Lumumbists. It is enough to recall that Che Guevara fought side by side with the Lumumbists in the mid-'60s and Malcolm X was their ardent sympathizer. (Those influences persist, as we hope to show in our next issue, in an interview with a Lumumbist activist, Serge Mukendi, giving more details about these contacts.)

Panicked by the gains of the RPF, the French-backed government launched an ethnic massacre, a veritable pogrom, in early April against the minority Tutsi people and against any and all opponents of the government, as well as against any Hutu even suspected of sympathizing with Tutsi or opposed to the killings by the government forces. An estimated 500,000 people were killed when the regime's militia and

soldiers were sent on this rampage. Despite the carnage, the RPF came to power and is inviting the rank-and-file Hutu people, who fled to Zaïre in fear of ethnic reprisals, to return and live in peace. Only the military criminals who ordered the massacres are to be tried; the Hutu people as a whole are not being blamed. Meanwhile, the French-trained militia, who had carried out the massacres, retreated under the protection of the French forces in Rwanda and other imperialist forces in Zaïre, to prepare a resistance force that could launch a Contra-style war against the new RPF government. And the U.S. troops, sent to the area for "humanitarian aid" to the refugees, may very well be used to support this Contra-type effort.

Rwanda, incidentally, was rated as a "poor" implementer of IMF/World Bank prescriptions. Probably the reason why the Rwanda government failed to go as far as the IMF wanted with its austerity measures was its fear of increasing mass resistance. When it saw its rule was in serious danger, however, it used foreign military assistance and whipped up ethnic hatred with rumors of Tutsi violence. The resulting massive slaughter proved a vain attempt to get the upper hand against opponents. The experience in Rwanda shows that a multi-ethnic popular liberation movement, with mass support—which the Rwanda Patriotic Front appears to be—can defeat a puppet dictatorship, even when the former colonial powers militarily intervene on the side of their puppet government.

## The Case of Nigeria

Nigeria (population over 90 million) offers another powerful example of resistance. After a year of refusal by the military government to admit that its candidate lost in the 1993 elections, the oil and gas industry workers went out on strike July 4, 1994, demanding democratic reform and the resignation of the government. The U.S.-backed military regime has refused to acknowledge it was defeated in the June 1993 elections and to turn over power to the winning candidate. The winning candidate, a wealthy industrialist, was arrested in June this year.

The strike soon spread to other industries and to the public services, with millions of workers taking part in the strike actions that shut down the major cities.

These workers mobilized despite the declaration by the government that disruption of the economy, i.e., participation in the strike, is considered treason and is punishable by death.

The winning candidate will surely not implement policies in the interest of the workers. The fact, however, that there is mass resistance of this type to a brutal military government after decades of repression shows how vulnerable these governments really are. It also illustrates once again the tremendous social and political weight of the organized working class, even in a relatively non-industrialized country, where wage workers do not make up the majority of the population. Despite dictatorial powers, the Nigerian military governments have received only an "adequate" rating from the IMF in terms of progress in implementing IMF reforms. Mass resistance and fear of it are holding even repressive regimes back.

(In our next issue we will explore the situation in sub-Saharan Africa more widely, and look at the role of imperialism, and specifically, IMF/World Bank policies, not only as regards Africa but also the parallel policies being followed in relation to — Russia.) □

August 8, 1994





# The Fifth Anniversary of "June 4"

by Zhang Kai

### Continued People's Struggles

It is five years since the crackdown on the 1989 movement for democracy. The culprits are still in power and as yet not tried by the people.

For five years, the power-holders have claimed that the political situation is stable. Party secretary Jiang Zemin recently boasted that "without the resolute measures at the time, today's stability could not possibly have been attained."

Yet, behind the façade of "stability" is the iron fist. On every anniversary of "June 4," the authorities cordon off Tiananmen Square, patrol the streets with large numbers of police, and arrest dissidents. This year, three persons who attempted to organize an independent labor union in Shenzhen were arrested just before June 4, and some dissidents have been put under house arrest.

On the third anniversary of "June 4," a citizen named Wang Wengqing was arrested when he attempted to unfurl a banner of protest in Tiananmen Square. Such a deed was considered "insane," and Wang has since been detained in a mental hospital. Wei Jingsheng, the world-famous dissident who was jailed in 1979 for calling Deng Xiaoping "a new dictator," was released in the summer of 1993, when China was bidding to host the Olympic Games in 2000, and has been returned to prison early this year. However, both Wei Jingsheng and some student leaders of the 1989 movement such as Wang Dan and Ze Weimin, who have served several years in prison, on their release declared to the press and the world that they do not regret their participation in the movement for democracy, that they are not guilty of the charges brought against them by the government, and that they will continue with their struggle even though they might end up in prison again.

This year, on the eve of the fifth anniversary, an open petition to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress was presented jointly by five student leaders (Wang Dan, Ze Weimin, Ma Shaofang, Zheng Xuguang, and Ge Haifeng), Shao Jiang from the China Human Rights Association based in Shanghai, and Li Hai, one of the signatories of the Peace Charter Campaign. The petition demanded the recognition of the 1989 movement as a patriotic movement for democracy, the release of all who have

been detained in relation to the 1989 movement, compensation for the families of the deceased victims of the June 4 massacre, and appropriate arrangements for the livelihood of people who have been released from prison and cannot find a job because they are still blacklisted.

Such voices are not rare in China. Since the crackdown five years ago, courageous struggles have continued; many underground organizations have been broken up by the police, and samizdat publications have been closed down. The organizations Human Rights in China and Asia Watch have documented the names of 522 persons arrested during and after "June 4," and released them on May 19 of this year. The only son of Ding Zilin, associate professor of the Department of Philosophy, People's University of China, was killed in the June 4 massacre. For five years, she has gone around to be in touch with the families and the victims, and has located over 150 families. She went on hunger strike on the fifth anniversary to protest against continued police harassment of her activities and the monitoring of her everyday life, and to arouse the attention and concern of the international community to come to the aid of the victims' families.

### Has the Situation Indeed Stabilized?

The 1989 movement was a political expression of people's grievances against the abuses and adverse consequences of the "market reforms" on ordinary people. The fact that most citizens of the capital turned out in the streets in support of the student movement indicates the reaction of urban residents and workers to "the Reform." Has the economic and social situation since 1989 improved so that the dry wood that burst into flame then has been dampened? Let us look at some indicators.

The inflation rate has remained high. In the year ending February 1994, inflation in 35 cities was an average 25.9%, with 19 cities reaching 26%-39%. Just in February of this year, grain prices rose 40% in the 35 cities. Government researchers have warned that inflation is reaching a dangerous high and is testing the limit of popular tolerance.

State-owned enterprises are more and more bogged down in deficits. According to a report of the State Economic and Trade Commission

in March, the budget deficit was 130 billion yuan, and in the first quarter of the year, 49.6% of state industries ran deficits, and 10% of the state-owned enterprises have totally or partially stopped production.

The government also estimates that unemployment will continue to remain high, and unemployment in 1994 is estimated to be 20% more than in 1993. In the first three quarters of 1993 alone, people receiving unemployment funds numbered more than the total of the previous 6 years, and it is estimated that the number this year will double that of last year. The government also announced a 140 million labor surplus in the countryside, and the transient labor force flowing from province to province in search of jobs already amounts to 200 million.

The official figures also show a widening urban-rural differentiation. The income ratio has deteriorated from 1.72:1 in 1985 to 2.54:1 in 1993, the latter surpassing the early years of "the Reform." The discrepancy between the more developed eastern region and the more backward western region has also grown from 1.8 times in 1979 to 2.02 times in 1992. A report by the Social Sciences Academy this March warned that inflation, factory unrest, rural unrest, and nationality conflicts will be potential causes for eruptions. It acknowledged that in May 1993, there were riots in Xinjiang, and in August and September, over 100,000 Muslims demonstrated in the western regions. The report anticipated serious riots in regions encountering economic difficulties.

Some people's deputies to the National People's Congress convened in March noted that the current relationship between the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the masses was tense, and that the internal contradictions among the people are growing very acute. Jiang Zemin, in an internal speech to CCP cadres, also noted that the many existing crime syndicates have not been broken up because they are shielded by corrupt party and army administrators.

For the movement for democracy, the question is not so much the deterioration of the people's living standards and the mafia-ization of society, but the ability of workers and peasants to come together in a joint struggle for their rights. □

June 3, 1994



# The Nicaraguan Revolution Today

by Michael Livingston

The worst and most despicable affliction — the characteristic malady of petty-bourgeois radicals — is this propensity to give up a battle before it is lost. Trotsky said, those who will not defend an old conquest will never be capable of fighting for new ones.<sup>1</sup>

— James P. Cannon

The FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional) held its second congress May 20–23, 1994. The congress reflected the growing political conflict within the FSLN and pointed to a possible split in the organization. The congress also represented the victory of the political leadership of Daniel Ortega and his political current.

Four political currents emerged in the pre-Congress discussions. The “democratic left” was led by Daniel Ortega and called for the continuation of the current FSLN policy, in the name of staying close to the FSLN’s roots and in opposition to the Chamorro government.

The “majority” current (organized around the document “For Sandinism That Returns to the Majority”) was led by Sergio Ramirez, head of the FSLN delegates in the Nicaraguan National Assembly. This current favors the transformation of the FSLN into a social democratic party. The “majority” current represents the right wing of the FSLN and has the support of all 39 Sandinista deputies in the National Assembly, as well as a number of prominent former Sandinista officials. For example, former Ambassador to the United States and Minister of Education in the Sandinista government Carlos Tunnerman, who resigned from the party on May 29, supports this current. Tunnerman stated that he was “disappointed with the results of the congress” and that “I have nothing to do in a party which refuses to correct itself...which appears to be stuck in business as usual, in the same figurehead, in the verticalism and the same discourse.” Similarly, prominent writer and Sandinista Gioconda Belli complained in an article published in *Barricada* (whose editor is also a supporter of the “majority” current) that “the fundamentalism of the past with pure ideas, such as vanguard, verticalism, orthodoxy, triumphed” and that there was no discussion of important issues, such as the economic crisis.<sup>2</sup>

Two other political currents were discernible at the Congress. One was headed by Henry Ruiz, a member of the FSLN National Directorate, who offered himself as a compromise candidate. Ruiz supports greater democracy within the FSLN while also opposing a turn to an

explicit social democratic model. (In the language of the pre-Congress discussion, he favors remaining close to the historic roots of the party.) Ruiz and his supporters also opposed Ortega as head of the party. They feel that Ortega, as the main architect of the strategy of tactical alliances with the Chamorro government, is not the best person to lead the party to a more oppositional position. The policy of tactical alliances often resulted in the FSLN’s tacit class collaboration with the Chamorro government and a failure to support the demands of the working class.

None of these three political currents represent a revolutionary alternative to the essentially class-collaborationist policies of the FSLN since the electoral defeat. A fourth political current, at present still relatively unformed, points toward a left alternative. This current, represented by the Group of 29, favors increased democracy in the party and clear opposition to government policy and to efforts to reverse the gains of the revolution. The Group of 29 is made up of 29 prominent Sandinistas who in July 1993 published an open letter critical of the leadership of the FSLN. Most of this current was co-opted by the “democratic left” current and supported Ortega. It is unclear which direction this current will now take. There are indications that it has some support among rank-and-file members of the FSLN, especially Sandinista unionists and the Sandinista Youth.

The Congress resulted in a clear victory for the “democratic left” current and for Ortega. Ortega was re-elected as general secretary of the party, receiving 287 votes to Henry Ruiz’s 147. Since the “majority” current did not field a candidate of its own for general secretary, Ruiz’s votes came from both his supporters and the supporters of the “majority” current. The National Directorate was expanded to 15 members. Ten of the fifteen are Ortega supporters, three are supporters of the “majority” current (Dora María Téllez, Víctor Tirado, and Luis Carrión), and two are not affiliated with either of the two principal currents (Henry Ruiz and Mirna Cunningham).

Former Sandinista Vice President Sergio Ramirez, leader of the “majority” current was not re-elected to the National Directorate. Ramirez and Jaime Wheelock (who did not run) were the only members of the previous National Directorate who are not in the current one.

Perhaps more significant than the victory of Ortega were the measures taken to democratize the party. For example, the Congress voted to adopt a quota system for women by allocating 30 percent of all leadership positions to women. As a consequence of the adoption of this system, five of the fifteen members of the newly elected National Directorate are women. A quota system for youth was also adopted. Starting with the next Congress, 10 percent of all delegates are to be youth.

The Congress delegated to the 135-member Sandinista National Assembly the task of refining the party program, given the discussion and amendments made at the Congress. According to the statutes of the FSLN, the Assembly is the highest decision-making body in the party between congresses. It can, with a two-thirds vote, nullify decisions made by the National Directorate. The Assembly meets at least twice a year.

The Congress signified a shift in the FSLN toward greater party democracy and an attempt to deal with the exclusion of women from leadership. Still, the FSLN retains a number of elements of verticalism — a top-down, authoritarian structure. The Congress also appeared to signal a shift by Ortega and others away from the policy of tactical alliances with the Chamorro government. Whether this shift is substantive or merely rhetorical is yet to be seen. The Congress also signaled a clear defeat for Sergio Ramirez and the “majority” current, who wish to embrace a thoroughgoing social democratic politics.

In the wake of the Congress, the political differences that were expressed by the various currents may lead to the break-up of the FSLN. Furthermore, as Gary Prevost has observed:

A coherent alternative political program to the neoliberalism of the Chamorro government has yet to be hammered out. Significant political differences remain, but the clear political desire of the rank-and-file delegates was for unity within the party around a political platform true to the historic principles of the FSLN and in clear opposition to the current government.<sup>3</sup>

Without a clear political program that can defend the interests of the Nicaraguan majority of workers and peasants against the attacks of the capitalists, the FSLN will become increasingly irrelevant to the Nicaraguan masses. At present the FSLN still retains the support of a sizable group of the population and a large number of militant activists in the mass movements. This support acts as a counterweight to the forces acting on the FSLN to break up. The Congress revealed but did not resolve the crisis facing the FSLN, a crisis sharpened by the 1990 election defeat. More than anything else, this crisis is a crisis of political program and revolutionary leadership.<sup>4</sup>

1. James P. Cannon (1942). *The Workers and the Second World War*, p. 16.

2. *Central American Report*, 10 June 1994, Vol. XXI, No. 21, p. 6.

3. Gary Prevost, “Political Infighting at Sandinista Special Congress,” *NACLA Report on the Americas*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, pp. 1–2, July/August, 1994.

4. Information in this section, unless otherwise noted, was taken from *Centroamerica: The Month in Review*, Vol. 9, No. 6, June 1994 (Minneapolis, MN: Resource Center of the Americas), and Prevost, “Political Infighting at Sandinista Special Congress,” cited in note 3. *Centroamerica: The Month in Review* is an invaluable digest of news on Central America. Subscriptions are \$30/year from The Resource Center of the Americas, 317 17th Avenue S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55414-2077.



## Erosion of Revolutionary Gains and the FSLN's Crisis

The party congress took place in the midst of a relentless neoliberal assault that has eroded many of the gains of the revolution. This neoliberal assault, combined with the problems growing out of the FSLN's structure and politics, generates the present crisis facing the FSLN. In order to understand the crisis we must also understand the extent and nature of this assault.

After four years of the Chamorro government, little remains of the revolutionary gains. While many of the gains had been lost during the Contra war and as a consequence of the FSLN's own policies, the last four years have witnessed many additional losses. The agrarian reform, considered by many to be a key achievement of the revolution, had by the time of the 1990 elections produced the most equitable land distribution in Central America, benefiting over half of all rural families. Since the defeat of the FSLN, state farms (and state-run factories) have been privatized, confiscated lands have been returned to their former owners, the government has delayed giving peasants titles to their land (making it impossible or difficult to get credit), and tightened lending policies to small farmers. As a consequence of these latter measures, numerous small and medium farmers are facing bankruptcy and foreclosure. Many are forced to sell their lands to large landowners.

The neoliberal policies of the Chamorro government, similar to the policies dictated to Latin America by the IMF and the U.S., has led to the privatization of the rest of the economy, including much of the health care system, and the elimination of spending on social services. Little remains, for example, of the widely respected education system established by the Sandinistas. Illiteracy is again on the rise in Nicaragua. The Chamorro government has also subverted the autonomy process for the Atlantic Coast by ignoring the Autonomy Statute and the regional Autonomous Councils. The Nicaraguan army and police force have been systematically transformed, through reductions in size, removal of key Sandinista officers, and changes in organization, into an instrument of capitalist power. While still not incorporated into the Pentagon's system of training and advising (as are most of the rest of Latin America's militaries) and still free of the death-squad style of repression characteristic of most of Latin America, the army and police have been used increasingly to break strikes and repress popular protests.

Some gains of the revolution remain, however. The revolution produced a massive increase in the size and organization of various mass movements, especially the union movement. (By the end of the 1980s, over 55 percent of workers were unionized.) While the union movement has experienced continuous attack

since the 1990 elections, it remains large and militant. While women's rights (especially their legal equality established by the Sandinista revolution) have been under continuous attack since the 1990 elections, the FSLN's defeat paradoxically reinvigorated the women's movement. The strength and vitality of the women's movement is yet another significant gain of the revolution. Finally, the political structure established by the FSLN, while hardly revolutionary, remains a significant advance over the Somoza dictatorship.<sup>5</sup>

The neoliberal policies of the Chamorro government place the FSLN and the mass movements in a difficult position. The FSLN's strategy of tactical alliances, as a way of influencing and moderating government policy, has proven totally ineffective in stopping or softening the attacks on the Nicaraguan people. The crisis within the FSLN is aggravated by the accumulation, by top Sandinistas in the party and army, of material privileges such as financial and commercial assets. In addition, the pre-congress assemblies, held to discuss the major issues and documents of the Congress, had low levels of participation by party militants (the name for full members of the party). Corruption at the top, a lack of a coherent political program to confront the assault on the Nicaraguan masses, authoritarian party leadership, and low levels of participation by party members in the decision-making of the party, all threaten the FSLN with political irrelevancy as a revolutionary organization. In Nicaragua the paradox is clear — an organization with great revolutionary potential, a strong mass base, and a proud history of revolutionary accomplishments, faces the prospect of political degeneration.

## Parallel Developments in El Salvador

This paradox is not unique to Nicaragua; it can also be found in El Salvador. In recent developments in El Salvador, the former guerrilla organization FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Movement) "deauthorized" 7 of its 21 deputies in the National Assembly as well as Joaquín Villalobos, leader of the ERP (Revolutionary People's Army), one of the 5 groups that make up the FMLN. The deauthorization — essentially a suspension from the FMLN — came after the 7 deputies voted for ARENA deputy Gloria Salguero Gross as president of the Assembly. (ARENA is the acronym for the ruling right-wing Nationalist Republican Alliance.) The FMLN had collectively agreed to abstain from the vote in order to protest measures passed by ARENA and its ally, the PCN (National Conciliation Party). These measures further strengthen ARENA's grip on power.

The 7 deputies were all members of the ERP and another FMLN component group, the RN (National Resistance). Among them was Ana

Guadalupe Martínez, the second in command of the ERP, and Eduardo Sancho, leader of the RN. Joaquín Villalobos, the leader of the ERP who was also suspended, was not an elected deputy. He was barred from running in the elections because of his involvement in the assassination of Salvadoran revolutionary and poet Roque Dalton. The deputies do not lose their seats in the Assembly as a consequence of the FMLN's action. Villalobos has termed the suspension "illegal." In an apparent deal, Martínez was elected vice president of the Assembly (receiving all votes except for the 14 FMLN abstentions) and Sancho was elected secretary. In defense of their violation of the FMLN's decision, Sancho said that the FMLN could not afford to pass up the opportunity to be represented at the leadership council table.

The suspended members maintain that the five groups making up the FMLN must discuss their differences, "such as the acceptance, real or apparent, of a market economy and private property; the struggle within the system or outside of it; the validity or the invalidity of the Marxist-Leninist definition; and the acceptance that we live in a new reality." The suspended deputies were labeled "traitors" by the other FMLN deputies. The suspended deputies called their adversaries "communist dinosaurs."<sup>6</sup>

The conflict within the FMLN reflects the political divergence that has developed between those organizations (the RN and the ERP) that now explicitly identify themselves as social democrats and aspire to be junior partners to ARENA, and the organizations that, while rejecting the possibility of successful armed struggle as a route to revolution, have not abandoned some of their earlier commitments to revolutionary change. The groups that have not been totally co-opted are still experiencing considerable repression, most notably the assassination of leading cadre.

The split in the FMLN was followed by setbacks to the Salvadoran mass movements. The Salvadoran Legislative Assembly approved a labor code and a constitutional reform package (which emerged from the Peace Accords) that contain substantial restrictions on the right to organize and strike.<sup>7</sup>

The crises facing both the FSLN in Nicaragua and the FMLN in El Salvador are the product of the neoliberal imperialist domination of all of Latin America and the political organization and program revolutionaries have adopted to confront this domination. Still, both organizations retain considerable revolutionary potential, and we should not abandon our critical-minded solidarity with them, and more importantly, with the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran mass movements. □

August 1, 1994

5. Information summarized in this section is based on Gary Prevost, "The Nicaraguan Revolution — Four Years After the Sandinista Electoral Defeat," a paper presented at the March 10–12, 1994, Latin America Studies Association, XVIII International Congress, held in Atlanta, GA.

6. *Centroamérica: The Month in Review*, Vol. 9, No. 6, June 1994.

7. Roberto Canas, "New, Complex Challenges Every Day," *Envío*, Vol. 13, No. 155, June 1994, pp. 19–22. Managua, Nicaragua: Universidad Centroamericana.



# Behind the June 12 European Elections

by Keith Mann

**T**he June 12 elections for the European parliament came at a critical time in the increasingly complicated and difficult process of European integration around the Maastricht treaty. Decidedly, the project for European monetary and political union is far more difficult than its planners originally realized. The heterogeneous nature of West European society, the problem of dealing with the shattered economies of the former Soviet bloc states in the East, the resistance of countries like Britain to Franco-German hegemony, and the growing consciousness among workers of the socially regressive nature of the treaty — all this has rendered the goal of European integration far more difficult than the economic union of other regional blocs of capital. By comparison, U.S. capital was able to construct the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with relative ease.

The remoteness that many Europeans feel from Europe-wide institutions, the national political stakes in each country, and the failure of the traditional left to present an internationalist anti-Maastricht front gave a national rather than European dimension to these elections. Beyond the difficulties of implementing the Maastricht treaty, the elections highlighted the crisis of traditional bourgeois political representation on a national level and the disarray and ideological confusion of the Western European left.

Disgust with politics as usual — aimed both at parties in power and at the opposition — characterizes the political scene in most European countries. This translated into huge voter abstentionism in most cases. In the Netherlands, for example, nearly two-thirds of the voters failed to vote, while in France only 53 percent of those eligible bothered to cast a vote, and less than 40 percent voted in Britain and Greece. The relatively large turnout in the Spanish state was no doubt due to the occurrence of important local elections at the same time as the European elections.

The crisis of the traditional bourgeois political formations in Western Europe was particularly evident in several countries. In France, the conservative legislative majority of the Union for French Democracy (UDF) and the neo-Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR), which had come to power in March 1993 on a wave of voter disgust with 12 years of Socialist Party austerity, did much poorer than expected, receiving only 25.5 percent of the vote. The real winners in the French elections were a dissident right-wing ideologue, Philippe de Villiers, and a moderately left-wing millionaire demagogue, Bernard Tapie. The former benefited from disgust with the constant maneuvering within the parliamentary majority, while the latter capitalized on the dissatisfaction with the Socialist Party's failure to renew itself following its de-

feat in March 1993. Both received more than 12 percent of the vote. In Britain, the Conservative Party was routed in favor of the Labor Party. This indicates that the long reign of Thatcherite Tory rule may be coming to an end.

