

## Teamsters Face Down UPS Bosses

# Unchain Labor's Power!

The two-week strike by 185,000 workers at United Parcel Service—the biggest nationwide strike in the U.S. in decades—evoked a sympathy for labor's cause not seen in this country for years. Millions of working people saw themselves in the overwhelmingly part-time UPS workers, who do backbreaking jobs for miserable wages. The UPS Teamsters strike broke the pattern of crushing defeats for labor over the past two decades. In its wake, many now see the possibility of fighting to get some of their own back from the profit-bloated corporations.

"What the UPS workers mostly want is the simple right to work full time," wrote the *Washington Post* (10 August). Indeed, under this capitalist system, which is based on the exploitation of labor, what more elementary right can there be for the worker than the right to a job? Yet while the bosses rake in record profits, for working people in America today's supposedly booming "employment" economy is increasingly defined by being "downsized" into part-time, contract or "contingency" labor. Downward pressure on wages is also maintained by massive speedup and the virtual elimination of the eight-hour day, as full-time workers are forced to work upwards of 60 hours a week. At the same time, wide layers of the ghetto poor have been tossed right out of the labor market and are now treated as a totally expendable population who should work for nothing in slave-labor "workfare" schemes or just die.

It is a real statement on the condition of organized labor in the U.S. that a strike which won relatively modest economic gains for the workers—at the price of thousands of layoffs which will intensify the already grinding, dangerous pace of work for UPS workers—is so widely perceived as such a victory. Nonetheless, the consciousness that it is possible to win something, anything, against the bosses is important. So is the recognition of the social power of the organized, multiracial working class. By the mere fact of withdrawing their labor power, the UPS strikers demonstrated the potential power of the working class that lies in its numbers, organization and discipline, and most decisively the fact that it is labor that makes the wheels of profit turn in capitalist society. Faced with the loss of millions in profits, UPS climbed down from its "last, best, final offer."

In the midst of the strike, some thousands poured onto the streets of New York City in protest against the brutal and sadistic cops who sodomized a black Haitian immigrant with the wooden handle of a toilet plunger, ripping apart his intestines. In a later rally outside the police precinct in Brooklyn, Haitian immigrants were joined by American blacks, Hispanics, Hasidic Jews and others. Here was a powerful statement against the capitalist rulers who foment racial and ethnic hatred to keep those at the bottom divided and pitted against each other. And, in the tens of thousands of black, Hispanic and immigrant workers who manned the picket lines during the UPS strike could be seen the potential for linking the power of labor to the anger of the dispossessed masses in the ghettos and barrios.

But translating the widespread sentiment of victory in the UPS strike into an

## For a Workers Party that Fights for All the Oppressed!



UPS Teamsters joined by other trade unionists at Georgia strike rally, August 14. UPS strike evoked broad sympathy among working people and the poor across the country.

Kuntz/Reuters

## Those Who Labor Must Rule!

aroused and struggling labor movement—mobilized in defense of its own class interests and the interests of blacks, immigrants and all those at the bottom of this society—is at bottom a political question. As V.I. Lenin, leader of the 1917 Russian workers revolution, said: politics is concentrated economics. The fundamental starting point must be the understanding that this society is divided between two hostile classes: workers who are forced to sell their labor power in order to survive and the property-owning capitalist class to whom their labor power is sold. The interests of these two classes are irreconcilably counterposed.

International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) president Ron Carey says the UPS strike was about labor's "fight for the American Dream." This echoes Jesse Jackson's sermon on UPS picket lines in San Francisco where he told strikers, "If there's a downturn share the pain...in good times share the gain." But this whole system is based on the extraction of surplus value, i.e., profit, from those who labor. The purpose of the capitalists who are in a dog-eat-dog competition with each other, particularly internationally, is to increase their profits through

the increasing exploitation of the working class, not to "share the wealth" with labor. The fact that working people, blacks, immigrants, the young, the aged have been taking all the pain while not making any gains is precisely due to a labor leadership which is guided by the view of a "partnership" between the working class and the exploiting class.