Perhaps the decline of Christian Democracy offers the most dramatic manifestation of the crisis of bourgeois political representation in Europe. This decline is evident in Germany, where Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats, although they did better than expected, are preparing for the possibility of defeat in upcoming national elections. But it is most dramatic in Italy, where the virtual disappearance of the Christian Democracy from the Italian political scene under an avalanche of scandal and corruption after ruling the country for decades is every bit as significant as the success of media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi in leading a right-wing coalition to victory in the recent elections and his inclusion of neo-Fascists in both his electoral coalition and the government which issued from those elections.

With the disappearance of the Christian Democracy and the Italian Social Democracy of former Prime Minister Benito Craxi, the Italian bourgeoisie has suddenly found itself without a clear legitimate political vehicle for its rule. Its discomfort with the far-right neo-Fascists was reflected in the irony of a stock market rebound following the defeat of these right-wing forces in last year's municipal elections, in which the Progressive slate dominated by the former majority of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), now the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), scored several narrow victories. Faced with a motley assortment of neo-Fascists, Italian capital at that point breathed a sigh of relief at the victory of former Communists. It is this political void and the failure of the PDS-dominated left to present a clear political alternative to neoliberalism, rather than the personality or demagoguery of Berlusconi or his control over much of the Italian media, that is most responsible for his success and that of the Fascists and other rightists in the Northern League of Umberto Bossi.

## Crisis of the SP's and CP's

The deep crisis of European bourgeois political formations did not, however, lead to big advances for the traditional left in most cases. This can be explained by the general crisis of Social Democracy, the near total collapse of the Communist Parties, and the failure of both to present a clear alternative to the European bourgeoisie's plans for capitalist integration. In France, the Socialist Party (SP) scored only 14.5 percent of the vote, its worst electoral performance since 1969. The SP suffered from continuous association with the policies that led to its own defeat

in March 1993 and its concomitant failure to present a left alternative to the current government. Its line on Europe was a meek "For Europe [Maastricht, that is], but Social." The immediate fallout was the resignation of presidential hopeful Michel Rocard as the party's secretary following a hastily organized emergency meeting of the national SP leadership only days after the elections.

The British Labour Party was the big winner in the Tory rout. But it is likely that this vote was more a result of dissatisfaction with John Major's government than enthusiasm for the Labour Party. This is because there has been no visible turn-around in Labour's slide to the right, so that it cannot present an authentic alternative to Tory rule. This alone makes a Tory rebound possible. Similarly, the defeat of the Progressive slate led by the majority of the former Italian Communist Party, the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), confirmed its disappointing showing in last spring's elections. This party's continuous move to the right exemplified by its support for privatizations, and assurances to NATO that it would not pull Italy out of the Atlantic Alliance if brought to power, made it clear that it was not an authentic alternative to the Berlusconi-led right-wing alliance. The reasons for the defeat of the Italian Progressive slate, then, were similar to those responsible for the Labour Party defeat in the spring 1993 elections, in which the party's leader at that time, Neil Kinnock, bent over backward to rid the party of any lingering left-wing traces. Unfortunately, both the "Communist" PDS and the "Socialist" Labour Party have drawn the dead-end conclusion that further shifts to the right are in order.

In the Spanish state, Felipe Gonzalez's ruling Socialist Party (PSOE) suffered a setback as well. And in Germany, the Social Democrats (SPD) received only 32.3 percent of the vote as opposed to 37.3 percent in 1989. As elsewhere, the German Social Democracy failed to present a clear left opposition to capital on a national and European-wide level. They put forth a pale version of the politics of the right, focusing on such themes as "security" and "defense of German interests." Their Cold War-like refusal to envision alliances with the ex-Communists of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) only helped lessen the crisis of the German right without in any way advancing left prospects.

The crisis of European political representation and the absence of a consistent, clear-cut mass democratic anti-capitalist alternative means that in the short and medium term the ramifications of this crisis could be quite dangerous; it is precisely the lack of stable parliamentary bourgeois political forces and deep economic recessions or depressions that



have historically opened political space for all kinds of demagogic would-be dictators and increased their attractiveness for big capital. For the moment, however, no important sector of European capital is seriously considering supporting a fascist or extra-parliamentary dictatorship, and the existing far-right forces did not enjoy an electoral breakthrough in the June 12 elections.

Far-right forces did manage, however, to maintain much of their electoral strength in most countries where they have established themselves. In France, Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front (NF) slipped somewhat in terms of recent elections but still managed to receive 10.5 percent of the vote. Far-right Belgian forces also scored significant vote totals. In Belgian Flanders, the Vlaams Blok registered a score of 12.6 percent and the far-right Walloon (Francophone) nationalist party "Agir" made a spectacular advance, winning 9.8 percent. In Germany, by contrast, the neo-fascist Republicans saw their vote totals slide dramatically.

Behind electoral results, the European far right is quite asymmetrical. In France and Belgium, fascist-like forces remain mainly an electoral phenomena. In France, local NF elected officials are often the only NF militants in their locality. In Belgian Flanders, where the far-right Vlaams Blok has received significant vote totals since 1991, it has often had difficulties in finding sufficient numbers of people to stand for elections. In Germany, fascists have remained marginal on the electoral plane but have established a deadly climate of fear in the streets, as far as immigrant workers and far-left activists are concerned. Beyond these differences, these forces with their facile, demagogic answers to the deep crisis of European society can only benefit from the degrading social and political situation in their countries and the failure of a mass working class alternative to neo-liberal Europe.

### Progress to the Left of Social Democracy

There were some bright spots in the generally negative overall balance sheet for the traditional European left. In several countries, loose political formations to the left of Social Democracy, sometimes with scattered fragments of disintegrating Communist parties, were able to present a more or less clear alternative to capitalist Europe and in some cases made significant electoral advances. In the Spanish state, the Izquierda Unida (IU), or United Left, slate organized around the Communist Party but including other forces, supporters of the Fourth International among them, scored an impressive 13.46 percent of the vote. Over the last period the IU majority leadership around Julio Anguita has traced what could be called a class struggle orientation in terms of labor struggles and its stance toward the ruling Social Democrats and their free market policies.

Rejecting calls by the clearly reformist minority of IU to find ground for an alliance with

the PSOE in order to defeat a far-right insurgency that has been nourished by the scandals around the SP "kleptocracy," Anguita led a campaign with a clear anticapitalist profile that targeted SP responsibility for growing unemployment (currently 24 percent) and spear-headed opposition to the Maastricht treaty. In the Andalusian regional parliamentary elections that took place at the same time, the IU slate, which included a popular agricultural trade unionist and leading Green activists, scored an impressive 19.18 percent of the vote. The success of the IU campaign will certainly strengthen the Anguita current within IU and demonstrate the appeal of presenting a clear anticapitalist, anti-Maastricht alternative to the left of the SP.

Broadly speaking, a similar process is occurring in Italy. The Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) registered modest but significant scores in recent elections, capturing around 6 percent of the vote. In contrast to the PDS, the PRC response to the rise of the Berlusconi-MSI-Northern League alliance has been to define itself as an anticapitalist alternative, rejecting the free market options embraced by the PDS. The PRC is far from homogeneous, and a significant current favors an accommodation with the PDS and its politics. Yet at the same time, revolutionaries like the Marxist supporters of the Fourth International grouped around the magazine *Bandiera Rossa* (Red Flag) have been able to gain a hearing and have elected members to the PRC's central committee and to Parliament.

In Belgium, the anti-Maastricht left grouped around the Gauches Unis (GU), or United Left, which includes left-wing trade unionists, solidarity activists, the Communist Party, and the Socialist Workers Party, Belgian section of the Fourth International, put forth a clear anti-Maastricht, internationalist platform for a pro-worker, anti-sexist, anti-racist, environmentalist Europe. If the 1.6 percent of the vote it garnered nationwide was disappointing, a closer look reveals the potential of this formation. GU was formed only three months before the elections. It therefore had little time to refine its program and make itself known to broad working class and progressive circles. In areas where active GU sections were somewhat well implanted, the list received as much as 4.5 percent of the vote, while in rural regions without GU sections it generally received under 1 percent. Its activist nature should give it influence well beyond its current electoral strength.

In Germany, the score of the PDS was universally considered as an important breakthrough. With a national total of 4.78 percent the party only narrowly failed to obtain the 5 percent necessary to win representation in the European Parliament. However, in certain regions of former East Germany it received over 40 percent of the vote. Its .07 percent in the West represented a tripling since the last elections. Its overall score raises expectations that it will pass the 5 percent barrier and enter the Bundestag next October. More importantly, the PDS de-

fined itself as a clear left-wing alternative to Kohl's neo-liberalism, and to Social Democracy's refusal to firmly oppose European capital's plan for integration. For the first time since unification, this vote was considered as representing support for a left-wing alternative rather than simply a protest vote against the "colonialism" of the West toward the East.

As far as the Greens were concerned, there was a marked contrast between Green parties which put forth a clear left profile and those which were content to pose simply as another political formation.

Unabashed revolutionary socialist forces had only an ephemeral independent presence in the June 12 elections. In the Spanish state, Italy, and Belgium this was explained by the participation of revolutionaries in class struggle formations where they helped politically sharpen those campaigns, some of which, like that in the Spanish state, were particularly successful. An excellent appeal signed by Fourth International sections in Belgium, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Sweden counterposed a social, ecological, non-sexist, anti-racist, demilitarized, internationalist Europe to the socially regressive Europe of the bosses. However, a lack of resources and, in some cases, of political will, meant that few workers actually came into contact with the appeal.

In France, the Revolutionary Communist Party (LCR), French section of the Fourth International, hoped to run a united campaign with dissident left anti-Maastricht forces. However, conditions in that country were not ripe for the type of formations seen elsewhere. As a result, the LCR did not present candidates and the anti-Maastricht left was represented by a slate led by Jean-Pierre Chevènement, who led a small left-wing exodus from the Socialist Party not long ago. Chevènement is resolutely anti-Maastricht but there is a distinct nationalist tinge to his politics. The Communist Party scored just under 7 percent with an anti-Maastricht campaign that was also marked by nationalism. The Workers Party (PT) slate of the Lambertist current scored under .05 percent. The Lutte Ouvrière (LO) slate of Arlette Laguiller registered an impressive score of nearly 3 percent but with a line that was not clearly anti-Maastricht. Between nationalism, sectarianism, and the failure to clearly oppose Maastricht and put forth a socialist alternative to capitalist Europe, French workers lacked a consistent left alternative on June 21.

At a time when the reactionary anti-worker and racist character of the European Union is becoming increasingly clear and over 20 million workers are unemployed, an authentic, internationalist, socialist alternative on a Europe-wide level that could take advantage of the crisis of bourgeois political representation and fill the yawning gap opened by the collapse of Stalinist parties and the default of the Social Democracy, remains to be built. □



# Ten Days That Shook the Teamster Bureaucracy

by Charles Walker

The power brokers and Teamster royalty and the mob used to run this union, but, by God, they don't any more. The days when top officials cut up the pie among themselves, and the members paid the bill, are over.

— Ron Carey

On May 25, Teamster leaders heard a report from General President Ron Carey which revealed "a systematic pattern of waste and corruption." This pattern, Carey said, "thwarts democratic reform, subverts efforts to put the union's resources to work for the members, and serves only to enrich a few self-proclaimed union leaders."

After ten days and 2,647 pages of testimony and deliberation, emotional arguments, and brazen threats, the Teamster General Executive Board (GEB) voted 14-3 to back Carey and revoke the charters of the four U.S. area conferences, which in the years since the first conference was chartered in 1937, had degenerated into \$15-million patronage political machines.

On June 9, in a vote no less stunning than their own 1991 election, the majority of the GEB and Teamster President Carey kept a major election campaign promise when they moved to eliminate a powerful layer of regional bureaucratic officeholders.

The stage is now set for the most tumultuous phase of the "New Teamsters" administration as Carey seeks to restructure the IBT (International Brotherhood of Teamsters) and as Carey's old-guard opponents seek revenge and the return of their lost status, perks, and multiple salaries.

At the same time, Carey's supporters and allies on the GEB, in local unions, and in the rank-and-file caucus Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) are responding to this unprecedented action with renewed commitment and enthusiasm, as the job of turning the IBT around seems increasingly practical and realistic.

## Investigators Find Waste and Corruption

A prehearing investigation by Carey's representatives and independent accounting firms revealed that small locals are used to maintain political power in the area conferences. The report summarizing the investigation stated: "In the East, a majority of Conference delegates represent only 21 percent of the members. In the Central, it's 15 percent. In the West, local unions representing only 10 percent of the members control the votes in the election of Western Conference officers."

In the South, 90 percent of conference grant money has subsidized paper locals whose votes have helped offset the votes of local unions containing 83 percent of the members.

Only a tiny minority of Teamster members are eligible to hold conference office. That includes Walter Shea, the top Eastern Conference

official, who has never been elected to any union office, including shop steward, and has never been a working Teamster.

Financial abuses include political payoffs, as when Carey ended one of three salaries being paid to Chuck Mack, president of Teamster Joint Council 7, and the next day Mack was given a \$30,000-per-year "job" with the Western Conference, restoring his yearly take from the dues honeypot to \$115,415, plus expense accounts.

Mack's benefactor is Conference Chair Mike Riley, whose multiple salaries totaled \$314,528 in 1993, plus another \$50,000 in contributions toward his multiple pensions.

In the Central Conference salaries jumped 414 percent from 1989 to 1993. After Carey removed Central Chair Jack Yager last year, for signing sweetheart trucking contracts, the transfer of \$250,000 of Central funds was approved to support Yager's personal suit against the IBT.

## Conference Bosses Don't Give Up

The morning after the conference charters were revoked, the former area heads spent part of their \$600,000 defense fund in a failed attempt to get a federal restraining order against the GEB action.

On June 14, the old-guard publication *The Real Teamster* announced the formation of four regional caucuses with a national coordinating group. The purpose of the group was hinted at during the hearings by Walter Shea of the Eastern Conference: "If you abolish the Conferences," he declared, "I'll see you down the road somewhere, because we are not going to give up this thing...We're going to be around. We might be pests. We might cost you money. We

might be a pain in the ass, but we are not going away. That's not a threat." And again, "We have got to get ourselves together in this room, with us and with others. I'm telling you, all of you — and I'm not threatening you."

This writer believes Carey's adversaries have nothing to lose by putting up a fight, and everything to regain. They will fight the restructuring of the international union with every penny they can squeeze out of the dues collections. They will refuse to answer phone calls; they will dump good grievances; they will feed contract information to the bosses; they will intimidate local officers; and they will network through the Teamster joint councils (local area organizations chartered by the IBT) as a substitute for their lost strongholds in the area conferences.

## Can the Old Guard Be Reformed?

At the 1991 convention, in the privacy of the voting booths, 85 percent of the delegates voted against reform and for associates of the corrupt former Teamster president, Jackie Presser, to run in the government-supervised IBT elections. Most of these delegates were longtime local union officers who at past conventions had voted against rank-and-file election of International officers, against majority rule on contract votes, and against an ethical practices committee. Instead they jeered at reformers and TDU delegates who introduced these and other proposals. TDU prophetically warned of a government takeover.

Three years later many of the same officers correctly voted to take down the freight strike picket lines because no more could be won. However, they then shamelessly refused to break

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## Conference Officials Take the Money and Run

*The following press release was issued by the IBT leadership on June 14.*

International Union representatives and auditors are just getting started uncovering last-minute financial maneuvers by Area Conference officials in the last hours before the Conferences were eliminated on Thursday, June 9.

Here are some actions that have been discovered so far:

- Eastern Conference Chair Walter Shea bestowed on Tom Brown, deputy director in the Eastern Conference, a "retirement gift" of \$16,280. (That's separate from pension benefits.)
- The Eastern Conference comptroller, Steve Thompson, got a retroactive raise of \$4,000.

- Bonus checks totalling \$58,000 had been written to Southern Conference employees. (The International representatives were able to stop them from going out.)
- Each of the four Conferences on June 8 or June 9 sent \$100,000 in dues money to their lawyers, Dickstein, Shapiro, & Morin.
- Southern Conference Chairman Jerry Cook defended his taking a \$37,000 Lincoln Town Car with him, saying that cars were taken by past Conference chairs when they left office.
- About 35 file cabinets are missing from the Southern Conference. Conference officials say that they contained pension fund records which they claim are not the property of the Conference.



## A Family Picnic With a Difference

# 60th Anniversary of Minneapolis Teamster Strikes Honored

by Frank Lovell

Outwardly the family picnic this year in Minneapolis on Sunday, July 17, seemed like any family-style picnic to which the public is invited. Like most other mid-West cities of similar size, Minneapolis has large public picnic areas with all necessary facilities. Hot dogs, beans, chips, and soda pop were served all afternoon, in unlimited quantities. There were balloons, rides, and games for children, and bingo for the oldsters. The grounds were neatly kept, with many picnic tables and a special area for a speaker's stand, with chairs for an audience. Beyond this, all similarity with other picnics ends.

The distinguishing feature of this picnic was its purpose: "to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the 1934 Minneapolis Truckers Strike" — the strike that "made Minneapolis a union town, spurred organizing... throughout the region and made the Teamsters a major force in the labor movement," as the picnic leaflet explained. The organizers made this purpose abundantly clear from start to finish. The leaflets, prepared well in advance of the event, not only announced this purpose. They also carried a long list of at least 50 union sponsors, including the Minneapolis Central Labor Union Council AFL-CIO, the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly AFL-CIO, the General Executive Board of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Teamsters Joint Council 32 (Twin Cities area), and various local, regional, and statewide bodies of electrical workers, machinists, oil, chemical, and atomic workers, communications workers, rail workers, public employees, auto workers, postal workers, transit workers, textile workers, nurses, printers, plumbers, musicians, newspaper employees, teachers, etc. In addition, out-of-town union endorsements were listed (Teamsters locals in Cleveland, Atlanta, and Milwaukee and Staley strikers in Decatur, Illinois), as well as many union caucuses and labor support groups, among them Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), the New Directions Caucus in the United Auto Workers, the Meeting the Challenge Committee, Resource Center of the Americas Labor Project, and a local Welfare Rights Committee.

The leaflet ran a column on one side, "The Story of the 1934 Strike," and besides showing a picture of strike action (the clash with police at the Gamble-Robinson warehouse) and giving the time and place of the picnic, displayed a map showing how to get there. A boxed appeal for

help "to sell tickets and get the leaflets out to all union members" was highlighted, along with the organizing committee's address. So there could be no doubt about the character of this picnic, different from most others. This "master leaflet" was distributed widely at union meetings and workplaces throughout the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, and mailed to other cities, weeks in advance of the event.

On the day of the picnic an estimated one thousand union militants, veterans of the strike struggles, and family members came to celebrate past achievements and prepare for labor's continuing struggle to hold its own against the ceaseless attacks of the employing class. Among the crowd were a few veterans of the 1934 strikes, some family members of strike veterans and victims, several oldtimers who shared memories of those strikes and their consequences, and visitors from other cities and other countries. All these people tended to congregate in the large open tent that housed the pictorial exhibit depicting the history of the Minneapolis Teamster movement from its inception in 1933 to the crushing of it by U.S. government intervention in 1941. At the center of that movement was Teamster Local 574, which conducted the 1934 strike, and its successor organization, Local 544. Probably a majority of those at the picnic, including some curious children and thoughtful teenagers, passed through this tent during the day and inspected the pictures, some in wonderment and others with nostalgia. Many puzzled over what the strikes 60 years ago really meant and what lessons they held for those who are seeking to invigorate and transform the docile union movement of present times.

A wide variety of experience and interest was represented by people who remain active and vocal in unions or are trying to help change the relationship of class forces in favor of those who work for a living. A photographer who was recruited by the organizers to make sound tracks and a pictorial record of the picnic (hoping that one day its "historic significance" will be recognized) came from Glasgow. He compared the Minneapolis uprising with what was once known as "the Red Clydeside" in reference to the militancy of shipyard workers in his native Scotland. Another visitor, who was recording oral histories of the 1934 battles and taking pictures, lives in Chicago. He interviewed several people, including Shaun Maloney, one of the few surviving central leaders of the 1934

strikes (perhaps the only one); Ray Dunne, son of Vincent Ray Dunne, strike leader and most prominent of the famous Dunne brothers of Trotskyist notoriety; and John Ness, one of two sons of Henry Ness, the man killed in the police attack on unarmed pickets in 1934. These three men, whose personal lives were changed by the strikes (albeit in very different ways), are now past retirement age.

Much else was happening while these interviews and informal discussions were going on in and around the historical exhibit tent. By noon the picnic was in full swing. Kids were lining up for food and pop, some dashing away for a chance to tumble in the "moon walk" tent, others running to catch the next ride on the fire engine from the Fire Fighters Memorial Museum. The bingo game was filled and undisturbed by the noise and excitement of kids' games all around. Long lines at the hot dog pit and pop machines continued to grow, even though they moved fast thanks to the professional expertise of members of Hotel and Restaurant Employees Local 17.

Shortly after noon the public address system was hooked up and members of the organizing committee began announcing events soon to happen, urging participation, or plugging raffle ticket sales or explaining where materials of interest (especially T-shirts and free literature about current strikes and other union actions) could be found or letting owners of lost articles know where to reclaim them or trying to locate other staff members assigned to various tasks. In short, everything associated with a large community gathering was in play here. Yet there was no sense of heavy-handed management. The fact that everything moved along on schedule with no apparent effort (except for the overworked cooks) is a tribute to the skill and experience of the organizers, one of whom claimed it was "all in the Minneapolis tradition." There was no mistaking that this referred to a deeply rooted working class tradition.

On the other side of the picnic grounds, across from the historical display tent, where lively discussions continued about the role of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Minnesota Governor Floyd Olson in the strike settlement, a line of tables displayed various items for sale, including stacks of T-shirts specially made for the picnic for those who wanted attractive and useful souvenirs. Another table, tended by members of TDU, had sample copies of their newspaper *Convoy Dispatch*. They distributed other literature on the current struggle inside the Teamsters union to oust remnants of the rackets-ridden bureaucracy, and sold caps to raise money. Another table was loaded with sample copies of *Labor Notes*, a monthly that is rightly called "the unofficial voice of the progressive wing of the labor movement." Both TDU and the Labor Education & Research Project, which publishes *Labor Notes*, furnished volunteers to help organize and advertise the picnic. Another table displayed free literatures by such local labor support groups as the Labor Speakers

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# New Jersey Labor Party Advocates Hold Forum

by Tom Barrett

Over 100 people attended a forum and speak-out sponsored by Labor Party Advocates (LPA) on Saturday morning, June 18, 1994. The event was held at the Labor Education Center at the New Brunswick campus of Rutgers University. Those attending came from every region of the state and from a wide range of different unions.

The principal speaker was LPA's founder Tony Mazzocchi, special assistant to the president of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers (OCAW) international union. Joining him as speakers were Valorie Caffee, a Communications Workers of America (CWA) staff organizer who ran as an independent labor candidate for the New Jersey State Senate in 1993; Barbara Rahke, a national representative of the United Auto Workers; and Jed Dodd, general chairman of the Pennsylvania federation of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, a railroad craft ("Pennsylvania" refers to the railroad line, not the state). The event was chaired by Kathy King, a CWA international representative, who is the vice president of the New Jersey Coalition of Labor Union Women and the state chairperson of LPA.

## Unique Opportunities in New Jersey

A number of unusual situations have given New Jersey activists some unique opportunities to build an independent working-class political movement. One is the strength of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers, which represents thousands of employees in the pharmaceutical industry, one of the most important in the state. One of LPA's key organizers is Mark Dudzic, president of OCAW Local 8-149, which represents the workers at Merck, Sharpe, and Dohme in Rahway, one of the world's largest pharmaceutical plants. Mazzocchi is himself a New Jersey resident, and LPA's first national office was located in Highland Park, New Jersey, near New Brunswick. (It has since been moved to Washington, D.C.) Carmen Martino, who staffed the LPA National Office when it was in Highland Park, has continued to build LPA in New Jersey since the national office's move to Washington. Martino, a resident of Hammonton (near Atlantic City), was instrumental in organizing strong participation from the southern counties in the June 18 event.

Another union which has been centrally active in building LPA is the Communications Workers of America, which represents New Jersey state employees in addition to telecommunications workers and (since 1986) workers in the printing trades. During the administration of Democratic Governor Jim Florio, who was elected in 1989 and defeated by Republican Christine Todd Whitman in 1993, the state gov-



Tony Mazzocchi addressing the New Jersey LPA Forum and Speak-Out on June 18. Seated are Barbara Rahke (left), a national representative of the United Auto Workers, and Kathy King, an international representative of the Communications Workers of America and New Jersey Chairwoman of LPA. The airbrushed banners of Joe Hill and Mother Jones were created by Mike Alewitz of the Labor Art & Mural Project.

ernment demanded contract concessions from the CWA, putting the union at odds with the Democratic Party. In 1991, the CWA threatened independent labor challenges to a number of Democratic Assembly members and senators, withdrawing the threat at the last minute when a contract agreement was reached. Besides Kathy King and Valorie Caffee, CWA District 1 Vice President Jan Pierce is an LPA supporter, and District 1, which comprises the northeastern U.S., gave its endorsement to the New Jersey forum. LPA activists thus were able to reach out to a broad cross-section of organized labor in New Jersey to build the Labor Party Advocates forum.

During the weeks leading up to the event, over 2,000 workers were reached by mail or through their union locals, many of which endorsed the event. Activists were able to hand out hundreds of leaflets at events such as a state employees' rally in Trenton (the state capital) and a re-enactment of the great IWW silk strike in Paterson. Their efforts resulted in a capacity crowd in the large auditorium at the Labor Education Center, which was decorated with airbrushed banners depicting Joe Hill and Mother Jones, created by Mike Alewitz of the Labor Art & Mural Project.

Besides the unions previously mentioned, members of the United Electrical Workers (UE), International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), International Association of Machinists (IAM), International Brotherhood of Electrical

Workers (IBEW), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and many other international unions attended. Two of the Teamsters in attendance came from Local 560 (based in Union City), the first labor organization to be subject to government intervention under the federal Racketeering and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act. (The Justice Department later extended its interference in Local 560 to the entire IBT.)

## Encouraging News on LPA's Growth

Tony Mazzocchi reported on the exciting increase in LPA's size and strength throughout the country. Especially since the ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement by a Democratic Congress and a Democratic president, recruitment of LPA members and endorsement of LPA by local unions has been on an upswing. Mazzocchi told of meetings like New Jersey's all over the country, events which have kept him on the road for the past several months. He explained that rank-and-file response to LPA's message has far exceeded organizers' expectations, leading to the decision to project a Labor Party founding convention in Denver in 1995. [See the latest issue of LPA's newsletter for more details on the growing support for LPA nationwide and on preparations for the founding convention. A one-year membership in Labor Party Advocates and a year's subscription

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## Speech at a New York City LPA Meeting

# The World Situation and the Need for a Labor Party

*Following is the edited transcript of a talk given by a New York labor leader at a meeting held by the Labor Party Advocates (LPA) organizing committee in New York City on April 23, 1994. We are printing this text, transcribed for BIDOM by Lee DeNoyer, for the information of our readers, especially because of its valuable appraisal of the world situation today. A passing suggestion that at one time there might have been a basis for working class participation in the Democratic Party we certainly would not agree with, but the speaker's clear assertion that today there is nothing for labor in the Democratic Party is undeniable.*

**M**y union was founded in 1914 and it passed a resolution for a labor party at that convention and did so again at its 1916 convention. If you look through the books, it continued to do so every two or three years because a labor party seemed always to be a good idea. The trouble with things that are always a good idea is that they become timeless and we don't discuss why we want a labor party now, but why a labor party is always a good idea. I'm going to discuss what is going on now, and how the campaign to build a labor party fits in with contemporary American, world, and labor politics. That's the topic for today: to try to set the stage that the labor party works on.

My daughter wants to go to Yale. I asked her why. She said so that when she grows up she can become president — of Mexico. [Laughter.] (Timing is key in these things.)

That sets the stage for why we need a labor party. That's what's going on in the world now; that the president of Mexico was trained at Yale. And what the president of Mexico was trained in at Yale, sets the stage.

We were going to cancel the meeting today in honor of Richard Nixon. If you listened to the news as you drove in, you thought that Mother Theresa had passed on and not Richard Nixon. It took a while. If you turned on the news too late you couldn't tell who they were talking about; they were talking about a great person. And a person who is going to be buried with dignity and with honors and with respect, and then they say Nixon, and you say, "Wait a second; that cannot be."

Let me make the following observation. In 1974, Nixon was driven from office in disgrace. In 1994 Nixon will be buried with high honors and respect. And those people in this room who can't stand that, who think that he should be hidden in an unmarked grave somewhere, should think about what happened. The reason he's going to be buried with high honors and respect is because the world went Nixon's way a lot more over the past twenty years than it went ours. That sober the discussion up.

He won. We didn't. The Cold War is over. Somebody won, and somebody didn't. It didn't just end. And Nixon won a whole lot more than we did. The question is, Is that a win, or just a little bit of a win? I want to speak a little bit about that and phrase the

issues extremely sharply: what a labor party means and why.

Let me pose some of the organizing principles that determine the modern world, and whose they are and whose they're not. It seems to me whose they are and whose they're not tells us why we need a labor party.

The modern world economy, the post-Cold War, neoliberal world, whatever the hell you want to call it, is being organized more or less around four principles.

Principle No. 1 is "slow growth." That is, high unemployment is a social virtue. If your brother-in-law was laid off for eight months and came home and said, "I got a job," you'd probably say, "That's good. You're finally going to earn a living. You're not going to be sponging off of us anymore. I'll buy you a drink over that." If the unemployment statistics came out and said, "Tens of thousands of brothers-in-law got jobs," the stock market would go down. A terrible thing has happened. More people are working. Because high employment is not good for the economy, for the world.

In Detroit several weeks ago the leaders of the top seven industrial countries in the world [G-7] met in Detroit in front of a replica of a Diego Rivera mural on the auto industry. We're talking metaphor here, fans. A replica of the mural — a phony mural — that was in Detroit because Mexico didn't have any money and Henry Ford paid Diego Rivera to leave Mexico and paint a mural about the auto industry, because at that point the auto industry was in Detroit. Now the auto industry is in Mexico. A phony mural is in Detroit, and they met in front of it and they said, "Unemployment, boy, we gotta do something about that." And they have done something about that. They have created it. And they're very comfortable with it.

World unemployment is at an all-time high. Everywhere. Some people think that's good. Some people think that's bad. The group that thinks that's good is *doing* it. Concomitant with that is low inflation. Don't overheat the economy. "Slow growth" as a principle of economic development.

Principle No. 2 — "free trade" as a principle of economic development. Where "free trade" has nothing to do with goods, but with the conditions under which goods are made and exchanged. "Free trade" means that *no country* can regulate the conditions under

which goods are made and exchanged. "Free trade" is not about how much rayon one country makes and how much "raymie" another country makes — whatever "raymie" is. It's not about regulating how much cocoa you get and how much bananas you get and how much steel. It's how people are allowed or not allowed to regulate the conditions under which they make and exchange goods. Free trade: NAFTA, GATT, all of those things.

Principle No. 3 — destroy the public sector. Crush, starve the public sector. As a principle for organizing the economy. Not because the public sector is expensive and inefficient. Some city workers go to Giuliani and say, "We can do the job cheaper than the private sector."

And he says, "I want 2,500 layoffs."

And they say, "But wait, we can do the job cheaper."

He said, "I don't think you heard me."

He went to Cortines [head of the public school system]. He said, "I want \$325 million in savings and twenty-five hundred layoffs."

Cortines said, "Here's your \$325 million in savings."

Giuliani said, "Where are the layoffs?"

"I thought you wanted the savings."

"No, I want the layoffs."

Whether or not there's an economic reason for the layoffs, there's an ideological, political reason. And that is that this organization of the economy does not distribute wealth socially, but distributes it privately. And the public sector distributes wealth socially. It takes the social production, grabs a little of it, and distributes it socially through political decisions. Because that's what the public sector does in fact. It's a form of what we might call the social wage. And some portion of your standard of living is distributed through the public sector, socially. And this organization of the economy says, "No, do not do that. All wealth should be distributed privately. And everything should be bought and sold on the market. Everything should be commoditized."

So the public sector is an obstacle to this organization of the economy. Whether it's efficient or inefficient. Whether it does a good job or a bad job, it's doing a job people don't want.

Case in point: in Phoenix, Arizona, or Scottsdale, or one of those towns, the fire department is private. The fire alarm rings. The truck rushes out there. And it opens its



computer screen and checks to see if the house that's burning has fire insurance. It's the equivalent of going to the hospital bleeding and they're saying, "What's your coverage?" "Ah, yeah, that house has coverage. Put the hoses up and put the fire out." "Ah, that house doesn't have coverage. Hook the hoses up and spray the houses nearby that do have coverage so that the fire does not spread." This is real. I'm not making this up. This is the *New York Times*. Think about that for a second.

The principle is that no portion of wealth should be distributed socially through the public sector. The public sector cannot play a role in defining the social standard of living of the people. That's gotta get chopped down.

Principle No. 4 — The fourth element of this new economy is that the organizations that can resist 1, 2, and 3 have to be hurt. And the technical or theoretical form of that is "deregulate the labor market." And the popular form of that is *union busting*.

There are two basic organizations for the defense of the mass of working people and of social standards — political parties and unions. And the question then becomes [for the organizers of this world economy], Can we defeat, destroy the political and organizational expression that would say 1, 2, and 3 aren't allowed? That means weaken the unions, weaken the regulators of labor and of social standards, weaken them, destroy them, attack them, make them illegal, arrest them, "disappear" them, do it in various forms.

These four points constitute the basic organizing principles of the economy. And every country in the world is being told, "If you do not organize your livelihood this way, you will be punished."

This is the policy of the World Bank. This is the policy of the International Monetary Fund. This is the policy where we [the IMF, World Bank, etc.] go to a country in Africa and say, "If you want a dollar, you will organize yourselves this way. You will prove that you want the dollar by cutting your public sector, by privatizing your industry, by cutting your wages, by laying off your workers, by weakening your unions. And if you do that, we will lend you money for development. And if you don't do that, we will starve you, blockade you, hurt you, and punish you, and your people will suffer and die." This is the world path of development.

What country am I talking about? Chile. Rwanda. El Salvador. Mexico. Did I leave any out? Nigeria. Nicaragua. The Philippines. New York City. The United States.

This is the organizing principle of *your* economy, not *their* economy. This is not some kind of Third World solidarity for some poor folks someplace else. The view that it is, is the same as a view that NAFTA is about factories leaving New York and human rights violations in Mexico. What about Mexicans coming here to work in factories under human rights violations?

This is the organizing principle, as I jokingly say, of President Salinas de *Giuliani*. Same principle. This in fact is the organizing principle of New York City. It's trivially obvious that the organizing principle of New York City is, "Destroy the public sector. Slow growth in the economy. Keep inflation down. Weaken the unions so that they are incapable of resisting those points." And it's a "free trade" economy where manufacturing wages sink to El Salvadoran levels. Either the jobs go to El Salvador or El Salvador wages come to the South Bronx. It really doesn't matter which way. One way or the other. This is America and this is the world.

This is also the organizing principle of one group of people. One might call them a lot of things: Wall Street, the rich, the multinational corporations, international capital, the capitalist class. Call them whatever you want. It's *their* organizing principle. And they have ventured more or less to organize the whole world this way.

Now, a couple of harsh statements. There is no countervailing organizing principle for human intercourse and human potential and democracy and the economy that has any validity in the world today. That's one of the results of the Cold War. There was up until recently a countervailing organizing principle: socialism. Good socialism, bad socialism, degenerate socialism, proper socialism, improper socialism — the debate among the socialists is one thing. But in fact there were two paths of development for the world. Or possibly three. And at this point there's one path of development for the world. And a whole lot of, "Damn, I don't like that, but I don't know what I can do about it." That's a unique historical moment, and it came with the end of the Cold War, and we'll have that discussion some other time for those who are interested in it.

World capitalism has more influence over the lives of the people in the world than any political organizing system has had in history. These guys are everywhere. There is no safe haven. There is no safe haven in Eastern Europe, in Asia, there is no safe haven anywhere. Harsh reality. Some people wanted to say, "When is the last time anybody ruled the world quite as much as these guys do?"

So we have these debates. Pick a time. There isn't one. Not Alexander the Great, not Genghis Khan, not anybody. So now people say, "We're gonna get real depressed. You're gonna have to collect everybody's shoelaces and belts so we don't kill ourselves. Isn't this a terrible story?" No. Why not? Because these guys rule the world but they can't run the world. I want you to think about that for a second. They can't deliver the goods; they can't provide decent lives for people. They don't even care about *producing* the goods, let alone delivering the goods. They have an antiproducer and antisocial policy. It is a redistribution policy on a world scale. Latin Americans call it savage capitalism.

They don't even care about producing goods. All they care about is taking money from working people. Each one of those four points: slow growth, free trade, destroy the public sector, deregulate the labor market, are ways for the owning class to take money from the producing and working people. It's a stealing, robbing, bandit, plunder strategy. As opposed to a "You guys work, and the more you produce, the more I'll take some off the top" strategy. This is a straight "Gimme mine, and the hell with you" strategy.

Their slogan is, Maximize profits. Not maximize profits through production, not maximize profits through let's make another million cars and we'll get another couple of bucks out of every car, but maximize profits through getting more bucks out of every car and then we don't care how many we make. Take more of everybody else's share.

Everything we know says that this is a strategy that cannot work. This is a strategy that will plunge the whole world into chaos and turmoil, because folks can't make it that way. This is a strategy of people who can rule things but can't run things. So at some point this strategy is going to fall in on itself. Where? Who knows. When? Who knows.

What happened on January 1, at the stroke of midnight? Rudolph Giuliani was sworn in as mayor. Chiapas, and Rudolph Giuliani was sworn in as mayor, and NAFTA started at that point. So in effect we see the naked contradictions of this strategy. It leads to Chiapas and it leads to Giuliani. It leads to the students and young people in France saying, "Don't cut our minimum wage." And it leads to the people in Bosnia killing each other. They are both very direct conclusions of this kind of political reality. They are equal paths in effect.

There was a statement in the newspaper the other day on Greek Independence Day where some Greek leaders said, "We must take Macedonia back. We lost Constantinople. We don't want to lose any more." So I called up my friend Sophia, a young Greek lady, and said, "You lost Constantinople. Tell me when that was!" 1475, 1501, whatever. So this guy is getting up at the Greek Independence Day march and saying, "We lost Constantinople, fellow Greeks, don't let it happen again." That's 500 years ago. You were worried about the debate over who lost China; you thought that affected you guys. That was nothing. That was 1949.

If we don't create alternate paths of development and vision, what we will have is 500-year-old blood feuds, the destruction of the people, and the continuing plunder of natural resources. "Where there is no vision the people perish." From Leviticus. Makes sense, notwithstanding its authorship.

The question for us of why we need a labor party is because they have organized the world in a form that is absolutely destructive but is currently relatively unchallenged as an organizing vision. It's their politics. It's class

*Continued on page 32*



# Major Upheaval in the Making in Brazil

by George Saunders

One of the most important tests for the workers movement worldwide is shaping up in Brazil today.

There the Partido dos Trabalhadores — the “PT,” or Workers Party — supported by millions of people in the organized union movement and among the many social movements made up of working people, the poor and the oppressed, has the likelihood of winning the national presidential elections scheduled for October-November. This would open up the possibility of the working class and its allies taking power in order to begin transforming society to meet the needs of the majority. And this in a country almost as large geographically as the United States (over 3 million sq. mi.), with more than 150 million people, one of the more industrialized countries of the Third World and the largest in Latin America, a continent where since the Cuban revolution the question of socialist revolution has been posed in a particularly sharp way in country after country.

The PT is neither a bourgeois populist nor a social democratic nor a Stalinist party. If it were any of these, its perspective would be simply to administer the existing capitalist socio-economic system in the interests of the ruling minority, to attempt a few palliative reforms while preserving the fundamentals of the “market economy” in which wage slavery and exploitation for private profit would remain the dominant realities. To the contrary, the PT consciously calls itself revolutionary socialist and has adopted revolutionary socialist policies and perspectives (most recently at its national gatherings in June 1993 and April 1994). It has consistently adhered to revolutionary socialist principles against repeated challenges since its beginning in the late 1970s. These principles and policies democratically represent a mass movement aiming for fundamental change.

### Democratic Control by PT Membership

The PT differs from another mass movement that in recent years has sought to achieve fundamental change through elections, the *lavalas* led by the priest Jean Bertrand Aristide in Haiti. Unlike the Haitian supporters of Aristide, the members of the PT have specific voice and vote within an organization that functions democratically from the bottom up, with full freedom of tendencies (including Fourth Internationalists). The PT’s policies are decided by, and its leaders answerable to, its “nuclei” containing hundreds of thousands of members throughout

the country. The activist members are in turn intimately linked with the unions and other social movements, involving millions hungry for real change and expectant that *their* party, the Partido dos Trabalhadores, will bring it about.

(For detailed accounts of the democratic and class-struggle character of the PT, in addition to what has appeared in *BIDOM*, see the article “Building Democratic Socialism: The Partido dos Trabalhadores in Brazil” by Maria Helena Moreira Alves, one of the founders of the PT and a member of the education department of the Central Unica dos Trabalhadores [CUT], Brazil’s left labor federation representing over 15 million workers. The article originally appeared in *Monthly Review*, September 1990. Maria Alves is also the author of *State and Opposition in Military Brazil* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986].)

As I have indicated, most of the ranks and leaders of the PT have consistently rejected both populist and Popular Frontist conceptions and pressures. (This is reflected in the clear dominance of the left-wing tendencies at the PT gathering in June 1993 and again in April 1994; see the informational material below for more about these gatherings, in particular the item “Tendencies in the PT.”)

### The Break with Populism

Maria Alves, in her September 1990 article in *Monthly Review*, gives a vivid account of the strict political housecleaning by which the PT fighters have shown they do not hold to other interests separate and apart from those of the working class and its allies among the poor and oppressed.

As she expressed it, “The roots of the PT are not only socio-economic. The PT’s political strategy has been built upon the accumulated historical experience of the working class movement in Brazil, *especially a critique of the legacy of Getulio Vargas’s populism and the legacy of the Brazilian Communist Party* [emphasis added].”

After several paragraphs describing the corporatist, semi-fascist heritage of Brazilian “populism,” derived from the time of dictator Getulio Vargas’s rule in the 1940s and his continuing influence in the ’50s, Alves cites the following critical exchange between PT leader Lula and Lionel Brizola, the head of the populist Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (PTB), who continues the Vargas tradition.

[The] trade unionists and community organizers [who created the PT] consciously wished to avoid founding a party based on a populist

framework, and intended to move the working class from a position of backstage mobilizing to frontline organizing as *independent major political actors*. This position of autonomy and empowerment was, perhaps, best expressed in an exchange that took place in 1979 between Lula and Brizola. Brizola, most important inheritor of the populist legacy in Brazil, was attempting to convince Lula to join his effort to reestablish the traditional PTB [the party founded by Vargas after his ouster from power in 1946].

Brizola argued, “We are reaching the river and it is necessary that we, as leaders, show the people where to cross it.” Lula replied, “I think it is time that the people should learn where and how to swim by themselves.” With the idea that the people themselves “should learn where and how to swim” the Partido dos Trabalhadores was born.

### The Break with Stalinism

Maria Alves’s account of how the PT rejected the Brazilian Communist Party’s notion of collaboration with imaginary “progressive sectors” of the native capitalist class is also quite interesting. However, she tactfully refrains from drawing any connection between the Brazilian CP’s peculiar notions, which betrayed the interests of the workers themselves, and the corrupting influence of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow, with its conception of “building socialism in one country” and using Communist parties outside the Soviet Union as bargaining chips or sources of pressure in arriving at deals between the labor bureaucracy and capitalist forces, particularly “peaceful coexistence” type deals between the Soviet bureaucracy and the imperialist powers.

But let us listen to what Maria Alves has to say about the rejection of such notions and their role in setting the political course of the PT.

The founders of the Workers Party also drew on the experience of the Partido Comunista Brasileiro (PCB). The PCB had deep roots in the working class movement since its founding in 1922 in connection with autonomous trade unions, and it became one of the leading organizers of underground resistance during the Vargas dictatorship. Because of this early history, the PCB enjoyed a high degree of legitimacy within the working class. The PCB organized mostly in a clandestine or semi-clandestine fashion from its founding days and became characterized by a top-down structure, rather rigid in its following of “democratic centralism,” with little room for internal debate and dissent. The Brazilian Communist Party is known as one of the most orthodox in Latin America.



After the end of the Vargas dictatorship, the PCB worked in loose and unofficial alliances in support of populist politicians. Its basic theoretical position on political action emphasized unity with the local bourgeoisie against imperialism. The PCB held strictly to this policy even after the military coup of 1964, and, within the resistance, argued for center-left unity with bourgeois sectors to overthrow the military government. This emphasis on alliances with the bourgeoisie caused a series of splits in the PCB and the loss of a significant number of its working class militants.

In 1979, at the time of the founding of the PT, the PCB argued for a soft line on strikes in order to build a secure inter-class alliance capable of overthrowing the dictatorship. Because many of the strikes deeply affected the interests of the national bourgeoisie, the PCB instructed its trade unionists to negotiate agreements with local capital in such a manner as to take advantage of what the PCB believed to be an inherent contradiction between local and international capital. This position became the subject of heated polemics within the new trade union movement, eventually leading to a new series of splits from the PCB. Some members left the party to join social democratic and populist parties; others supported the efforts to found the Partido dos Trabalhadores. Those members of the PCB who joined the PT did not believe in the effectiveness of an "inter-class alliance" because of the deep connection between local and international capital in Brazil. And they were frustrated by "democratic centralism" and the inability of rank-and-file militants to influence the party platform. They joined the PT to have a more active voice in decision making.

## Dangers the PT Faces

The movement for fundamental social change represented by the PT, if it wins the election, will still face major obstacles. Brazil is not one of the advanced capitalist countries, not one of the Group of Seven that dominate the world with their financial power. Brazil is burdened by heavy debts to the banks and governments of finance capital centered in North America, Western Europe, and Japan. The ruling rich of Brazil are intimately interlinked with the multinational banks, corporations, and other financial institutions that, until they are overthrown, will continue to dominate the world market. The armed power of the state in Brazil remains in the hands of the capitalist minority, and as the experience of Chile, Haiti, and so many other countries has shown, the property-owning minority, with the encouragement and support of imperialist wealth and military power, will not hesitate to use armed force to try to preserve the profit system and their privileged position within it if they feel those are in danger.

This is the kind of challenge and confrontation that is shaping up in Brazil. While apologists for the capitalist system everywhere are proclaiming that socialism and Marxism are dead, the workers and oppressed of Brazil are showing they are very much alive and kicking (just as the Zapatista fighters of Chiapas have done in Mexico; as have the continued resistance to military rule in Haiti, and Cuba's con-

tinued defiance of the tightening imperialist stranglehold).

In the United States and in all countries, socialists, union militants, activists in the movements for social change, and particularly opponents of imperialist intervention will need to respond in solidarity and support of our Brazilian brothers and sisters as these events unfold. Because our fates are more and more closely interlinked in the shrinking "global village" of world capitalism, the success of a workers party genuinely seeking change in any country will help promote the same aims in every country. And an injury to every such struggle is an injury to all. The movement in Brazil can be a particularly important example and inspiration for us in the United States at a time when important sections of the union movement here, through Labor Party Advocates, are moving toward a founding convention of a labor party. (See the article by Tom Barrett on pp. 00 of this issue.)

## Further Information

During the past year our magazine has carried several articles with information about the PT and the situation in Brazil. We urge readers to look again at the 1991 program of the PT, reprinted in *BIDOM*, January 1994; an account of the history of the PT and the struggle within it for revolutionary principles presented by Beti Burigo, a PT leader and a Fourth Internationalist (a report she gave at the April 1993 conference in South Africa of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action; see *BIDOM*, February 1994); and an interview with PT presidential candidate Lula, taking up some of the problems of PT relations with capitalist, populist, and social democratic political forces as the elections approach; see *BIDOM*, April 1994.

## The Brazil Election Information Committee

We reprint below several items of information about the upcoming elections in Brazil prepared by the Brazil Election Information Committee (BEIC), which was just formed in June of this year. While we may or may not agree with all the political views stated or implied in these materials, their factual contents illustrate and confirm the points made above about the significance of this class battle in Brazil and how it is shaping up. This factual material is especially valuable in view of the virtual news blackout by the capitalist press on this subject. (The BEIC may be reached by writing to it c/o Brecht Forum, 122 West 27 Street, 10 floor, New York, New York 10001; E-mail to [bkoelein@igc.apc.org](mailto:bkoelein@igc.apc.org). On the West Coast, write PO Box 8402, Berkeley, California 94707; or phone Claudette Begin at (510) 869-5799; E-mail to [achis@igc.apc.org](mailto:achis@igc.apc.org).)

We also call our readers' attention to the text of the PT's "Guiding Principles for the 1994 Election," adopted at its gathering in June 1993. An English translation of this important programmatic document appeared as part of a "dossier" on Brazil and the PT in the December

1993 *International Viewpoint*, monthly journal of the Fourth International. □

August 11, 1994

## What is the Workers' Party?

From materials made available by the Brazil Election Information Committee.

The Brazilian Workers Party is one of the most dynamic parties on the Latin American left today. It is widely predicted to win the October 3 elections for the presidency on a platform calling for renegotiation of the Brazilian debt with Northern Hemisphere banks and for agrarian reform to benefit Brazil's millions of landless peasants. If elected, the PT will lay the bases for democratic socialism in Brazil.

The PT has grown from humble beginnings in the Brazilian workers' movement 15 years ago, emerging among the workers in the industrial heartland around the city of São Paulo despite severe trade union repression during three decades of military dictatorship. The presidential candidate, Luis Inacio da Silva, popularly known as Lula, rose to the leadership of the party from his activity as an auto worker and trade union activist.

If the PT wins the presidency, it promises to confront the dramatic poverty and social inequality which plague Brazil. In 1988, the richest 20 percent of the population received two-thirds of the national income, while more than one-third of all families had a per capita income of only US\$180. This poverty is reflected in an extremely high infant mortality rate, 65 per 1000 births. More than 7 million homeless children, abandoned by their families, live on the streets.

In the light of such extremes of poverty and wealth, PT supporters are convinced that only radical measures of economic redistribution and political democracy from the grass roots will be able to improve the lot of the poor majority. Accordingly, the PT is organized from the ground up, with close connections not only to the trade union movement but also to the Christian Base Communities of progressive Catholics, and to the movements of women, slum dwellers, native peoples, black people (the "negritude" movement), and the environmental movement working to save the country's vast rain forest from destruction by development.

Since 1988 the PT has elected mayors in some of the most important cities, where they have put into practice the PT's ambitious plans of empowerment of the poor and working population and direct links between elected officials and the grass roots movements. PT activists organize in neighborhood committees to make proposals to solve local problems: running water, schools, street lights, health clinics, etc. They elect a popular council (open not just to party activists but to all concerned citizens) which meets regularly with city council members to discuss budget issues, establish priorities, and implement programs. Maintaining these close links to the grass roots will be an even greater challenge if the PT has the oppor-



tunity to form a national government after this year's elections.

The Brazilian electoral system allows for a two-round presidential election. At present, there are six major candidates and several minor ones in the race. If none of them wins a majority in the first round, the two leading candidates will face each other in a second election on November 15. If Lula maintains his present standing in the polls, however, he stands a good chance of defeating all challengers and winning on the first round.

[For extensive background information about the Brazilian PT, see the book *The Workers' Party and Democratization in Brazil*, by Margaret E. Keck (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992). This book focuses primarily on the formative years of the PT, but also includes developments through the late 1980s.]

### **The Brazilian Cultural Background** *From "Brazil Fact Sheet #1," provided by the BEIC.*

The amazing rise of the Partido dos Trabalhadores from its founding in 1979 to its front-runner status today owes a lot to the uniqueness of Brazil's people.

Brazil's population is the largest in Latin America, and is as ethnically diverse as any in the world. Like the United States and much of Latin America, Brazil was "settled" in the early 16th century by Europeans who violently displaced the indigenous population, and imported African slaves to work the land. Most of today's 150 million Brazilians are descendants of Indians, Africans, and Portuguese.

But unlike the United States, the Brazilian national identity is strongly inclusive of all ethnic groups, with racial integration in communities and workplaces much more accepted, especially among the working class majority. About 75 percent can trace their roots to Africa, and intermarriage is fairly common.

Racial discrimination against darker-colored Brazilians exists, but it is not as structurally rooted as in the United States. White racism is much more typical of the "pure European" upper classes than of the general public.

In the last one-hundred years, waves of immigrants came from Italy, Spain, Germany, Lebanon, Syria, and Japan. They came to work in the southern coffee plantations, in the factories in the industrial center, São Paulo, or as small farmers in the southern states: São Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul. The Middle Eastern immigrants set up small shops, and some became major merchants.

The Brazilian culture is widely recognized as a mix of all these influences. As a result, the Brazilians have earned a reputation for creativity, energy, artistry, and exuberance. A heavily Catholic country, Brazil has seen its share of military dictatorships, populist political campaigns, and mass uprisings. Despite being both the major economic power in the U.S. "backyard," and having a rapidly growing industrial sector, nonetheless intense poverty, violence,

and bitter exploitation remain the norm in city and countryside. The people have sustained themselves for generations with various forms of mutual aid and a strong belief in the power of love and community. This is reflected in the Base Christian Communities, landless peasants settlements, shantytown associations, and the labor movement. [It is also reflected in the rich and marvelous novels of Jorge Amado about the state of Bahia, especially in the translations by Gregory Rabassa. — G.S.]

These cultural characteristics have made all the difference in the growth of the PT as a movement embracing all the poor and struggling sectors of Brazil.

[The PT's "Guiding Principles for the '94 Elections" state in part:

The PT will not achieve hegemony among the masses if it does not know how to *speak with a Black voice*. Racial and sexual discrimination must be combated with the same radicalness as the exploitation of...labor. (Emphasis added. — G.S.)

### **Brazil's Lula: A Political Biography** *[by BEIC]*

Although he is widely recognized throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, Luis Inacio da Silva, a founder of the Brazilian Workers Party and the odds-on favorite to win the upcoming October 3 presidential elections, is barely known in North America.

Lula, as he is popularly called by both supporters and opponents, was born in 1946 in the small village of Garahuns, in Northeastern Brazil's Pernambuco state, one of the poorest regions of the country. Like many peasants from the Northeast, his father migrated to São Paulo state, Brazil's industrial center, to find work, and the family followed several years later.

In São Paulo, life was hard. Lula, his mother, and seven brothers and sisters lived in a tiny apartment in back of a bar. As a boy, Lula sold candy and fruit on the street to help his family, and did not begin school until he was 10 years old. Although he was a good student and finished primary school, his education was interrupted at age 12, when he took a job delivering laundry. At 14 he was hired to work in a general store, and at 15 he got a job in a screw factory while taking a technical course in metallurgy at a state-sponsored school. In 1966, at the age of 21, Lula became a metalworker at Villares, a big auto-parts factory, where he lost a finger in a work accident.

Lula first took up the fight for auto workers' rights in the late 1960s, when he joined the Metalworkers' Union of São Bernardo dos Campos, an industrial city near São Paulo. He was elected director, and soon after, president of the union. Being a union activist was particularly tough during this time of military dictatorship in Brazil. The government frequently harassed the labor movement and took repressive measures against it, arresting leaders and activists, and beating, torturing, and even killing many of them. The 1975 arrest of Lula's brother, José Ferreira da Silva ("Frei Chico"), who was

an activist in the Communist Party, had a profoundly radicalizing effect on Lula.

Throughout the last half of the 1970s, workers continued massive organizing drives, and in 1978 and 1979 huge strikes that paralyzed São Paulo's multinational-owned automobile factories occurred. Lula played a prominent role in these activities. Corporate representatives tried to bribe Lula and others to end the strikes, but failed in their attempts. Next, the federal government banned the Metalworkers' Union and arrested Lula. He was indicted and held in jail for a month, but following national and international protests he was finally released. Eventually, the workers won the strikes, but the government enacted new laws that restricted wage increases and benefits. This action by the government forced the labor movement to begin considering activity that would go beyond workplace organizing and into the political arena.

During the late 1970s, trade union activists, as well as representatives from Brazil's varied social movements, began holding meetings to discuss the necessity for and feasibility of forming a new labor party, and in 1980 the Partido dos Trabalhadores was formally constituted.

A new labor federation, Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (CUT), was founded in the early 1980s. Under military rule, any unions under the control of the Ministry of Labor were outlawed. Thus, the CUT had to be organized clandestinely and operate underground. This situation continued until 1985, when a mass movement demanding direct elections forced the military government to step down from the presidency and allow a civilian president, elected by the Congress, to succeed it.

In 1982, public pressure brought an end to the Supreme Military Court's prosecution of Lula and other labor activists. Four years later, Lula won a seat in Congress, receiving over 650,000 votes, the largest share in Brazil's history. He and the handful of other PT members of Congress began formulating a new post-military constitution, fighting the conservative majority for inclusion of workers' rights, and won some impressive victories. The new Constitution recognizes the right to free education and health care for all, paid maternity leave, the right to strike, a 4-hour reduction in the workweek with time-and-a-half pay for overtime work, vacations with one-third pay guaranteed, and cost-of-living adjustments for pensioners. But major components of the PT's vision for Brazil, particularly agrarian reform, were still unrealized.

### **The 1989 Election**

The PT ran Lula for president in 1989. The campaign mobilized millions of people from all over Brazil as the social movements, including those of urban and rural workers, neighborhood associations, Christian-based communities, women, Blacks, Amazon indigenous peoples, and ecology activists, threw their resources into the effort. By the end of the campaign, PT rallies throughout the nation were drawing up to a million people. PT campaign advertisements on



television were immensely popular and depicted real-life scenes and situations of the Brazilian working class. Issues like political corruption and police repression were given intense scrutiny, and the achievements of municipal PT governments, which had been ignored by the mass media, were publicized.

Lula's main opponent was millionaire Fernando Collor de Melo, a front man for the establishment during the years of the massive strikes in the 1970s. Collor was the owner of a major media company, and had the full backing of the giant television, radio, and press conglomerate Globo. Capitalizing on his handsome and youthful appearance, Collor, a politician who was not widely known in Brazil, was portrayed by the media as "Mr. Clean," the candidate who would end political corruption. He won by a narrow margin amid charges of vote fraud. In 1992, in one of the biggest political scandals in Brazilian history, Collor was impeached by Congress for corruption and for pilfering government money.

Since the 1989 presidential election, the PT has grown and enlarged its base of supporters, gained new seats in Congress, and won some important municipal elections. Lula is decidedly the front runner in the opinion polls, with the support of over 40 percent of the electorate. His closest opponent, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a neoliberal and former sociologist, is polling only 17 percent of the vote.

[There has been a shift in the polls since May-June, when this was written; reports from the BEIC in late July indicated that the capitalist establishment, using its control of government and media, had gone on the offensive against the PT, launching an economic "stabilization plan," including a currency reform especially geared to the elections, and a propaganda offensive to discredit the PT candidate, whose standing in the polls fell to about 31 percent, and to boost the campaign of Cardoso, candidate of the Social Democratic Party of Brazil (PSDB), bringing Cardoso up in the polls to 30 percent. (About 24 percent of those polled were "undecided.") The PT is preparing a counteroffensive to expose the Social Democratic candidate as the front that he is for capitalist and reactionary forces. — G.S.]

Lula has not held elective office since 1990 and instead has concentrated on PT organizing and expanding alliances with grassroots organizations and social movements.

The PT government agenda and program have resulted from years of discussions and debates within the trade unions, neighborhood associations, rural, environmental, and academic organizations, social-based movements, and within the party itself. Its platform was formulated through the collaboration of millions of Brazilian workers who voiced their ideas during its drafting process. Perhaps 1994 will be the year when their efforts start coming to fruition.

## Brazilian Workers Party Meets (April 1994)

by Mara Ochoa

*The following article, datelined "Brasilia," was originally posted on E-mail by green-left.news on May 23, 1994, and later circulated by the BEIC.*

The Brazilian Workers Party (PT) opened its Ninth National Meeting on April 29 in the Federal Congress Building.

The participants included 440 delegates elected by municipal PT branches. Invited guests included diplomatic representatives, PT supporters, political activists, and indigenous people. Media were present from around the world.

Also invited were progressive political parties, including Socialist Unity and Frente Grande (Argentina), Chilean Socialist Party, Chilean Communist Party, Cuban Communist Party, Democratic Revolutionary Party of Mexico, Portuguese Communist Party, Democratic Socialist Party (Australia), Frente Amplio (Uruguay), Causa Radical (Venezuela).

The delegates met to debate and adopt the program for government titled "1994: Lula for President, A Revolutionary Democracy for Brazil." The program addresses the issues affecting the Brazilian people under the capitalist economy and seeks to introduce reforms as part of the struggle for socialism.

Two main issues debated as part of the program for government were abortion and foreign debt repayments.

### For Abortion Rights

The proposal unanimously supported by the delegates was in favor of women having access to safe abortions. The program states that in every 100,000 births in Brazil, 156 women die, and it is estimated that 2 million abortions are performed every year.

One-fourth of the women forced to seek clandestine abortions are admitted to hospitals with complications that often lead to infertility or death.

The PT strongly believes that abortion is an issue for a popular democratic government to address. The PT also recognizes that education about methods of contraception is important. A PT government will guarantee women's access to all methods of contraception that do not risk women's health, accompanied by a thorough education process involving the public health system, the education system and society in general.

### Postpone Foreign Debt

On the foreign debt, the PT sees it as necessary, should it win the elections, to postpone repayment. It has various urgent programs planned to develop social services, and these would not be able to be properly developed while funds were diverted to paying foreign debt.

Previous governments with fragile political mandates have signed agreements with private international creditors that are unfavorable to

Brazil and that put constraints on future government by requiring them to increase repayments. As a result of these agreements, the Brazilian government has been paying US\$17-20 billion a year. The PT believes this is irresponsible and plans to put basic human rights before servicing these debts.

### Election Prospects

The federal elections are scheduled for October 3. The PT is receiving increasing support from the people; national polls [in May and June] give it more than 40 percent of the votes. The PT has been growing strongly and now has 700,000 members.

The party is standing Luis Inacio da Silva, or "Lula," for president. The press continually tries to present him as someone unable to lead a country because he is a worker with no university degree. But as a representative from the PT International Relations Committee said, "Lula has completed university — in fact four universities, which he helped to build!"

The meeting also passed motions on international events. These included a recognition of the first democratic government in South Africa and a condemnation of the United States economic blockade of Cuba.

The gathering sent a message of solidarity to Ricardo Canese of the Paraguayan Concentration Democratica y Social, an invited guest who was not allowed by Paraguayan officials to leave the country to attend. □

### Tendencies Within the PT

*The following outline notes the tendencies within the Brazilian Workers Party. It was originally published in Folha de São Paulo of Saturday, April 30, 1994, under the title "All the 'Faces' of the PT" during the PT's Ninth National Meeting. Folha, a center-right daily, is considered Brazil's newspaper of record. The outline was transcribed by Reynaldo Cue and translated by Michael Pearlman. It was made available by the BEIC.*

Acquaint yourself with the political tendencies that cohabit in the party.

**Tendency:** Radical Democracy  
**Percentage of Delegates at the National Meeting:** 11

**Classification in the PT:** Right  
**Main Leaders:** José Genoino and Eduardo Jorge

**Ideological Principles:** Sympathetic to social democracy

**Origin:** Combines underground parties with PT groups that exchanged their radicalism for moderation.

**Tendency:** Unity in Struggle  
**Percentage of Delegates at the National Meeting:** 31

**Classification in the PT:** Center  
**Main Leaders:** Luis Inacio (Lula) da Silva and Olivio Dutra

**Ideological Principles:** Unites sympathizers



close to social democracy, trade unionists without a defined political profile, and sympathizers of Castroism

**Origin:** This is the old "Articulation" [tendency], born at the founding of the PT to fight organized groupings in the party. Lost control of the PT machine with the split of its left wing in 1993.

**Tendency:** Left Option

**Percentage of Delegates at the National Meeting:** 33

**Classification in the PT:** Left

**Main Leaders:** Rui Falcão and João Machado  
**Ideological Principles:** The largest group of the "Articulation Left," struggles for the PT not to social-democratize, has a strong bias against prioritizing the parliamentary struggle.

**Tendency:** PT in Struggle

**Percentage of Delegates at the National Meeting:** 20

**Classification in the PT:** Extreme Left

**Main Leaders:** Luis Eduardo Greenhalgh, Ivan Valente, and Markus Sokol

**Ideological Principles:** A bloc of Trotskyists, dogmatic Marxists, and former underground activists

**Origin:** Created in 1993 by tendencies that wanted to "rescue the historic banner of the PT (such as the creation of alternative institutions of power)," and that do not accept the "domestication" of the party.

**Tendency:** Independents

**Percentage of Delegates at the National Meeting:** 5

**Classification in the PT:** Closest to the left and far left

**Main Leaders:** None

**Ideological Principles:** No basic links among the groups; basically regional. □

## Children and Hunger Are Priorities

*The following article originally appeared in Folha de São Paulo of Sunday, May 1, 1994, during the Brazilian Workers Party's Ninth National Meeting. The article, transcribed by Reynaldo Cue and translated by Michael Pearlman, was made available by the BEIC.*

Lula has already chosen two themes and a target for his campaign strategy: the promise that by the end of his term, no child will be without an education, and for an end to hunger. The objective in the political field is to obtain the support of dissidents in other parties, mainly the PSDB [a social democratic formation]. In the campaign, the PT presidential candidate will be presented to the electorate as "the candidate who knows the country best." [His campaign] caravans that have been crisscrossing the country will be used to demonstrate this. Lula's campaign will be mainly led by a discourse in defense of the "excluded," the new PT jargon in speaking of the poor.

Of the problems of the "excluded," Lula has chosen to prioritize the program of guaranteeing education for children. Congressman Aloizio Mercadante (São Paulo), Lula's principal economic adviser, is one of the defenders of this idea. The fight against hunger is in the context of the PT's attempt to transform the electoral contest into a comparison of programs. Lula will insist that his program has goals that are possible to reach, while his adversaries have a vague discourse on "modernization."

Rui Falcão, vice-president of the PT, wants Lula to adopt "an ideological but not doctrinaire discourse." In this vision, the candidate would make clear to the electorate who would win and who would lose upon his arrival in power.

The PT also has decided to bet on the "nationalization" of the campaign. This decision was taken after a verification of the fragility of the PT candidacies for state governors.

During the World Cup [soccer tournament to be held in the United States], taking advantage of the fact that the interest of the electorate of the big urban centers will [be on television coverage], Lula will have one more caravan. The itinerary foresees a boat trip on the San Francisco River from Minas Gerais to Bahia. □

## Bahia Governor's Storm Troopers Can't Stop Demonstrations for Lula

*The following items were excerpted from Lula Ja, the campaign bulletin put out by the National Secretariat of Communications of the PT; translated and made available by the Brazil Election Information Committee.*

Over 400 Military Police officers from Bahia, dressed in civilian clothes, tried to forcefully break up a pro-Lula rally in Salvador, the capital of Bahia, on July 2, Independence Day in that state. The "storm troopers" positioned themselves in strategic spots along Lula's route to the rally site.

When former Bahia governor and power broker Antonio Carlos Magalhães appeared, the crowd heckled him, and the Military Police responded by beating and kicking people. These actions, however, failed to stop the rally. As Lula wound his way through the streets of Salvador he was enthusiastically greeted.

Currently, Lula is polling more than 50 percent of the vote in Bahia in opinion surveys.

The PT has protested the illegal actions of the Bahia state government. On July 4, PT Congressman Jacques Vagner filed a suit in the Supreme Electoral Court of Bahia which accused the government of using the machinery of state to benefit Antonio Carlos Magalhães and to promote the candidacy of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Magalhães' choice for president.

— *Lula Ja*, July 4, 1994

## Rural Workers of Xapuri Suffer Political Persecution

The Committee of the Workers Party (PT) of Acre denounced attempts by the local press and

judiciary to suppress the struggle of the rubber tappers in this Amazon state. Local politicians and the media fabricated a story about an "armed revolt," led and commanded by Edson Souza da Silva, the treasurer of the Rural Workers Union of Xapuri.

On June 10, Mr. da Silva was arrested and accused of directing a "guerrilla operation." The Military Police told the press that four weapons were found in his house, although this alleged cache has not been publicly exhibited. Following his arrest, Mr. da Silva was transported to jail illegally in a car belonging to one of the biggest landowners in the region. During the trip, a bag was placed over his head. Mr. da Silva reportedly has been tortured and beaten in jail. He remains in confinement as of this date.

In addition, these same officials are persecuting PT Councilman Raimundo de Barros, who is a cousin of Chico Mendes [the world-renowned rubber workers' union leader and environmentalist who was assassinated a few years ago]. The City Council of Xapuri established a special task force to investigate the "absence of decorum" on the part of Mr. de Barros.

The prosecutor in the case against Mr. da Silva also asked for the suspension from the City Council of Mr. de Barros while the investigation proceeds.

According to the PT of Acre, this repression has been initiated by the PMDB, the largest traditional political party in Brazil, with the support of the Military Police, the prosecutor, and the judge. The PT and local labor activists are mounting campaigns demanding the release from jail of Mr. da Silva and an end to the harassment of Councilman de Barros.

— *Lula Ja*, June 29, 1994

## Oil Workers Begin National Strike

A national strike by oil workers in six of the AO oil refineries began today. The unions of Parana, Cubatao (São Paulo), Maua (São Paulo), Paulinia (São Paulo), Caxias (Rio de Janeiro), and Mataripe (Bahia) plan to cease production for the next 24 hours. Workers at other production facilities of Petrobras, the state-owned oil company, held meetings today to decide whether to participate in the strike.

According to the Federation of Unions of Oil Workers, 20,000 out of 50,000 workers are on strike already. The strike was called because of a joint decision by Petrobras and the Ministries of Finance and Mines and Energy that denied wage increases meant to compensate for real wage losses stemming from rampant inflation.

Two oil workers unions in Rio Grande do Sul and São José dos Campos (São Paulo) have recently obtained court orders that mandated wage increases. □

— *Lula Ja*, July 5, 1994



# Why Canadian Socialists Should Reject a "New Labor Party"

by Howard Brown

*Howard Brown is a Saskatchewan grain farmer and unaffiliated socialist.*

**T**he austerity policies of the three provincial New Democratic Party (NDP) governments are driving many working people out of politics into apathy and cynicism — or, as we saw in the October 1993 federal election, into the clutches of the Liberals and even the right-wing Reform Party. The devastating defeat suffered by the NDP at the federal polls has fueled a discussion within the labor movement on the way forward for the unions in politics.

Some militants in the unions are beginning to consider the need for an alternative party to the NDP, including contributors to *Socialist Challenge* who have raised the idea of a "new labor party." But would forming another party based on the unions really mark a step forward for working people in the fight for a government of our own?

## United Front Tactic

The demand for a labor party, as advanced historically by revolutionary Marxists, is a special application of the united front tactic. It is meant to unite working people in taking an initial step toward labor political action independent of the capitalists and their parties.

That first step, however partial and tentative, was taken in English Canada in 1961 with the founding of the NDP, which through the affiliation of local unions is linked to the labor movement and outside the direct control of the capitalist class. But the trade union bureaucracy and its party henchmen suppressed the progressive impulse in the NDP's formation when they cast the party in a social democratic mold. From its inception the NDP was constituted as an obstacle to workers' further progress on the road to political independence.

Nonetheless, consistent with the united front tactic, revolutionary socialists historically have offered critical support to the NDP as a means of promoting an organizational break by workers from the capitalist-controlled parties. Within that framework, we have demanded that the NDP break politically from the capitalist class to take the road of struggle for a workers' and farmers' government.

What might be gained now by raising the slogan for a "new labor party" in opposition to the New Democrats? NDP attacks on workers have already exacerbated factional divisions in the union movement, most sharply in Ontario in response to Premier Bob Rae's antilabor "social contract." The slogan for a "new labor party" would seem to promote workers' further fracturing into competing labor parties linked to contending factions within the union bureaucracy.

United working class action against the capitalist offensive is desperately needed today. It will not be achieved without sharp political struggles inside the labor movement. High on the agenda is the need to fight for the unions' political independence from the NDP brass. But that objective will best be accomplished through moving the unions into action in support of elementary class-struggle demands, not through a campaign for a "new labor party."

On the face of it, fighting for a "new labor party" is a diversion from promoting a united action campaign by the unions against the capitalist agenda. It would mark a departure from the tactic of the workers' united front. And what contribution would it make to constructing the new political leadership working people need?

## Crisis of Social Democracy

Understanding the roots of the NDP's policies in government would immeasurably aid working people in beginning to resolve the current crisis of labor political leadership. The NDP governments' austerity drives are portrayed by their reformist critics in the unions as an "abandonment of social democratic principles" in the face of a "neoconservative" offensive, as though social democratic "ideals" were a casualty in some ideological war. In truth, the actions of the NDP in office are painfully consistent with the modern record of social democracy, which identifies working people's interests with the health of capitalism as a system — in good times and in bad.

In periods of relative "prosperity," the social democrats are prepared to press for progressive reforms consonant with capitalism's capacities. In periods of economic crisis like our own, capitalist austerity measures are an iron requirement of the system, whatever the "ideals" of social democratic politicians. The NDP's current troika of premiers better understands that reality than do many of their "radical" critics who mourn "the death of social democracy" while praying for the Second Coming of Keynes.

Deploying much the same logic as union bureaucrats pleading the case for contract concessions before a hostile membership, NDP governments today proclaim the necessity of cutbacks, layoffs, and wage rollbacks in sustaining the "imminent" capitalist upturn and resolution of their fiscal crises. Economic recovery through fiscal restraint, they like to argue, is the sole basis for salvaging the social programs, wage gains, and job

opportunities won by working people through "their party" in more prosperous times.

The current crisis of the NDP is rooted in its procapitalist orientation. No labor party government in this period could resist the tide of capitalist austerity without setting a course of anticapitalist action that pointed toward dismantling the system itself. But the "new labor party" slogan doesn't even begin to address that reality.

## Procapitalist Orientation

Calls for a new party based on the trade unions leave unexplained the roots of the NDP's procapitalist orientation within the unions themselves. In its fundamentals, the outlook of the NDP leadership is shared by the "labor lieutenants of capital" who administer the trade union movement. From the party's founding, the labor officialdom has shaped the NDP in its own class-collaborationist image.

The NDP has served the trade union officialdom well as a safety valve for relieving rank-and-file pressure toward direct labor action. How often have union leaders counterposed the capitalist ballot box to workers' picket lines as the more effective means of wringing concessions from the employing class?

But the NDP was never conceived by the labor brass as an instrument for pursuing independent workers' power. They have shown no consistent commitment to strengthening the NDP organizationally, building the party's base in the unions, or even "delivering" workers' votes at election time. The union bureaucracy has carefully avoided the open exercise of immediate control over its "political arm," by and large leaving day-to-day leadership of "labor's party" to parliamentary professionals.

However much some officials today posture against the "betrayals" of NDP leaders, the union leadership fears that mobilizing labor's ranks in rebellion within the party might spill over into an antibureaucratic movement within the unions' own structures. Least of all do the labor brass want to supplant the present NDP leadership in the provinces the party governs. At the prospect of forming a government in this period of capitalist crisis, no faction in the union bureaucracy has a practical alternative program to the NDP regimes' procapitalist course.

## Crisis of Labor Leadership

The proposal for a "new labor party" is a diversion from addressing head-on the general crisis of labor political leadership, which resides not only in the NDP but is rooted fundamentally in the unions. In its valuable coverage of the labor bureaucrats' phony war against Ontario Premier Bob Rae's "social contract," *Socialist Challenge* has amply shown the inadequacy of the current trade union leadership. In resisting attacks on working people, whatever their course, the bureaucrats in both public and private-sector unions have abysmally failed to advance a strategy of mass mobilization.

Experience with social democratic governments is rapidly teaching many workers that



## In Response to Barry Weisleder's "Time for a New Party?"

The accompanying article first appeared in the March-April 1994 issue of *Socialist Challenge*, the English-language newspaper reflecting the views of Fourth Internationalists in Canada. A response by Barry Weisleder appeared in the same issue and subsequently in the April *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* under the headline "Time for a New Party?"

In previous issues of *Socialist Challenge* Weisleder had been among contributors raising the prospect of a campaign for a "new labor party" in Canada. But in elaborating his position, Weisleder has turned to promoting a new party of a different sort.

Revolutionary Marxists have generally reserved the term "labor party" to describe political formations arising from the organized labor movement, characterized by structural links to the trade unions and organizational independence from capital. In a genuine labor party the trade unions, at least potentially, exercise decisive weight.

While Weisleder raises the possibility of a "new labor party," the proposal he advances amounts to a political realignment of "leftist and progressive forces" organizationally independent of the unions. By Weisleder's description this new party would not depend for its formation on a successful struggle to affiliate union bodies. In campaigning for this party Weisleder expects "absolutely no leadership from the labor officialdom," even from such layers as might feel compelled for their own reasons to come over to a real "new labor party" movement. His project would seek to involve the many union militants repelled by the NDP's anti-labor policies, but by and large as individuals.

In the absence of organizational ties binding this proposed party to the unions, it is unclear what social weight workers might expect to exert in its ranks. And what of the new party's political class character? The program of this hypothetical formation is unspecified — it will not be pro-capitalist, says Weisleder, but neither can it be revolutionary socialist. We can only be confident, Weisleder offers his assurances, that through

a process of patient discussion this proposed new party might be won to socialist policies. As for its prospects, he offers for inspiration the example of New Zealand's New Labour Party — a "labor party" in name only.

I argue on several counts in the accompanying article that the demand for a "new labor party" in opposition to Canada's union-linked New Democratic Party is a diversion. The "betrayals" of NDP governments are but the reflection in the electoral arena of the broader crisis of political leadership within the labor movement as a whole. That crisis is best addressed at its roots, concentrating socialists' modest resources on promoting a fight for a class-struggle course in the unions. It's on that terrain that the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party can best be assembled in this period.

The key task before worker militants today is turning the unions away from dead-end maneuvers in capitalist politics toward the direct action strategy labor needs in confronting the capitalist offensive. The struggle to resolve the crisis of labor political leadership can be decisively advanced only in conjunction with workers' entering the political arena through their own methods of struggle — first and foremost through broad-based strike action.

However mistaken, proposals for a "new labor party" have at least the merit of pointing militants toward fighting through their unions for political solutions to the crisis we face. Whatever his intentions to the contrary, Weisleder's proposal for launching an "all-inclusive" new party independent of the unions tends to point activists in another direction.

I leave aside here further implications raised by Weisleder's article for *BIDOM's* ongoing discussion of Lenin's theory of the vanguard party. Would the struggle by socialists for a new formation of the sort Weisleder proposes contribute in any respect whatever to building a party of the Leninist type? I think not, and in advancing the construction of the revolutionary workers' party in Canada the NDP is obstacle enough.

— H.B.

in defending their interests they cannot rely for an instant on the NDP. But workers can no more depend on initiatives of other sorts in capitalist politics that are the stock-in-trade of the union brass.

For example, over the past several years Canada's trade union leadership has been preoccupied with a campaign waged on protectionist grounds against the North American "free trade" deals. The capitalist trade pacts promote the restructuring of the North American economies, reinforcing on a continental scale the destructive impact of the economic crisis on workers' rights and living standards. But labor's policy on the accords should have started from the principle that on the terrain of capitalist trade relations there is

no relief for working people from the ruling class offensive.

Labor's opposition to the accords should have been subordinated to an internationalist strategy of working-class mobilization that responded to the most immediate effects on working people of the capitalist crisis itself. The trade deals exacerbate the jobs crisis; an international campaign for jobs through a shorter work week without lost pay should have been given first place on labor's agenda.

But rather than forge an international workers' united front to fight for jobs, the union brass resorted to building nationalist coalitions against the trade deals that were geared to finding allies among ostensibly "progressive" capitalist forces, especially in

the Liberal Party. Workers' independent interests were sacrificed to the construction of a class-collaborationist lobby operating wholly in the capitalist political framework.

The labor bureaucrats' campaign against the trade deals deepened the unions' class-collaborationist course on both the industrial and political fronts; it stood in antithesis to every principle of independent labor political action. Wouldn't a "new labor party" based on today's unions serve the trade union bureaucracy (or one of its factions) as yet one more instrument for pursuing class-collaborationist ends?

### Independent Political Action

In fighting back against capitalist attacks, including the austerity policies of NDP governments, working people can rely on no one but themselves, on their self-mobilization for a program expressing their exclusive class interests. In opposition to the capitalist agenda what's needed today is a united campaign by labor based on rallies, demonstrations, and picket-line actions that advance independent working-class power.

One focus of such a campaign should be demands that NDP governments break from their course of collaboration with the capitalists' austerity drive. But that battle will not be advanced through initiatives toward trade union disaffiliation from the NDP or threats to found a "new labor party." Nor will it be won or lost through skirmishes on the floor of NDP conventions or party nomination meetings, whatever their propaganda value. Decisive in inflicting defeats to NDP anti-labor policies will be the capacity of the unions to mobilize their ranks in direct action, especially in broad-based strike struggles.

Fighting for such a strategy for labor involves bringing to center stage the perspective of transforming the unions themselves, which under their present leadership are proving incapable of meeting the tests of these times. Required is the promotion of a class-struggle tendency in the unions committed to genuine independent labor political action.

There is no question that the current crisis of the NDP raises interest in a new workers' party, though today that alternative is mainly discussed among workers in electoral terms. But a "new labor party" based on reformist-led unions would mark no step forward from the NDP for working people. Nor should socialists wish to be seen as promoting electoral solutions to workers' problems through a new party formation.

Needed is a workers' party of another type, a party of socialist militants rooted in the unions and committed to promoting the fight for a workers' and farmers' government by direct action methods. The current crisis of the NDP creates new openings for bringing before activists the need for a revolutionary workers' party on the Leninist model. We shouldn't be diverted from seizing those opportunities by a campaign for a "new labor party." □



# Sarah Lovell: Collective Portrait of a Revolutionary

by Paul Le Blanc

**S**arah Lovell died in New York City on June 14, 1994. Since then, a flood of notes and letters has come to her husband, Frank, from many people whose lives she touched over the past five decades and more.

"Sarah and I have been friends and comrades for such a long time — it goes very deep," wrote someone who was in the Trotskyist movement with her in the early 1940s. "It took more than a couple of moments to sink in that Sarah was — in the physical sense — gone," wrote one younger friend. "Thank goodness our memories will last at least a few moments — in the grander scale of geologic time. [We] will remember her as long as our conscious minds are able. It's as if I hear her voice over the phone — she had such a wonderful and unique voice..."

A more recent friend wrote: "Sarah was proof to me that it is possible to be a revolutionary socialist without being a jerk." A friend from the 1960s put it a little differently: "Sarah was also such a kind and loving person. As much as anyone I have ever known, she put the lie to the notion that a revolutionary has to be hard as nails in order to get anything accomplished. I regret that I never told Sarah, directly, just how much she meant to me..." An even older friend wrote: "I cry this morning for Sarah yet at the same time feel renewed because the substance and meaning of her life provide such inspiration."

## The Quality of a Person

A younger friend wrote to Frank: "My memories of Sarah are so vivid. I was just a child and I remember her exotic beauty and her kindness to me. You and Sarah gave me a real sense of security and treated me with such respect even though I was so young. As an adult I've learned to truly appreciate adults who treat children as kindly... I remember a weekend camping trip and how free I felt because you both encouraged me to just enjoy the moment."

One friend from Canada, who had gotten to know her fairly recently while taking Spanish classes when the two of them vacationed in Mexico, commented: "I can think of no one I have ever met with whom I established a better rapport more quickly.... I so enjoyed her spontaneity, good humor and fun, and I was always infinitely encouraged by our common political sympathies — since there don't seem to be many of us left!"

For some, the quality of this person was related to her political commitments. "I think Sarah became a Trotskyist when she was still a high school student and, fortunately, she never outgrew it," wrote one close friend of many years. "It shaped her life. Added to all her other personable qualities, it made her an admirable woman and, for me, a wonderful friend."

A friend who had worked with her since the 1950s added: "She was an extraordinary person in so many ways that cannot be replaced by anyone else I know. In my mind I keep seeing her as I knew her in Detroit, and I can hear her voice as if we were speaking over the phone about the magazine [*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*]." Another comrade from Detroit days confessed: "I went shopping with her, shared petitioning to get on the ballot and leafleting activities with her, and of course, had a crush on her for years starting as soon as I first met her. She seemed like a perfect example of what a great woman was — and it turned out that indeed she was one. She was objective, fair, modest, flexible and compassionate as well as intelligent and knowledgeable."

A younger British comrade recalled "her enormous energy, optimism and commitment to rid this world of injustice. She was and is an inspiration to me and everybody who came into contact with her. I will always appreciate the warm welcome I received when I was confronting a very difficult political situation. I remember coming away with a sense of confidence to carry on a political fight to maintain the traditions of Trotskyism."

Another veteran revolutionary active in Britain and South Africa, who attended the founding conference of the Fourth International in the same year that Sarah joined the Trotskyist movement, commented: "I know that for the last few years she fought as tenaciously and courageously against her illness as she fought, for most of her life, against the evils which capitalism and Stalinism have inflicted on the world."

"She was such a vibrant, spirited person," wrote two friends. "We feel our world is diminished now that she is not with us." Another wrote: "Sarah's contributions to the revolutionary socialist movement survive her."

## The Context of Her Youth

Sarah was born in Brooklyn, New York, on May 8, 1922, daughter of Sol Hellman and Yetta Yankowitz, Eastern European Jews who — with many others — had immigrated to the United States in the early 20th century and became part of the ethnically diverse working class of this country. She had two sisters, Anne and Mollie, with whom she remained close for her entire life. Yet they were growing up in a period of history which would force them to develop their critical faculties more quickly than is often considered "normal" nowadays.

When Sarah was seven years old, the Great Depression began, throwing many millions of workers into unemployment and despair in the United States and throughout the world. It seemed to many that the capitalist system was



Sarah Lovell in 1991

on the verge of collapse. By the mid-1930s there was a powerful resurgence of the left-wing working-class movement, as many built unemployed councils and militant industrial unions, and the most radically-conscious workers and intellectuals were attracted to Socialist and Communist organizations.

This was occurring throughout the world — countered by powerful and well-financed "patriotic" chauvinist and racist movements, two of which had come to power, the Fascists in Italy and Nazis in Germany, along with right-wing and militarist dictatorships in many countries in Eastern Europe, in Nationalist China, and in Japan. Other defenders of capitalism (such as the New Deal forces around President Franklin D. Roosevelt) sought to win workers and the oppressed away from left-wing solutions by offering a variety of liberal social reforms. At the same time, the shadow of an oncoming Second World War loomed ever larger, with the capitalist classes of different countries — assisted by their governments and military establishments — confronting each other over global markets, raw materials, and investment opportunities.

Many saw the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics — created by the 1917 revolution of workers and peasants, which had been led by Lenin and Trotsky — as a socialist counterweight to the wave of reaction, standing as a positive alternative for the workers and oppressed of all countries. Indeed, an international Communist movement was founded, in the wake of the workers' victory of 1917, to spread working-class revolution. But after Lenin's death, a bureaucratic dictatorship under Stalin consolidated its power in the Soviet Union, carrying out authoritarian and murderously repressive policies that made a mockery of socialism within the Soviet Union, perverting the world Communist movement for its own narrow purposes, and engaging in foreign policy



maneuvers which, if anything, were to contribute to the global eruption of imperialist slaughter.

This was the context in which the bright, thoughtful, and alert young Sarah Rebecca Hellman was coming to adulthood. Debates about such realities as these engaged her attention as she approached her sixteenth year in Brooklyn. Especially compelling was the revolutionary socialist alternative to capitalism, reformism, and Stalinism represented by Leon Trotsky and his small band of cothinkers. In the United States, a sizable Trotskyist current — with impressive leaders such as James P. Cannon and Max Shachtman — had become part of the Socialist Party of America. In 1938, Sarah and some of her friends joined the Young People's Socialist League, as that group and many members of the Socialist Party were moving to become part of the Fourth International, the worldwide organization adhering to the revolutionary Marxist program represented by Trotsky. Soon she also joined the newly formed Socialist Workers Party.

"There were bright and strong girls in the movement," one participant later recalled, "students very much ahead of their moment and ahead also of their own self-regard. They were determined to behave as if our proclaimed belief in sexual equality had been realized, while in fact of course it was not." Elaborating, this eyewitness recalled: "Most admirable of the women in the movement was a group of students who were seriously interested in politics and culture, intent upon battling for place and definition, and trying also to be sexually attractive in the styles mandated, more or less, by American society." A teen-ager himself, he added: "I admired them and feared them." Remembering the readiness of himself and some of his male comrades to "fall back into the modes of [sexist] condescension that prevailed in the outer world," he noted of comrades like Sarah: "They seldom complained, at least openly. They typed stencils, gave out leaflets, became organizers, spoke with a flaring eloquence. They declared themselves ready for a new and free life, partners in the adventure of socialism, even though back home their families, with whom they still usually had to live, were putting constant pressures upon them."

In 1939–40 the Trotskyist movement was wracked by a sharp debate over what attitude to take toward the Soviet Union, toward the unfolding of the Second World War, and toward certain fundamental principles of Marxism. Max Shachtman — a brilliant orator and engaging personality who was especially popular among the youth — challenged Trotsky's "critical defense" policy toward the USSR, and also questioned the value of dialectical materialism and the nature of the revolutionary party. Sarah, in part influenced by her friend Harry Braverman (later author of the classic *Labor and Monopoly Capital*), was among the few YPSL members who did not follow Shachtman in his split from the Socialist Workers Party. Another strong influence on her decision was James P. Cannon. "He spoke to us in the accents of the Russian revolution and in the Leninism which had gone forth from the Soviet Union in the

twenties and thirties," Braverman later recalled. "But there was in his voice something more which attracted us. And that was the echoes of the radicalism of the pre-World War I years, the popular radicalism of Debs, Haywood, and John Reed."

Those who knew Sarah were aware that, while influenced by those she respected, and while believing in the need to function politically as very much part of a collective, she was also very much her own person — observing, reading, and thinking things through critically and independently before making a commitment. This stood her in good stead throughout her years in the Trotskyist movement.

### From New York to Detroit

In the early 1940s Sarah was briefly married to another young comrade, Eugene Zucker, and continued to be politically active, including as an organizer in one of the branches of the New York City Local of the SWP. Because of its refusal to acquiesce in the imperialist war aims of the U.S. government during World War II, the SWP was victimized, with its leadership being prosecuted and imprisoned under the Smith Act. Yet idealistic and committed comrades like Sarah rallied around the SWP's banner, producing and circulating revolutionary socialist literature, stepping up trade union and anti-racist activities, maintaining educational and recruitment efforts, and — remarkably — making the party stronger than before.

In this period she sometimes worked in the garment industry but also developed proofreading and copy-editing skills that would ensure her a lifetime of employment in the printing trades. She later was able to join the International Typographical Union (ITU), of which she was an active member for many years.

It was after World War II that Sarah became involved with a seaman and party activist named Frank Lovell, and in 1946–47 she moved to San Francisco with him. Dissatisfied with life on the West Coast, away from what had been for her the center of her political and personal life, she soon returned to New York, where some comrades felt she had a leading role to play in party activity. As she struggled to decide which life choices would be best for her, she happened to meet Jim Cannon on the stairway at the SWP's national headquarters at 116 University Place. Cannon asked her what she was planning to do, and she confessed that she was undecided. She more than once, in later years, recalled his earnest advice to her: that it was important for her to make up her mind based on what she wanted to do, not on what others thought would be best politically for the party or for her.

As it turned out, Sarah chose to return to San Francisco, where she and Frank Lovell were married in April 1949. Later that year the SWP sent them to Seattle, to help in a fight taking place within the Sailors' Union of the Pacific. The leadership of the union — which initially had quite radical traditions — was completely adapting to the anti-Communist orientation of the U.S. government, going so far as to work with the employers to attack unions in Canada

and the U.S. that were identified as being close to the Communist Party. In Seattle a Sailors' Union official, John Mahoney, took a stand against this policy and was himself targeted for expulsion from the union and from the industry. Other union militants, including Shawn (Jack) Maloney and a number of SWPers led by Frank Lovell, came to Mahoney's defense. These workers were, in turn, expelled and fired. To help rally support for union democracy and the victimized workers in this struggle, a newspaper was published — *The Defender* — which could not have been maintained without Sarah's skills and effort. Unfortunately, the high tide of Cold War anti-Communism defeated their efforts.

A few months before Sarah and Frank moved back to San Francisco, their daughter Joan was born (July 1950). Joan's loving parents created a secure environment for her, permeated by secular-humanist and egalitarian values, and they sought to introduce their daughter to all of the things that were important to them; but over the years they also supported her as she sought to develop her own beliefs and way in life. (Joan later became a progressive lawyer in the Detroit area. Sarah, as well as Frank, were obviously pleased with the kind of person she turned out to be.)

In 1951–52, the Lovells returned to the New York City area, where for several months Frank attended the Trotsky School at the party's Mountain Spring Camp in New Jersey. (Sarah herself was to attend this party leadership school in 1955.) Soon afterward, they were asked by the SWP to move to Detroit. Another division had opened up within the party over how to proceed in the new period of political reaction that had deepened in the early 1950s. Some members — led by prominent trade unionist Bert Cochran, and also including old friends such as Harry and Miriam Braverman — felt that the SWP leadership had unrealistic expectations of what would be possible in the Cold War era. These comrades believed that it was necessary to scale back dramatically, dropping SWP electoral campaigns and other activities that would make party members vulnerable, adapting to the liberal trade union bureaucracy in such unions as the United Auto Workers, and in some cases regrouping with non-Trotskyist radicals in the Stalinist milieu. The Cochranites were especially strong in Detroit, and it was felt that Frank and Sarah were badly needed to strengthen the party-building wing of the branch.

In 1953, soon after their move, Frank was chosen to run for mayor on the SWP ticket. "We ran a good campaign," one participant later recalled, "with lots of publicity: TV, radio, newspapers — all the media picked us up. We were news: we were the reds campaigning for office at the height of the witch-hunt. Some of the Cochranites shook in their boots every time we got publicity. And I'm sure some of them wondered all through the campaign why Frank didn't end up in jail." Not long afterward, the Cochranites split from the SWP. Sarah and Frank remained in Detroit — she working as a proofreader for the *Detroit Free Press*, he as an auto worker — to help rebuild and maintain the



Detroit branch of the SWP, and also to create a stable home for their daughter Joan.

## Detroit Years

The Detroit Police Department's "Red Squad" maintained fat and informative files on the Lovells and other "subversive" comrades from the beginning, and these can help us follow Sarah's activities through the 1950s and '60s.

One of the first items in Sarah's file is a letter to the editor of the *Detroit News*, published in 1954, responding to someone who blamed "working wives" for male unemployment and who argued that women's place was in the home. In her letter, Sarah explained that during World War II women "were called upon to fill jobs in the factories, offices, etc. They filled these jobs capably and were praised for their efforts. Following the war, the high cost of living compelled working wives to remain on the job. And they are forced to work today to help support the family." Adding that women are not responsible for the cutbacks in production that were the real cause of unemployment, she argued that "the answer to unemployment and the high cost of living is to reduce the hours of labor — with no reduction in pay — so there will be plenty of work and a better living for all." After this popularization of the Transitional Program, she concluded on a characteristically feminist note: "But there is something more involved here in this attack upon women. It is the right of women to work. We women will decide whether we want to work in industry and earn our independence."

Sarah did much more than write letters to the editor. In 1955, according to a Red Squad agent, an educational class (or "another Indoctrination Class," as the agent put it) was held on the question "Is Marxism Dated? Has Capitalism Shown a Vitality Which Refutes Marxist Revolutionary Philosophy," with the *Communist Manifesto* as the text and Sarah Lovell as the instructor. Her conclusion was that Marxism remained a vital tool for understanding the world and changing it.

The Detroit SWP for many years held a weekly "Friday Night Socialist Forum" series, in which Sarah was centrally involved (Red Squad agents dutifully reported), sometimes as forum director, often as publicity director, usually as a participant, and sometimes as a speaker. In 1954 she gave a presentation on C. Wright Mills' new book *White Collar* and "The Role of the Middle Class in American Society." In 1955 she participated in a panel discussion, chaired by George Breitman, that reviewed several recent books on the Black struggle; according to the agent, "Sarah Lovell reviewed *Now Is the Time* [by Lillian Smith], applying the Marxian analysis of the trend of history regarding landholders, slavery and revolution." In November 1956 the Red Squad reported that Sarah Lovell was giving out yet another leaflet for the Friday Night Forum: "THE REVOLUTION IN HUNGARY. Newly formed councils of workers, students and soldiers deputies are leading a revolution in Hungary. Russian troops are drowning this revolution in blood. Why are they playing this counter-revolutionary role?"

What do the Hungarian events mean to the men in the Kremlin, to American Big Business, and to the working people of the world?" Another topic on which she gave a forum in this period was Harvey Swados's well-known essay "The Myth of the Happy Worker," challenging common stereotypes about the working class of the "affluent" '50s.

In 1957 a Red Squad agent reported that, as SWP candidate for mayor, "Mrs. Lovell spoke for approximately one hour, giving her political views and condemning the other political parties. She stated that the Socialists believe that economic and political power should be taken out of the hands of big business and turned over to the working people who are the majority of the population. This is the only way to solve the problems of unemployment, economic insecurity, automation, the danger of war, racial segregation, discrimination and thought-control." In March 1958 Sarah gave a forum on "Detroit and the Depression," dealing with the fact that the city's unemployed exceeded 200,000 people. In January 1959 she analyzed the findings of Senate hearings on price fixing in the auto industry. The need for national health care for all as a matter of right — or "socialized medicine" — was the focus of one forum she gave in June 1959 and of another in 1960.

Other forum topics on which Sarah spoke during the 1960s included: "the battle of the counters" in which students were conducting sit-ins at lunch counters in the South against racial segregation; the significance of the film "On the Beach," about the dangers of nuclear war; analysis and eyewitness reports on the Cuban Revolution; racial discrimination in the hiring practices of the Detroit city government; the 1964 right-wing, U.S.-backed military coup in Brazil; the 1964 downfall of Khrushchev in the USSR; the left-wing, pro-labor film "Salt of the Earth," which was shown after she described the difficult circumstances under which it was made during the McCarthy period; and an historical review of the Sacco and Vanzetti case.

One Detroit comrade who knew Sarah for many years has recalled: "She always worked hard on her forums, and her research was always scholarly and interesting. I was always sorry she didn't give more of them. She spoke with emotion and conviction, not dryly, at those forums. ... Her feeling for her subject each time was infectious, and that helped me, likely other people too, to remember what she said. ... She made a lifelong impression on me with those talks."

Sarah did much more than give forums and classes. She ran a vigorous socialist electoral campaign for mayor in 1957, as we have seen (garnering about 2,000 votes), and also was on the ballot for Common Council in 1961, and for U.S. Congress in 1968. In 1960, Sarah and two good friends — Dorothea Breitman and Connie Weissman — went to revolutionary Cuba to see things for themselves; in the process they gave an interview to *Vanguardia Telefónica*, the monthly magazine of the Cuban Telephone Workers Union (resulting in a terse memo from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover being placed in Sarah's Red Squad file), and afterward Sarah was active in defense of the Cuban Revolution.

She was to make another trip to Cuba in 1978, again with Dorothea Breitman, as well as other SWP comrades — Jean Tussey, Carolyn Kerry, and Almeda Kirsch. (Jean Tussey recalls Sarah as an "extremely dynamic" member of this delegation, especially interested in advances in women's rights that had been made in Cuba since her first visit.)

A prominent union activist, Sarah chaired a highly publicized ITU committee which collected food and clothing for unemployed mine-workers and their families in Hazard, Kentucky, in 1964. In her Red Squad files there is also conclusive evidence that she participated in planning meetings and protest demonstrations focused on the fight against racism, and against U.S. involvement in Vietnam. She served as a branch organizer, a Detroit delegate to the National Convention of the SWP, and in the 1960s was an alternate to the SWP National Committee.

As a party-builder, Sarah welcomed and helped train a new wave of young radicals that came into the Detroit branch in the 1960s. "When I joined," one of these comrades recalled, "Sarah was the main teacher I had on 'how-to' organize and do things right. (Whether a picnic or a strike, we do it right!) ... Sarah had to teach me the ins and outs of book-keeping, how to correctly carry out assignments in a Defense Committee, and how important closely detailed work like this was. The lessons she taught me stuck to this day — and I can still see her bending over me to show me a book-keeping page. Sarah was also such a delight in those days — and all through my time in the Party — to see her smile and say hello was a real treat." Another young comrade from Detroit days later asserted that "her intelligence about human beings and human relationships taught me how Marxist philosophy is really about the human



Sarah Lovell at the controls of a big rig delivering food and clothing to striking miners in Hazard, Kentucky in 1964.



## The FIT: A Brief Account

The FIT, which Sarah helped form in 1984, differed from the other groups of former SWPers in significant ways. First of all, embracing the Fourth International, the FIT insisted on the need for unity among all Fourth Internationalists in the United States, on the basis of democratic discussion that would allow for the clarification of political differences. Unlike the other groups, the FIT hoped to pass out of existence as soon as possible — ideally, by the SWP taking back into membership all of those expelled and allowing for the necessary discussion which had been undemocratically cut off. In addition to embracing the Fourth International, the FIT also embraced what it considered to be the proud traditions of American Trotskyism — from the 1920s onward.

At the same time, Sarah and other FITers shared a belief in the need for Marxism to remain relevant through continual renewal. "Marxism is a theory in process of development," Sarah's friend George Breitman had insisted, "which grows in power and scope as it is applied to specific situations and to new conditions." This meant being open to and engaged with new realities, and also critically examining older assumptions — including self-critically examining problems within the pre-1979 SWP. Such an approach was necessary in order to build a revolutionary socialist movement that would be more effective in the present and future. This is why the FIT remained vibrantly democratic, doubling its numbers, able to play a significant, if modest, role on the Left.

condition (or at least should be about this condition) in a very concrete way."

### From the SWP to the Fourth Internationalist Tendency

In 1969 Frank and Sarah moved to New York City, where Frank became SWP trade union director and a member of the Political Committee. Sarah remained active in her union, and she was also profoundly affected by the new wave of feminism, joining the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) and the National Organization for Women (NOW). She remained committed to activities opposing racism, and continued to be a participant in the movement against the war in Vietnam. In later years she also was an active supporter of such things as the Central American revolution, struggles against South African apartheid, the struggle for democracy and genuine people's power in the Philippines, and opposition to the Persian Gulf war.

At the same time, with the transformation of the SWP in the 1970s, largely due to the influx of radicalized young people — and the coming to the fore of a younger party leadership — there was increasingly less room for Sarah to function as a branch activist than had been the case in previous years. The new SWP leadership under Jack Barnes even encouraged the "older comrades" not only to step aside, but to revert from being members to being sympathizers of the party. This Sarah refused to do. Working with George Breitman — a close friend and leading comrade with whom she had worked for many years in Detroit, who was now heading up Pathfinder Press — Sarah brought her editing talents to bear in helping to produce two of the fourteen-volume "Trotsky Writings" series — *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932)* and *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932-33)*. She was also the editor of the valuable and popular volume *Leon Trotsky Speaks*.

While less active in day-to-day branch activity, Sarah remained involved in party life. Many younger comrades came to know her and value her during this period, and she was always seen

as someone who — while maintaining an independent and questioning mind — was supportive of her comrades' efforts. With the close of the 1970s, however, there were growing tensions, a tightening by the central leadership of party norms, and indications that some kind of new thinking was going on among the new SWP leadership.

It became clear in the early 1980s that the Barnes leadership was developing a relatively uncritical enthusiasm for the policies of Fidel Castro's government in Cuba, while at the same time being inclined to draw back from the many struggles in the United States in which the SWP had traditionally been quite active. Worse, Barnes and his cothinkers had decided — without an honest and democratic discussion — that it was necessary to draw the party away from Trotskyism and the Fourth International, instead initiating policies designed to make the SWP a "sister party" of the Cuban Communist Party, and a component of a revolutionary "New International" which, it was imagined, the Cubans would soon help to build. As Sarah noted in a later letter which she co-authored with Naomi Allen to the SWP: "Our party can be proud of its traditional method of resolving political questions through full, democratic discussion culminating in a vote by a party convention. We think that is still a good method and we have always pledged to abide by it. We emphatically do not think that that Leninist method should be replaced by expulsion, slander, and exclusion." Instead, the Barnes leadership began waves of expulsions, on trumped-up charges, of real and imagined dissidents.

This entire course was resisted by Sarah and Frank Lovell who, with others following the leadership of George Breitman, formed an oppositional caucus in 1981. In *The Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party 1979-1983* (published in 1992), which Sarah edited as part of the three-volume series "In Defense of American Trotskyism," the story of this fight is fully documented; the subsequent developments are recorded in the other two volumes in that series. By 1984 Sarah and her cothinkers

had been expelled, along with a number of oppositionists. A majority of those expelled were anxious to quickly form a new organization to compete with the SWP. Some agreed with certain of the Barnes leadership's political assessments and formed the non-Trotskyist (and short-lived) North Star Network. Others sought to recreate the pre-1979 SWP and formed Socialist Action. Yet others, while remaining loyal to the Fourth International, rejected, as a "national conceit," the very notion of "American Trotskyism" represented by the late James P. Cannon and sought regroupment with other socialist currents — eventually forming Solidarity. Sarah, Frank, George Breitman, and others founded the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (see box).

When the leading spirit of the FIT, George Breitman, died in 1986, Sarah helped to organize the memorial meeting — which she also chaired — honoring Breitman's life and contributions. She later worked tirelessly to coedit (with Naomi Allen) *A Tribute to George Breitman, Writer, Organizer, Revolutionary* and to oversee its publication in 1987.

Central to Sarah's contribution to the work of the FIT was her involvement with the founding and production of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, beginning in December 1983. Initially, the editor of the magazine was Frank Lovell, who greatly relied on Sarah's assistance. Beginning with the magazine's fourth issue, after the formation of the FIT, there was an editorial board on which Sarah played a key role — helping to make editorial decisions, proof-reading, and copy editing, as well as overseeing finances and circulation. As the magazine drew more supporters and became a more substantial publication, Sarah continued to be actively involved in the team that month after month ensured its appearance and circulation.

She rarely wrote any articles, but the few she wrote give a clear sense of the person she was. In issue #11 (September 1984) she motivated participation in what was to be an important Emergency National Conference Against U.S. Military Intervention in Central American and the Caribbean; in the same issue is a review of Evelyn Sell's *Handbook for Marxist Studies*, in which Sarah stresses the importance of socialist education. What was required, she stressed, was "serious study coupled with revolutionary activity, as the history of Marxism demonstrates."

Another review by Sarah appeared in issue #34 (October 1986), this time of Ken McMullen's film "Zina." The focus is Zina Bronstein — Trotsky's daughter whose life ended in mental breakdown and suicide in 1933 — who, Sarah points out, was "a passionate political person in her own right." In the film "the political and emotional elements of her personality interact and merge," and this quality gives shape to the entire work: "One of the themes is the parallel between Zina's psychosis and analysis in Berlin and the social psychosis of fascism engulfing the city. Another theme is the contest between reason and instinct, as personified in the relations between Trotsky and Zina. This theme is echoed on the social plane as



## Memorial Meeting for Sarah Lovell

Friday Night, September 30, 1994  
6:30–9:00 p.m.

Tamiment Labor Library  
New York University  
Located on an upper floor of 70  
Washington Square South  
(West Fourth Street)  
New York City

Sponsored by: Bulletin in Defense of  
Marxism, Socialist Action, Solidarity

political reason confronting the irrationality of the Stalinist regime and the irrationality of the Nazi onslaught.” Sarah gave attention both to the film’s aesthetic and historical/political dimensions: “The photography, in color and in black and white, is stunning, gorgeous scenes on Prinkipo, grim scenes in Berlin, realistic and surrealistic, as the camera shifts between different time periods and different levels of reality....For those of us who are familiar with the writings of Trotsky and the cataclysmic events of the time, and who care about the vicissitudes in the lives of Trotsky and his family, the film will be of special interest on that account, exciting and devastating.”

In 1990, when the Socialist Workers Party definitively broke from the Fourth International, the FIT shifted its orientation, calling for unity between itself and the other groups adhering to that world organization — Socialist Action and the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity. After drawn-out and often frustrating negotiations with one group and then the other for at least a partial unity, an agreement was finally reached with Solidarity that FIT comrades could join that organization while maintaining the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. Sarah and a majority of her comrades decided, in 1992, to take this step. She became a member of Solidarity, and of its FI Caucus, and helped to establish *BIDOM* on its new, independent basis.

Sarah was not able to be very active in Solidarity — although she paid her dues and sustainer in full, was concerned about the problems facing the organization, and was hopeful that it could move forward to do positive work. At the same time, she believed that *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* most closely reflected what her own political commitments had always been, and she hoped its political perspectives would find greater resonance among her comrades in Solidarity, but also among her comrades in other organizations, as well as among those who were as yet unaffiliated.

### From 1992 to the Present

Up to issue #100 (October–November 1992) of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, Sarah was centrally involved in the production of the magazine. While she remained on the Editorial

Board afterward, she was not part of the newly established Editorial Committee, which shouldered the initial decision-making and “nitty gritty” practical tasks in which she had participated for years. This was her decision. She told us she thought it was time for her to step back a little. Before doing that, she worked closely with me in the effort to establish the magazine on what she felt was a sound political basis. This accomplished, she felt able to step back.

What most of us didn’t know at the time was that Sarah had learned she had cancer. In retrospect, this made it clear to some of us the meaning of what she was trying to accomplish in 1992. She now felt able to give attention to what might be a life-or-death struggle with the tumor that had been found in her lung. Some of us were drawn closer to her in this period, and her apparent victory was both an immense relief and an inspiration. When the lesions were discovered in her brain, we were to be even more profoundly inspired by the way that she mobilized all of her strength, all her inner resources, all her determination to resist the new threat.

Sarah remained very much tied to her loved ones, to her friends, to revolutionary politics. She continued her life-affirming battle with a cautious optimism — first hoping to win another victory, then hoping to stall for a longer period of time the probable victory of the cancer. In January of 1994, although weakened, she was still very much “the old Sarah.” By April this was no longer true, but some of us were still able to talk with her a little, and to hug and kiss. By June she was gone.

“With sadness we have received notice of the death of Sarah,” wrote a friend from Mexico, an old militant who had known Trotsky during the Dewey Commission hearings in 1937, in a note to Frank Lovell. “I share in the pain over the loss of this comrade, which leaves a great wound in your life and in the Trotskyist movement of the United States.”

“The movement will always be indebted to Sarah not only for the many years that she put in the women’s and labor movement,” a British comrade wrote, “but for her dedication, in which she pursued the building of a party which will give leadership to the working class.... She was one of the few that stood firm for revolutionary Marxism during the years of Stalinist domination of the radical movement, but perhaps even more crucial was the fact that Sarah was prepared at the time of the degeneration of the American Socialist Workers Party to begin once again the indispensable task of the building of a revolutionary Marxist cadre.” Sarah would have valued the upbeat quality of this same comrade’s comment: “We view the future with optimism: we feel that there is every possibility that we are seeing the beginning of the upturn of working class struggle. Once again we have no doubt, with this development, of tens of thousands of youth who will find their way into the revolutionary Marxist movement.” The comrade added: “It will be the role of comrades like Sarah which will have enabled us to bring revolutionary socialism to this new generation.”

A friend whom she had known both in Detroit and New York, who had never been part of

the organized Trotskyist movement, wrote: “I find that the older I get, the more cynical I get, and the harder it is to keep fighting the good fight. Well, perhaps Sarah had to fight off the same demons, but it never seemed so to the rest of us; even as she grew older, she seemed never to have given up believing that the good people of this earth will one day make a revolution. That, as I say, inspired me and will, no doubt, continue to do so in the future on those days when I get to wondering if the revolution will ever come.”

In 1957, Sarah wrote: “It is labor, working with materials provided by nature, that is the source of all wealth....It is possible to have a factory owned by the workers, but where is the factory that can be operated by the employer without workers?...Workers and their families are the overwhelming majority of the population....By their labor...and by their government they can make this a better place in which to live.”

[I would like to thank Frank Lovell for sharing thoughts and materials with me. Thanks are also due to Asher Harer and Jean Tussey for information given. I have made extensive use of the files on Sarah kept by the “Red Squad” of the Detroit Police Department, secured by Sarah through the Red Squad Notification and Distribution Compliance Program. In addition to sources cited in the text, I have quoted from: Irving Howe, *A Margin of Hope* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982); Les Evans, ed., *James P. Cannon As We Knew Him* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1976); Al Hansen, “Introduction” to James P. Cannon, *Speeches to the Party* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973); and George Breitman, *Marxism and the Negro Struggle* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1965). I have also quoted from the correspondence of Marian Brain, Miriam Braverman, Jack Bresée, Kay Burch, Sally Devezze, Bob Fink, Patricia Gaffney, Jerry Gordon, Rose Mary Gordon, Felix Ibarra, Jim Lafferty, Ron Reosti, Audrey Rockman, Evelyn Sell, Carrie Hewitt and Adam Shils, Melissa Singler, Charlie van Gelderen; this is only a sampling of the communications received on Sarah’s death.] □

As the July–August issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* noted: Frank Lovell urges those wishing to give a gift in memory of Sarah to make a donation to ‘Bulletin Builders Fund,’ P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009. We wish to gratefully acknowledge several donations already received, including from foreign lands, ranging from \$1,000 to \$15, and bringing the Builders Fund, as of early August, to the sum of — \$5,999.44.

It would seem a reachable goal if we aim to bring the Fund up to \$10,000 by the end of this year. This would be an excellent way to honor Sarah’s memory, to help keep going this magazine of American Trotskyism to which, since 1983, she devoted a great part of her energy and inspiration.

— Frank Lovell



## From the Arsenal of Marxism

# Detroit Labor Urged to Run Own Slate in City Elections

by Sarah Lovell

*The following is the text of a talk by Sarah Lovell, socialist candidate for mayor of Detroit in 1957, before units of UAW Ford Local 600 on March 17, 1957.*

### Brother chairman, brothers and sisters:

As a union member, as a socialist, as socialist candidate for mayor, I would like to talk with you about what I think the Detroit labor movement can and should do in this city's 1957 election campaign.

As I see it, you have a choice of doing one of the following three things:

1. You can ignore the elections, feel you have no stake in them, do nothing, and let the big businessmen keep the administration of the city in their hands, for their benefit.
2. You can sit back and let the top union leaders repeat what they have done in the past—that is, fish around for some self-seeking politicians belonging to the old capitalist parties to put in bids for office, and then endorse them as a so-called “lesser evil.” This also will lead to the administration remaining in the hands of the business interests, to the labor leaders remaining in the position of pleading for favors, and to the workers remaining without any voice in how the city is run. Or:

3. You can decide it's time for a change, time for the workers themselves, you and me, to get into politics—not merely as voters, but as candidates as well, with a voice in saying what the problems are and how they are to be solved. Time for us to run and elect our own slate, a labor slate, taking the government out of the hands of the old boss parties and into the hands of our own representatives.

It is this third course that I am here to urge you to adopt. I ask you to use your influence in the labor movement to get the CIO and AFL to call a joint conference, with representatives from every local union in Detroit and from other interested organizations, to issue a declaration of independence from the capitalist politicians of all varieties, to adopt a platform that will meet the needs of the people of Detroit, to pick a full labor slate for mayor and common council, a slate that will be responsible to the labor movement and controlled by it, and then go out and conduct a campaign to put them in office.

### Could We Win?

Some of you may think, “It's a good idea, but is there time to do it; could we win?” I say yes to all these questions.

The last filing date for petitions is July 27. There is plenty of time to call a united labor conference and start the ball rolling for an independent campaign.

Could we win? The workers of this city are strongly organized. They are the overwhelming majority of the population. Without them, the employers can't produce a single car; without them, the employers' politicians couldn't even elect a dogcatcher. An independent labor campaign this year would unite, inspire, and mobilize the workers of Detroit as never before. It wouldn't be necessary to agitate them to register to vote—the members themselves would be out campaigning energetically to bring in a victory for labor.

But in order to achieve such a victory, we require the kind of program that meets the needs of the working people. A united labor conference would have no difficulty in defining those needs and working out a platform to meet them. In the time I have here, I want to touch on some parts of the platform that I think should be included.

### 30-for-40

First of all, we must remember that despite the so-called national boom, Detroit has almost 100,000 unemployed today. Automation and speed-up in the plants, and then layoffs—that's the trend, and one that will deepen in the next four years.

Chrysler gloats about how it laid off thousands of workers and at the same time increased production and profits. And Mayor Cobo, in his turn, chimes in with attacks on city employees for not being “efficient” enough, that is, he demands speed-up, too.

One answer, a correct one, being raised by sections of the labor movement, is the demand for 30-for-40—the lowering of hours without reduction in weekly take-home pay. What we need is a city administration that will help in the fight to win 30-for-40. And do this, in the first place, by the example it sets for industry, by the way it treats its own workers—by granting city workers the 30-hour week with no cut in weekly pay.

In other words, a labor administration would mean a complete reversal of things as they have been; it would mean a city government on the side of the workers in their fight with the corporations on these as well as other issues.

### Democratic Rights

A labor administration would also have to change things drastically with regard to civil rights and civil liberties. Labor's platform would have to meet the special needs of the Negro one-fifth of our population, who are the necessary and natural allies of the white workers. It would recognize their right to representation at all levels of government and would make room on labor's slate for representatives of the Negro community.

Its platform would affirm the right of colored people to live free and unsegregated lives anywhere in the city, to be free of discrimination in employment and all public facilities, and to be safeguarded against the police brutality practiced in the Robert Mitchell case and against the mob terror organized against Mrs. Ethel Watkins in Cherrylawn.

A labor administration would do everything in its power to defend and extend civil liberties. A good first step would be action to end the McCarthyite city loyalty investigating commission that intimidates city employees and deprives them of the right of free political association.

It would prohibit the use of the police for strikebreaking and scab herding such as occurred in the Square-D and other strikes.

It would get rid of the police commissioner who made Detroit the laughing stock of the country by his efforts to dictate to us what we shall not read.

### City Services

Year after year, the problems of housing, schools, and city services have become worse and worse.

Mayor Cobo brags about Detroit's “new look.” But the real look of Detroit can't be covered up by his expensive waterfront showplaces. The real look of Detroit is one of deteriorating dwell-



Sarah Lovell as candidate for Mayor of Detroit in 1957



ings, spreading slums, and a severe school crisis.

Detroit has proportionally less federal housing than any other big city in the country. It needs an administration that will fight to get federal low-rent housing to replace the slums, not block it, as has been done on behalf of the real-estate interests; it needs an administration that will fight to get federal funds to assist school construction.

City services have been contracted instead of expanded. At the same time that the Cobo administration agrees to honor the working woman, by a special "week," its welfare department proposes to shut down the last three city nurseries in this big city.

It's the same story with the Department of Street Railways. It is run under the slogan "decrease the service and increase the fare," instead of being operated as it should be, as a public service, like the fire department.

### Tax the Rich

Where can we get the money for these necessary projects and services? That brings us to the question of taxes — city funds and federal funds.

The answer to the city tax program isn't in Cobo's bond refunding schemes, which are good only for his banker friends. The answer lies in a radical rehauling of the assessed valuation of property in Detroit.

What we have at the present time are scandalously low assessment rates on corporation property, and at the same time rates that are too high on the property of small homeowners.

I say we must raise the taxes of the rich, and the way to do this on the city level is by raising the assessed valuations of corporation property. This would then enable us to lower the valuations on property of small homeowners.

### End War Preparations

Cobo recently was asked what he had to say about the Eisenhower Doctrine for the Middle East. His answer was that he had no comment because that isn't his department. Well, I take just the opposite view.

Foreign policy, national policy, state policy — these determine what happens here, how many are unemployed here, how high prices go here, how many young men will be drafted here, how much taxes we pay here, and whether we get the necessary funds for Detroit housing and schools.

We don't want a city government that pretends these questions have nothing to do with our problems. What we need is a city government that intervenes at all levels to seek policies that meet our needs.

Demanding more federal funds for schools and houses of course raises the question of the federal budget itself. The newspapers keep telling us the federal budget can be cut. I agree on that point. It can be cut, and the main place to cut it, in my opinion, is in the military expenditures, which take over 60 percent of the whole budget.

It would be wonderful — a contribution to the fight for peace, and a contribution to the solution of our local problems — if the mayor and common council of Detroit, representing 2 million people, would go to Washington to call for an end to war preparations and expansion of housing, school, and other public works. A labor slate representing the working people of Detroit would do this and many other things along the same line as a matter of course.

### Effects of Victory

Conducted in that spirit, an independent labor campaign would surely win in Detroit. The effects of such a victory would be far-reaching and long-lasting. It would be a signal to the

labor movement in the rest of the country that they don't have to keep hanging on to the coattails of a Democratic Party that continues to follow pro-Taft-Hartley, pro-Jim Crow, and pro-Cold War policies.

It would be a stimulus all over the country to the formation of an independent labor party able and willing to fight for a workers' and farmers' government to replace the representatives of Big Business up and down the line.

As a socialist, as a candidate endorsed by the Socialist Workers Party, I believe of course that the problems facing us will not be solved completely until economic as well as political power is taken out of the hands of the monopolist corporations, until the productive forces and wealth of the country are controlled and operated by the working-class majority of the population in their own interests. But I also believe that a labor slate independent of the old parties and the formation of an independent labor party will represent a big step down the road to the solution of our problems.

### Labor's Duty

For that reason, I intend to keep working, between now and July 27, the last date for filing, to persuade the labor movement and its allies to run their own slate. If they do this, then I will be willing to consider withdrawing my own candidacy in favor of an independent labor candidate.

If, however, the labor movement defaults on its responsibility, then I shall stay in the race as a candidate for mayor, collaborating with all progressive forces to gain support for the program I have discussed here today, and to build sentiment for an independent labor party.

I hope that you will agree with the main thought I have tried to express to you — that labor has the power, the right, and the duty to govern Detroit — and that you will join actively in the fight to bring this about. Thank you. □

## Zapatistas Sponsor National Democratic Convention in Rebel Territory

*Continued from page 4*

with the Zapatistas. But even before the delegates arrived in Chiapas, he stated publicly he would not be bound by the convention's decisions.

The most contentious issue before the CND was precisely the one of whether to openly endorse Cárdenas. In the end, it was decided to simply call for a vote against the PRI and the PAN and to call upon Cárdenas to implement convention resolutions.

### Prospects for the CND

It is too soon to gauge the impact the CND will have in the long run. Its first test will come in the wake of the August 21 federal elections, when the convention will try to serve as a forum and organizing body for those forces willing to mobilize against fraud and against efforts to impose the continuation of PRI rule.

The CND offers a national, unitary framework for radicalized social movements and the Mexican left in general to advance a common platform of long-range demands based on a mass-action perspective. In that regard it represents a major step forward from the past six years in which the PRD and the Cárdenas electoral apparatus in general had absorbed the energies of the bulk of such forces and had increasingly channeled protest into institutional channels.

Much depends on the outcome of the August 21 voting and how the PRD responds to mass hopes for the end to PRI rule and a radical transformation of the Mexican state. The prospects for maturing the CND into an ongoing project will hinge in part on the possibility that the EZLN and most radicalized forces continue to exert their hegemony over the project or whether sectors of the PRD try opportunistically to derail the perspective adopted in the

Lacandon Rainforest in an effort to bend the convention to its own perspective of negotiating a bigger share of parliamentary power.

The CND's 100-member leadership body was selected from among the state delegations (2 per state) and an additional list of personalities nominated directly by the EZLN, led by long-time human rights activist Rosario Ibarra, who was chosen convention president. Though it contains no EZLN members, the Zapatistas have stated they will "discipline themselves to" the decisions of the CND as long as it abides by the general perspective adopted August 9.

The survival of the CND and the new state of nationwide struggle opened by the January 1 uprising of the EZLN will ultimately be decided by the CND's ability to maintain that perspective. □

*August 14, 1994*



# One Million March for Lesbian/Gay Rights; National Lesbian and Gay Labor Organization Founded

by Paul Lefrak

On June 26, 1994, an estimated one million lesbians, gay men, and their supporters marched and rallied in New York City for the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion. Stonewall was the four-day uprising of gay people in Greenwich Village in late June 1969 in which largely working-class, Black, and Puerto Rican gay men, lesbians, and drag queens fought militant street battles with police.

The Stonewall Rebellion was the springboard for the modern lesbian/gay liberation movement, a movement which far surpassed the more timid and middle-class "homophile" movement of the 1950s and 1960s in its breadth and scope.

The gay liberation movement of the early 1970s, led by organizations such as the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) — named after the National Liberation Front (NLF) of Vietnam — and the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), was consciously modeled after and largely inspired by the militant Black and women's liberation movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The 1994 "Stonewall 25" events show both the strengths and the weaknesses of the current lesbian/gay movement. While it is capable of organizing more people in the streets than any other social movement active right now in the U.S., the lesbian/gay movement in many ways is being coopted by the more liberal sectors of the capitalists and their lieutenants. This was expressed in the generally apolitical, carnival atmosphere and commercialism of the march, as well as its futile appeal to the United Nations to protect gay rights.

At work is both an inspiring growth of the lesbian/gay movement and its headway into all facets of American life, and at the same time an effort to reconcile the movement to the mainstream and channel it into the norms of bourgeois respectability and acceptance.

### Right Wing Vetoes Real Reforms

The liberal attempt to coopt the lesbian/gay movement is in sharp conflict with the overall unwillingness and inability of the ruling class to grant reforms, including those that push in the direction of legal and social equality for gay people and all oppressed sexual minorities.

The decay of capitalism and the beginnings of resistance to it are causing the ruling class to turn more toward the political "solutions" offered by the far right. The ruling class understands that the specter of lesbian/gay legal and social equality threatens that pillar of bourgeois

stability, the traditional nuclear family. It also understands how anti-lesbian/gay hatred can be a valuable tool to help divide and conquer the working class.

The more liberal representatives of the ruling class, who are inclined to acts of tokenism and modest reforms aimed at gay people, constantly yield to the political pressures of the far right. Hence, the whole "gays in the military" controversy: Clinton and the Democrats felt a need to throw some small crumbs to a "loyal" constituency and tried to persuade the lesbian/gay movement to appeal for a small reform of the imperialist war machine and to drop every important demand.

The right wing, realizing what this reform would imply for society as a whole, drew a line in the sand. Naturally, Clinton chickened out and betrayed gay people with his "don't ask, don't tell" policy, essentially no change whatsoever.

Pro-Democratic Party, liberal reformist tendencies within the lesbian/gay movement, while at first reinforced by Clinton's maneuver, were then significantly weakened by it. Many gay people began undergoing a process of radicalization in the wake of their disappointment in Clinton and are now wondering where to go next.

Radical or potentially radical tendencies exist within almost every lesbian/gay rights group. They need to be organizationally consolidated and strengthened. Revolutionary socialists should seek to intervene in lesbian/gay organizations to promote a working-class orientation, mass action rather than lobbying, and political independence rather than begging crumbs from Democratic Party politicians. In particular, they should try to link the movement for lesbian/gay liberation with the unions, the antiracist and women's liberation movements, and other progressive struggles.

### The "Pride at Work" Conference

In the often confused swirl of ferment that characterizes much of the current lesbian/gay movement, one small but potentially very significant step was taken by a group of approximately 150 activists meeting in New York City at a national conference held on June 24, two days before the Stonewall 25 march.

This conference, called "Pride at Work," was a meeting to found a national lesbian/gay labor organization. Participants at the "Pride at Work" conference were mostly from the two

coasts, with AFSCME, SEIU, the UAW, and CWA being the largest union components of the conference. The conference was held at the AFSCME District Council 37 headquarters in lower Manhattan.

The "Pride at Work" conference did not get much coverage in the established gay media, much less the bourgeois press. Its lack of prominence in the Stonewall 25 events, on the one hand, and the fact that it happened at all, on the other hand, reveal much about the state of the lesbian/gay movement.

The conference took the first steps to form a national organization for lesbian/gay union activists and all those fighting for gay rights at the workplace, as well as for those advocating a working-class and labor orientation within the lesbian/gay movement. The new national organization, still very much in its formative stages, is tentatively called the National Lesbian and Gay Labor Organization (NLGLO).

In addition to voting for a National Executive Board elected by regions, the "Pride at Work" conference voted to adopt the spirit of a 10-point statement of purpose which included: increasing the participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered union members in the labor movement; encouraging unions to fight measures that reduce the rights of people based on sexual orientation; supporting political action by unions to fight all forms of discrimination at the workplace and in the community; attempting to incorporate domestic-partnership health-and-welfare coverage in all collective-bargaining agreements; including sexual orientation in all nondiscrimination clauses in union contracts; supporting the development of lesbian/gay caucuses in local unions; and generally living up to labor's historic motto, "An injury to one is an injury to all."

### The National Lesbian and Gay Labor Organization

The founding of NLGLO consolidates and extends the groundbreaking and courageous work done by groups such as the Bay Area Lesbian/Gay Labor Alliance and similar groups in New York City and Boston. The pioneering work of lesbian/gay union activists has helped create a climate in the U.S. labor movement in which outward manifestations of anti-lesbian/gay bigotry are much less acceptable than they were 10-20 years ago. Almost all major international unions today give at least paper support



to the fight against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

This shift in the labor movement also reflects a shift in the U.S. working class and the population as a whole. In polls taken on attitudes of Americans toward gay-rights issues, opposition to anti-lesbian/gay discrimination at the workplace increased from roughly 50 percent at the start of the 1980s to about 80 percent by the end of the decade — this trend taking place during the “conservative” 1980s.

While most movements of workers and the oppressed saw an overall decline during the 1980s, the lesbian/gay movement did not. And while increasingly under attack during this time, the movement did not suffer any major defeats on a national level. In fact, the movement registered some real gains, not only modest legal reforms but also important gains in popular support for key parts of the gay-rights and AIDS activist agenda.

The national marches on Washington, D.C., in 1987 and 1993 and this year’s Stonewall 25 march were the largest political mobilizations in the U.S. in each of those years. They showed the strength and determination of vast numbers of gay people and their supporters, including the millions more who could not be there physically, to take to the streets and fight to defend the rights already won and to build a political movement to win even more.

The fighting determination of millions of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered people to defend themselves, to refuse to stand by and see their rights taken away, is a big plus on the side of gays and all working and oppressed people struggling for justice.

### The Crisis of Leadership in the Lesbian/Gay Movement

What is lacking in the lesbian/gay movement, however, is a political leadership that really represents the interests of the vast majority of gay people, who are not only gay but also working-class. The lesbian/gay movement does not yet have a leadership capable of being part of the overall struggle for working-class power and — through working-class power and socialism — lesbian/gay liberation.

The current lesbian/gay movement, like the movements of other specially oppressed groups in the U.S., is dominated by a middle-class leadership, schooled in parochial reformism and unable and unwilling to go beyond the scope of Democratic Party politics.

The newly-formed NLGLO, while not revolutionary, is committed to going beyond parochial politics by its simultaneous orientation to the working class and to lesbians and gay men. There are subjective revolutionaries, even Trotskyists, in the leadership and ranks of the organization, including the author, who was elected to the National Executive Board of the new organization.

NLGLO is in an ideal position to help link the struggles of workers and gay people. Its placement in the unions means that it will be part of the growing struggles of workers. And its placement in the lesbian/gay movement means that it will be part of the growing struggles of gay people. NLGLO could help strengthen and radicalize both.

The oppression and subsequent resistance of lesbian and gay workers, both as workers and as people facing discrimination because of their sexual orientation, could be the basis of a dynamic leading to an anticapitalist political consciousness on the part of a substantial section of the working class.

The essential condition for this is that revolutionary socialists provide the movement with the analysis — and the program and strategy derived from it — that only the working class can overthrow capitalism and lay the basis for the elimination of all forms of sexual and gender-based oppression.

By helping to infuse the spontaneous struggle with revolutionary politics, Trotskyists can influence much greater numbers than those attending the “Pride at Work” Conference or even the one million in the streets of New York City.

### A Political Strategy for NLGLO

What would be an effective political strategy for the newly founded NLGLO? For one thing, the organization must be visibly fighting for, and establish itself as a force defending and expand-

ing, gay rights at the workplace and supporting national and local labor struggles.

NLGLO should build open and proud lesbian/gay labor contingents at labor solidarity actions. During the British miners’ strike of the 1984–85, Lesbian/Gay Support the Miners Committees sprang up in many parts of Britain. This led to an inspiring show of reciprocal solidarity when a contingent of 500 miners — traditionally a “macho,” overwhelmingly male line of work — marched in the 1986 London Lesbian/Gay Pride march. NLGLO needs to aim for a similar dynamic in the U.S.

NLGLO needs to link up with national efforts to build an independent labor party, including Labor Party Advocates (LPA), Workers Unity Network (WUN), and union caucuses that seek to break with the twin parties of reaction and build a mass-based, working-class political alternative. By making this link, NLGLO could help infuse the movement for independent working-class political action with consciousness of lesbian/gay issues and promote lesbian/gay leadership there, as well as raise the importance of breaking with the Democrats in the lesbian/gay movement, one of the most vital social struggles of the last 25 years.

NLGLO needs to involve itself prominently in all the struggles of working people — from fighting for a free, comprehensive, single-payer national health care system under worker-client control; to opposing U.S. intervention in Haiti, the former Yugoslavia, and elsewhere; to building cross-border solidarity with Mexican and Canadian workers; to opposing budget cuts and warfare; to fighting against racism and the growing fascist movement; to defending reproductive rights.

By fighting in the forefront of the battles that will galvanize the working class, NLGLO could help advance the struggle for full equality for lesbians, gay men, and all those oppressed by the rotten and decaying capitalist system. By participating in NLGLO, revolutionary socialists can help advance the struggle of workers and the oppressed for political power. □

August 8, 1994

## Ten Days That Shook the Teamster Bureaucracy

*Continued from page 11*

with the old-guard leaders and follow Carey in recommending the settlement (which the membership nevertheless approved by 81 percent). These officials refused to change their old-guard stripes, even after two years without corrupting pressure from the very top of the IBT.

In the discussion before the final vote to revoke the conference charters, some GEB members stated that the problem was caused by bad individuals. Carey argued that the structure itself, with its lack of democratic accountability, was at fault.

Carey’s argument is closer to the truth, but fails to explain the universal presence of a bureaucratic ruling elite in the labor movement, and its business unionism outlook. Teamster reformers still need to see their die-hard opposition as a parasitical social formation whose self-serving interests mean that it will always be a traitorous fifth column within labor’s ranks.

The continued resistance of the old guard, and the support they continue to receive from the bulk of officialdom, will force the reformers to keep seeking the answers to this problem. They’re so close to the truth now, they can’t fail

to recognize it as the struggle to make the union “work for the members” goes on.

The reformers are moving in the right direction, as evidenced by a Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* news item about its upstairs penthouse neighbor. It quoted Tom Leedham, who heads Carey’s transition team in the West: “Standing in the Western Conference’s expansive offices, with sweeping views of Elliot Bay, Leedham said, ‘I don’t think we’ll be keeping these plush digs. This is a bit much for an organization that represents working people.’” □

June 23, 1994



## The World Situation and the Need for a Labor Party

*Continued from page 15*

politics. It's "maximize profit" politics. It's the politics of one group of people, and nobody else can say anything about it. So either we will fill that vacuum and say something about how the world is organized, or the people will perish. And Bosnia will be more typical of this period than Chiapas. We will have the high-tech Dark Ages.

How do you do that, pull it together? You do that through political action, through organizing and consciousness and democracy.

One of the key features of the current period is that the corporation has taken over all aspects of civil life, of public life, of decision making. Those areas of your life and everyone else's life that are decided by you or by us shrink, and those areas of civil life that are decided by the corporation or the marketplace grow. One of the features of this period of capitalism is that what Hegel called "civil society" is being squeezed out by the blob of corporate society. Family life and social life are being squeezed out and commoditized. Democratic life is squeezed out. Elections are bought. Policy is bought and commoditized. There is no room left for people to practice social, political, democratic life.

One of the reasons why people come here on a beautiful Saturday is that there is no area in your life where you are capable of organizing and acting on the events that you deal with. There's no place to do democracy (to the extent that democracy is something you do, not a system you read about). You don't do it in your communities because there are no community organizations that do it. I'm not insulting anyone who does the real work that you do. And all the work that people have done is spectacular and may in fact create the basis for the future. But on a broad scale there are no vibrant community organizations that affect the lives of

people in the community. You don't do democracy in your unions because on a broad scale the unions are weak and do not function as centers for democratic discussion and decision making about the lives of the union members. The unions could be and should be and in fact have to be a center of democratic discourse and resistance, but for certain reasons they have chosen not to be. The New York City Central Labor Council and the public sector unions are not the source of nightly meetings of thousands of people to talk about what we are going to do about the organization and privatization of New York.

And there are no political parties. The Democratic and Republican parties are not political parties, in any true meaning of the word. Because they're not — even if you happen to believe in what they say — they are not things that you can work in, they're not organizations for people. They're organizations for narrowing process and for the narrowest class interests. There was a time perhaps when there was a mass form of the Democratic Party, where a club may have meant something. It wasn't great, it was the good old days, it was racist, it was exclusionary, it stunk, but it had something to it. Reform, the triumph of the petty bourgeoisie in the name of the masses, but really at the behest of the rich destroyed the basis of working class participation in the Democratic party and replaced it with white shoe nonparticipation.

So the Democratic Party and the Republican Party are identical in that "there ain't nothin' there." There is no "there" there.

So there's no place for people to do what they want to do about the conditions that are going on in life. If a labor party has to be built now, it is because of that. The overall economy and the nature of popular democracy.

In 1966 at the stroke of midnight on January 1 the transit workers went on strike and Mayor

Lindsay said, "I'm gonna break this strike." And within a few days the employers, the bosses of the city, called Lindsay and said, "We ain't got no workers; end the strike. We want our workers to come back to work. Whatever your problem is with Quill, end it." (Quill went to jail.) And the strike ended because the employing class *needed* the workers. That's why the subways were built. To get the workers from where they lived to where they had to work. That was the only purpose of mass transit. So don't have a transit strike, because that stops the workers from getting from where they live to where they work. And so Lindsay caved, because the bosses of New York told him he had to.

1980. Transit workers go on strike. The mayor's name is Koch. Koch says to the people of New York, "Walk to work." And they do. The bosses say to Koch, "Good work." Think about what happened in between there. Some of it was political, some of it was ideological, some of it was consciousness, some of it was the destruction of mass organizations, the weakening of the power of the unions, the fact that there is no political party that speaks for working people, some of it was that we lost 300,000 factory jobs between one strike and the next strike. But the fact is the public shifted. That was our PATCO. That was the beginning of a sign that we were in a new period, when Koch was able to get the folks of New York to bike to work, walk to work, and the bosses went along with it. The New World Order came to New York City before it came to Mexico City. It was another 10-12 years before Mexico was able to crush its public sector the way New York was doing it then.

That's the political reality that we face. In that political reality, of building the potential for democratic discourse in a world where capital rules completely, either the labor party makes sense or it's just the same idea that it was. A good idea anytime in the past 75 or 100 years. Either this is the labor party for these problems or it's a group of 25 or 30 people who will have their own newspaper and stand on the margins of demonstrations of workers, as many other pro-labor party groups have for the past 50 or 75 years. So it's either going to be built from within and part of these problems or it ain't hardly worth building.

The third verse of "Solidarity Forever" says, "We will bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old." Those people who say "No, no, don't tell us about the ashes of the old, don't tell us what's wrong with what's going on now" — they have no interest in bringing to birth the new world. Those people who don't want to bring to birth a new world will get swamped by the ashes of the old. The labor party will bring to birth democratic politics from within the collapse of the current political system or it will not build at all. □

*April 23, 1994*





# The 1994 Project Censored Yearbook

*Censored: The News That Didn't Make the News — and Why: The 1994 Project Censored Yearbook* by Carl Jensen and Project Censored (Four Walls Eight Windows, 1994; \$14.95).

*Reviewed by Arthur Maglin*

**P**roject Censored has been around since 1976. Each year they sift through the news to find the most vitally important stories that have been so grossly underreported as to have effectively been censored by the corporate media.

The stories are researched and summarized by students participating in Carl Jensen's seminar at Sonoma State University in California. The stories are then submitted to a broad panel of judges ranging from such personages as Noam Chomsky, a radical writer and activist, to Hugh Downs, an anchor on ABC's "20-20" newsmagazine. Once evaluated, the final list is circulated and publicized — this time through the publication of the book under consideration.

Even for revolutionaries and other progressive-minded individuals, much of the material in this book will come as a revelation.

For instance, who has heard of the United Nations Children's Fund report, released in September of 1993, which revealed that nine out of ten young people murdered in industrialized countries are slain in the United States and that the poverty rate for children

in the U.S. is more than double that of any other major industrialized nation?

Or how about the fact that the U.S. Army has quietly resumed biowarfare testing after a ten-year hiatus? Or that, as a result of the U.S. embargo against Cuba, thousands of Cubans are losing their eyesight because of malnutrition?

One interesting story in the book is about how deeply involved giant corporations like General Motors, ITT, and American Express are in what is politely called "fringe banking" — more accurately, "loan sharking." These corporations have set up a wide variety of schemes to charge the poor, who have little access to traditional banks and S&L's, up to 200 percent on loans and purchases. They follow this up with a very high pressure process of debt collection to coerce low-income debtors to pay back funds regardless of their circumstances.

Twenty-five stories are reported in all, including important but hidden information on Somalia, Haiti, Chernobyl, and the environment. Another section of the book discusses the "Junk Food News" stories of 1993 to refute the notion that editors had so much important news to report that they just couldn't cover everything.

Here's the results of Carl Jensen's survey of the national Organization of News Ombudsmen soliciting their selections for the most overreported, least deserving news stories of 1993:

1. Amy Fisher/Joey Buttafuoco
2. Woody Allen/Mia Farrow
3. Bill Clinton's \$200 haircut
4. Madonna
5. John Wayne Bobbitt's Severed Penis
6. The Michael Jackson Allegations
7. Burt & Loni's Divorce
8. Late Night Talk Show Armageddon
9. Heidi Fleiss — the Hollywood Madam
10. Jurassic Park Dinosauritis

Even though we are confronted by this kind of sensationalism and outright pabulum every day, it is still pretty daunting to see it all presented as a list. Taken as a whole, what is the mind-numbing influence of all this crap?

*Censored* is profusely illustrated by one of my three favorite political cartoonists — Tom Tomorrow. (The other two are Tom Toles and Ted Rawls.) Anyone not familiar with Tom Tomorrow's work should peruse the book for the sheer pleasure of these cartoons alone.

*Censored* also contains a lengthy and very interesting chronology of censorship from 605 B.C. to the present. For one thing, the chronology traces the concentration of major media ownership into fewer and fewer hands.

Revolutionaries are always on the lookout for important information on the depredations of the capitalist system. Project Censored has proven to be an excellent source. □

## A Crucial Test for All Rail Labor

*Continued from page 2*

thus cutting a full day off global transportation times and competing directly with shipping through the Panama Canal, as well as with other U.S. railroads, which are already beating the time through the Canal.

The Soo Line strike is therefore not some parochial struggle of interest only to the immediate participants. It is part of the restructuring of North American industry and transportation whose most prominent landmark so far has been NAFTA. That pact gives the three participating nations six years to align their safety, workforce, and equipment standards for trucking, rail, and bus operations.

### Ferment in Union Ranks

As this kind of corporate restructuring has rolled on, boosting profits while worsening conditions for labor with the complicity of both government and union leaders, ferment in the ranks has intensified. In 1991 the UTU finally voted out its longtime president, Fred Hardin, replacing him with Assistant President G. Thomas DuBose who promised changes in policy after the disaster of the 1991 government-imposed contract.

DuBose, however, entered into unauthorized and unprecedented "informal" negotiations with the carriers and convened the union's general chairmen (the chief union officers on the various railroads) in April 1994 to try to sell them a national agreement containing further far-reaching concessions. DuBose received a stinging rejection when the proposal was voted down 92 to 13.

It now remains to be seen what DuBose will do about the Soo Line strike. If he continues to seek to have the national organization agree to the concession he proposed in April, it is likely that he will allow the strike to atrophy, waiting, like CP, for it to collapse through attrition and eventual defection of some group of workers, forcing the UTU to accept some major concessions, such as a change in the basis of pay from miles to hours for road workers, resulting in substantial wage losses. Such concessions were agreed to by the BLE on the Soo Line in 1991 on some jobs and were permitted on Amtrak several years ago by the UTU. Any such concessions would be advanced with renewed impetus by the carriers on the agenda of the 1995 national negotiations.

### Problems of Strike Tactics

The essential alternative open to the UTU, if the CP-Soo Line remains intransigent, is to extend picketing to connecting railroads, precipitating an escalating transportation crisis. Under U.S. rail labor law, there is no prior prohibition of such action, and it has been done before, with good results. The official UTU position is that this is not desirable because it would provoke government intervention and the imposition of a bad agreement, as happened in 1991. DuBose in fact campaigned on the promise that he would never allow the government to settle another rail contract. On the other hand, the UTU leaders, while opposing any more aggressive picketing tactics on this basis, are telling the strikers that the strike is likely to be settled in their favor as the Clinton appointees on the NMB begin to see how unreasonable Canadian Pacific is, and if rail workers do their duty and write letters to their Congressional representatives. The implausibility of this contradictory position — warning against government intervention, on the one hand, and looking for rescue by the NMB, on the other — is entirely ignored by its proponents.



The UTU, through the initiative of the union's chief negotiator, an international officer assigned to the negotiations, has unfortunately also sought to prompt government intervention on the union's side through an appeal to Yankee patriotism, calling for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to deport the relative handful of Canadian managers the CP is using to try to operate the Soo Line. While some valid points can be made in denouncing the CP's cross-border strikebreaking operation as "neo-colonialist," a term used by one rail union leader, and exposing the INS's double standard of harassing and deporting superexploited immigrant workers in industries such as meatpacking, garment, and others, Federal police agencies are not going to help win the strike, and inviting them in can only open the door to legitimizing their intervention in the strike. In fact, the first intervention of Federal cops in this strike, as experience and history show, will undoubtedly be in response to some trumped-up charges by CP management of "sabotage" by striking rail workers. The most obvious allies of the striking Soo Line workers are the members of the UTU employed by the CP north of the border, not the INS. The presence of a UTU leader representing CP workers in Canada at an August

7 rally in Minneapolis was a positive development.

As of this writing, the strike is stalemated. A CP ultimatum instructing workers to return or be replaced is possible. CP has begun to bring in a small number of scabs from non-union railroads. Many rank-and-file strikers are growing impatient, with widening talk of the need to extend picketing to other railroads, understanding that a prolonged and stalemated strike, even one that costs CP millions, would not be in their favor. Unfortunately, CP has more money than its employees, while the UTU leadership is adamant that the strike will remain limited to the Soo Line. At the same time, intercraft solidarity remains strong, with leaders of railway clerks, maintenance of way workers, and others pledging strike benefits to CP workers honoring the UTU's strike.

### Back to the 1920s?

The direct and open CP challenge to the UTU is one that has not been posed in the industry since the 1922 strike, with the exception of the defeat of the UTU on the Florida East Coast Railroad nearly 20 years ago. This, however, was in a relatively isolated area. The Soo Line is situated in the heart of the U.S. railroad industry, whose two largest rail

terminals are Chicago and Kansas City. The Soo Line directly intersects with a dozen or more fully unionized major railroads. A defeat of rail labor's ability to shut down a carrier through its united front tradition of honoring all picket lines, coupled with the breach in the unionization of rail opened up by the short-line provisions of rail deregulation in the 1980s, would drastically weaken all rail unions and be a giant step toward making the carriers masters of the workplace in a way they have not been able to achieve since the 1920s.

At the same time, the fundamental nature of this confrontation will undoubtedly speed up the tendencies for change within the UTU and other rail unions as well. This strike will not be allowed to go on indefinitely, and may have reached some resolution by the time this issue reaches its readers. Soon decisive action will be initiated — in spite of the seeming intransigence of Canadian Pacific and the conservative approach of the UTU leadership — either by CP, by the striking workers, or by both. Although the outcome of this strike is still not decided, it is certain that rail labor and the rail industry will be permanently changed by it. □

August 7, 1994

## 60th Anniversary of Minneapolis Teamster Strikes Honored

### Continued from page 12

Club and the Northland Poster Collective and by the *Union Advocate*, "since 1897 Minnesota's leading labor newspaper." All these groups helped organize the picnic, and the *Union Advocate* devoted half the front page of its July 11 issue to a feature article about the picnic and about the 1934 strikes. Pathfinder Press had a separate table with campaign literature of the Socialist Workers Party candidates in the 1994 general election and a display of the four books by Farrell Dobbs on the strikes and the organization of over-the-road drivers that followed.

Vast amounts of literature, union leaflets, and other materials on the Soo Line strike against the Canadian Pacific rail system were distributed. This strike, called by the United Transportation Union (UTU), had begun a few days before and was still being organized. Everyone was invited to help expand and strengthen the picket lines. Locations of picket sites were listed and distributed.

At several literature tables special attention was called to a commemorative pamphlet published on the 60th anniversary of the 1934 strikes: *Lessons from the 1934 Minneapolis Truckers Strike* by Harry DeBoer. Many at the picnic had known Harry DeBoer or heard about him. He had been a central leader of the strikes (hospitalized from gunshot wounds during the July strike), highly respected as a tactician. He held top union posts after the strike settlement. So his pamphlet should be useful for present-day union militants. It was written in 1987 and is dedicated to Gillian

Furst, member of Teamster Local 1145 in Minneapolis and an activist in TDU. Harry DeBoer died in 1992.

An announcement over the PA system at 2 p.m. notified all present that what had been billed as "a short program of speeches" was about to begin, and all those interested should find chairs in front of the speakers stand. And let the speakers be heard. This announcement was made by Gillian Furst, a key organizer of the picnic who chaired the program. She also announced she had been designated to keep time on the speakers, and promised to limit each one to no more than 10 or 12 minutes.

But first a proper tone and spirit had to be set. Gillian introduced Solidarity Singers, a local group that sings without accompaniment, much like a group of workers in a union hall. But this group is practiced and knows all the verses to "Solidarity Forever." This is how the meeting began. The first speaker was Bill Urman, secretary of Teamsters Local 792 and a vice president of the IBT, elected on the Ron Carey slate in the 1991 election. His presence established the fact that this picnic was organized and conducted in accordance with the hopes and aspirations of reform unionism. He brought greetings and good wishes.

Eight more speakers followed in order, each with a special message. They were:

- **Nellie Stone Johnson.** At age 89 she retains membership in the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union and is a delegate to the Minneapolis Central Labor Union

Council. As a young Black farm woman, she delivered fresh vegetables to the strikers in 1934. She submitted this as an example of what solidarity means, workers helping workers.

- **Mike Turnure**, representing TDU. He explained that the struggle for democracy in the Teamsters union is far from over. (See the article on the ongoing fight against the old-guard Teamster bureaucrats by Charles Walker elsewhere in this issue.)
- **Diana Kilmury.** First woman ever elected to high office in the Teamsters union, she is first vice president, elected on the Ron Carey slate in 1991. She read a message from Carey, who regretted that he could not be at the picnic.
- **Peter Rachleff**, labor historian and author of *Hard Pressed in the Heartland: The Hormel Strike and the Future of the Labor Movement*. As an organizer of the picnic, he brought the message of solidarity and urged support of the rail workers strike.
- **Greg Pofertl**, national business representative of the American Postal Workers Union. He paid tribute to the heritage of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters and urged that the union movement follow in that tradition.
- **Pauline DeBoer**, widow of Harry DeBoer and former union leader in her own right. She spoke of the need for better education in unionism and recommended that the union movement undertake its own educational program to combat the misinformation



tion of the public schools and other ruling class institutions.

- **Dave Riehle**, local chairman, UTU Lodge 650. He explained why, in contrast to other recent rail-strikes, the U.S. government is not expected to intervene soon to settle the current UTU strike against the Soo Line.
- **Shaun Maloney**. Besides having been a central leader of the 1934 strikes, he was for many years president of Local 19 (Seattle) of the West Coast longshore union (ILWU). He was the last speaker and

sought to expand upon what others had said. He agreed that solidarity is good, but urged that the union movement seek to change the conditions of work and get rid of the present corrupt political system, the clear implication being that a labor party is badly needed.

Maloney's message was understood and he received a standing ovation, unusual for an audience of this kind under these circumstances. This was not a typical audience, but the

response to the labor party idea is indicative of the broad sentiment in union ranks for their own labor party and a desire to rid themselves of Democrats and Republicans alike. Large numbers of the publication *Labor Party Advocate* were distributed.

The picnic ended with the Solidarity Singers, and this time they got some audience participation. □

July 28, 1994

## New Jersey Labor Party Advocates Hold Forum

### Continued from page 13

to its newsletter, *Labor Party Advocate*, may be obtained by sending \$20 to LPA at P.O. Box 53177, Washington, D.C., 20009-3177.]

The other speakers — Barbara Rahke, speaking on "Difficulties of Organizing"; Valorie Caffee, speaking on "Independent Political Action"; and Jed Dodd, speaking on "Dealing with a Democratic Congress" — all addressed the abject failure of the Democratic politicians in any way to represent the interests of working people.

Rahke explained how the supposedly "impartial" government continues to be an obstacle to union organizing and to collective bargaining even after George Bush's defeat.

Valorie Caffee discussed her campaign against labor-hating Democratic State Senator James Lynch. Though she was unable to win a large percentage of the ballots on election day, she was grateful for the support she received from a number of local unions, both in her district and around the state.

Jed Dodd was especially eloquent in explaining why his union had decided to join the campaign to build a labor party. He said, "If electing Democrats were in the best interest of our members, we would work to elect Democrats. If electing *Republicans* were in the best interest of our members, we would work to elect Republicans. The reality is that neither one is in the best interest of our members." He explained that his union considers building LPA an elementary responsibility in representing the workers who maintain the railways along the old Pennsylvania line.

### Discussion from the Floor

About twenty minutes was devoted to questions and comments from the floor. As is usual at events like this one, members of some small groups who do not support Labor Party Advocates took the floor to make revolutionary speeches — among them several members of the Socialist Workers Party and one member of the Freedom Socialist Party. Their remarks were received politely. Members of the Communist Party (CP) were distributing the *People's World* outside the meeting, and registration table staffpeople had to reassure some trade unionists that there was no connection between the CP newspaper and Labor Party Advocates.

Of more relevance were four comments from the floor. One person criticized LPA for not guaranteeing the presence of people of color in LPA's leadership; another asked what LPA was doing to work with other independent political action initiatives. Eric Lerner, president of the New Jersey local of the National Writers' Union and a supporter of the Labor Party Organizing Network and the Liaison Committee for a Workers' International (led by followers of the late Pierre Lambert, who refused to participate in reunification of the Fourth International in 1963), called on LPA to define a platform for itself. In responding to the question on working with other independent political action groups, Mazzocchi took the opportunity to respond to the question of race and the question of program as well.

Mazzocchi explained that LPA had to organize *itself* before it defined its relationship with other independent political formations — though, certainly, LPA "wishes them well." He said that in his experience it was primarily in the Northeast that too few people of color have been involved in Labor Party Advocates and its leadership. In his travels in other parts of the country Mazzocchi said, he noticed that people of color participate in LPA in greater numbers. He described one event in Albuquerque, New Mexico — a similar event to our New Jersey forum — attended overwhelmingly by Chicano workers. Nearly all who took the floor prefaced their remarks by saying, "I'm pro-life [anti-abortion], but I'll work with anybody..." He related this anecdote to caution participants about being too hasty to define a platform for LPA without the broad involvement of workers in the decision-making process. He reiterated his belief that it would be undemocratic for LPA to define its program at this time, before large numbers of workers have become involved in LPA and been given a chance to express their opinions through organized debate and discussion.

A fourth participant illustrated in action what Mazzocchi meant. Fred Potter, president of IBT Local 469, took the floor, first to take issue with the idea of determining leadership based on race "in this day and age." He then went on to denounce the federal government's intervention in the IBT's inter-

nal life and the decision of the General Executive Board to revoke the charter of the Teamster conferences (see "Ten Days that Shook the Teamsters Bureaucracy," on page 11 of this issue). Local 469 was one of the initial endorsers of the LPA Forum, and it contributed money to help build the event.

Potter supports the Teamster old guard, which in fact broke with the Democratic Party over twenty years ago — to support the Republican Party. The officials in locals like 469 and 560 still enjoy considerable rank-and-file support, for many complex reasons, but at this time continuing support to the Republicans — who make no attempt to conceal their hatred for working people — may jeopardize the support they continue to receive from their members. So officials like Potter are taking a long and serious look at the LPA project and bringing their local members with them. It would not help LPA to adopt a platform at this time which would exclude local officials who are prepared to turn out their members and contribute money to help build a labor party in the United States.

### Continuing Labor Party Organizing

Buoyed by the success of the June 18 Forum and Speak-Out, New Jersey LPA activists are preparing further organizing during the summer months. The next step is to begin building for the Labor Party founding convention, planned for Denver, Colorado, in 1995. We are confident that labor's political alternative will come into existence soon and that New Jersey workers will play a big part in it. □

July 16, 1994



Jed Dodd, general chairman of the Pennsylvania Federation, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees.



# Letters

## Disagrees with Labor Party Emphasis

Most of the Trotskyist movement in the United States has reduced the Transitional Program to one demand: the Labor Party. Of course, the Labor Party is not even in the Transitional Program because it was seen by Trotsky as unique to the United States within the context of sit-in strikes and the mass movement that developed the CIO.

Jerry Gordon, writing in *BIDOM* (May-June 1994), is right to emphasize the need to broaden the decision-making process in a future Labor Party beyond the existing unions to include minorities and unorganized workers. There's no doubt some labor bureaucrats are opposed to doing that because they would like to form another version of the Liberal Party, which is the second Democratic party in New York State. This kind of "Labor Party" would be used by the labor bureaucrats to pressure the Democratic Party while running the same candidates.

But I believe the Labor Party emphasis is wrong. If the movement of the oppressed decides to call itself a Labor Party... Great! Or it may decide to call itself something else... It might call itself People's Assemblies or Town Meetings... Great! But if the focus of Trotskyists is an *electoral* Labor Party, only the bourgeoisie will win in the end.

Electoralism has its own logic: the PRT in Mexico is now supporting a liberal bourgeois candidate, Cárdenas, in the elections for president of Mexico. The PRT is supposedly Trotskyist, but its practice is little different from the former CP... except the PRT has a picture of Trotsky on the wall.

Winning an election in the U.S. is not a realistic option for socialists, given the power of the mass media and the enormous cost of running a serious campaign. Bernie Sanders's literature emphasizes that he is an "independent" but does not mention that he is a socialist... if he still is. In any case, his effect in Washington, D.C., has been nil.

It is the nature of the beast, whether Bernie Sanders, or Lula of the Brazilian PT, for electoralism to be reformist. Electoralism inevitably appeals to the "majority" rather than the most oppressed... And, of course, international finance capital can and will blackmail any country that begins real changes. Revolutionaries should, of course, *participate* in the process that leads from electoral politics to revolutionary politics... though usually the process goes in the other direction. But it is bizarre to see various Trotskyist groupings attempting to initiate a Labor Party, which leads them to

collaboration or pressuring a section of the labor bureaucracy.

I believe the emphasis should *not* be running candidates for office (unless they are revolutionaries). Without the rank and file movement of all the oppressed forcing decisions physically, the Labor Party will degenerate with or without a democratic constitution. *We need to develop and build this rank and file movement, instead of building another little revolutionary party*, which will still be the "vanguard" pressuring bureaucrats in a reformist Labor Party. The facts of life today are that there is not much of a rank and file movement in the U.S.

We need local structures before we build national structures. We need local organizing before we have national organizing. For many on the Left the Labor Party has become the political gimmick or key to open the treasure chest, because everything else they've tried has failed. But the formation of a reformist Labor Party will not save the Left, which has failed to develop its own rank and file revolutionary movement.

We need a practical discussion how to build this movement. (TDU has tended toward economism. But there are other movements, particularly in the Latino and Black communities, that have not made that mistake.) We need to develop rank and file coordinating committees; local publications written for the working class rather than for other radicals; local networks of activists not controlled by so-called "vanguard parties," local Police-Watch defense committees, local Labor Street Theatre groups, cultural alternatives for youth.

These networks may lead to running candidates, but at least they would come from the bottom up rather than from Mazzocchi or Kirkland down. These networks may decide that there are other things more important than running in bourgeois elections, i.e., winning strikes, forming workers' defense guards, or organizing democratic revolutionary Soviet elections.

Earl Owens  
San Francisco

## Time Now for "The First Great Step": A Reply to Earl Owens on the Labor Party

In reply to Earl Owens's letter belittling the importance of the fight for a labor party in the United States, I would remind him that since the very beginning of scientific socialism its founders, Marx and Engels, in the *Communist Manifesto*, made the point that the working class would have to form its own political party in order to replace the

rule of the capitalist employing class. That was in 1848.

Engels repeated the same idea in correspondence with U.S. socialists many years later. Consistency on this point, for him, was not "the hobgoblin of little minds," but corresponded to a general reality in the modern capitalist world. He correctly wrote, for example: "The first great step, of importance for every country entering the movement, is always the constitution of the workers as an independent political party, no matter how, so long as it is a distinct workers party... That the first program of this party is still confused and extremely deficient... are unavoidable evils but also merely transitory ones. The masses must have time and opportunity to develop, and they can have the opportunity only when they have a movement of their own — no matter in what form so long as it is their own movement — in which they are driven by their own mistakes and learn to profit by them." (Engels's letter to F.A. Sorge, November 29, 1886, in Marx & Engels's *Selected Correspondence*.)

I also urge Owens and others to read again what Trotsky had to say about the transitional character of the fight for a labor party in the U.S. (See the 1970s Pathfinder edition of *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*.)

Sarah Lovell made the same general point, in different words, in her 1957 campaign speech, reprinted elsewhere in this issue. As she said, "[The] problems facing us will not be solved completely until economic as well as political power is taken out of the hands of the monopolist corporations, until the productive forces and wealth of the country are controlled and operated by the working-class majority of the population in their own interests." We know that would undoubtedly require mass working class participation in workplace and neighborhood councils, workers control over production, and workers defense guards — the kinds of things Earl Owens calls for, things that unfortunately aren't on the agenda right now, although we all of course wish they were. Wishful thinking aside, the fact is that a movement for a labor party in the U.S. *is* in existence *right now*. There is a call for a founding convention in Denver, in 1995. This needs to be acted on. As Sarah Lovell rightly put it, "the formation of an independent labor party will represent a big step down the road to the solution of our problems."

George Saunders  
Boulder, Colorado



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