The UPS strike never transcended the framework of business unionism. Crying that it was "illegal" for strikers to stop management scabs, the union leaders mandated porous picket lines which the company could have literally driven a truck through if it had made good on its threat to hire thousands of scabs. There was not one demand made by the bureaucrats aimed at redressing the vicious racist harassment of black, Hispanic and immigrant workers who are regularly tracked into the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs with little or no chance of promotion. The union tops' refusal to wage a fight against such conditions has led many of these workers to look for "justice" in the racist, anti-union capitalist courts.

Much was made of John Sweeney's offer of \$10 million to the Teamsters strike fund, a fraction of what the AFL-

CIO poured into Clinton's re-election campaign. But labor solidarity is not \$55 a week in strike pay and a telegram of support. UPS pilots demonstrated some real support by respecting the strikers' picket lines and the Teamsters had better do the same if the pilots go on strike.

Now Carey, Sweeney and the rest of the labor officialdom are thanking Democratic president Clinton because he didn't bring down strikebreaking legislation! Rail workers at Amtrak whose right to strike was denied by Clinton before their contract had even expired surely don't share the same appreciation. And how about the Teamsters themselves? The ink had barely dried on the settlement with UPS when the government ordered new leadership elections in the Teamsters. IBT "old guard" spokesman James Hoffa Jr. is now calling on the feds, under whose aegis Carey himself was installed, to remove the current president from office. We say: Government hands off the unions!

### The Enemies of Labor

The union bureaucracy sees "allies" in the agencies of the class enemy—the

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# Unchain Labor...

(continued from page 1)

government, the cops, the courts. This class collaborationism stands behind the series of broken strikes and broken unions that have racked the organized labor movement. In the U.S., the main obstacle to successful class struggle against the capitalists is the allegiance to the Democratic Party of the labor bureaucracy as well as of a majority of the working class itself. For American workers, this support to the Democratic Party reflects the absence of elementary class consciousness. The Democratic Party portrayed by the labor bureaucrats as a "lesser evil" is, no less than the Republicans, a capitalist party which cannot serve the interests of the workers.

The U.S. is the only industrial country in the world where the workers have not historically had their own independent political party, reflecting in some way, even on a reformist basis, the conflicting interests of labor and capital. Yet the social-democratic labor parties that exist in other countries are based on the illusion that the way to advance the cause of the workers is through the electoral process. History has shown that the working class cannot simply lay hold of the existing apparatus of the capitalist state; rather, that state must be smashed and replaced by one serving the cause of the proletariat.

A genuine workers party must be based on the understanding that only through their mass mobilization in struggle can the workers fight for their interests and in defense of all the oppressed. The best workers party in history was the Bolshevik Party led by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, which led the workers of Russia to power in the October Revolution of 1917, creating the first workers state in history. The Spartacist League is fighting to build such a party, forged in sharp political struggle against the pro-capitalist labor misleaders and based on the Marxist understanding that the capitalist profit system must be rooted out and replaced by workers rule.

It was this revolutionary understanding of the class struggle that imbued the pitched class battles in the streets of Minneapolis in 1934 which forged the Teamsters as a powerful industrial union. These strikes, which twice shut down the city, were led by "reds," Trotskyist militants. Speaking of "The Great Minneapolis Strikes," James P. Cannon, a founding leader of American Trotskyism, underlined the political program which lay behind those victories:

"All modern strikes require political direction. The strikes of that period brought the government, its agencies and its institutions into the very center of every situation. A strike leader without some conception of a political line was very much out of date already by 1934. The old fashioned trade union movement, which used to deal with the bosses without government interference, belongs in the museum. The modern labor movement must be politically directed because it is confronted by the government at every turn. Our people were prepared for that since they were political people, inspired by political conceptions. The policy of the class



UPS picket line in Rhode Island attacked by cops. These armed thugs of the racist capitalist rulers have no place in the unions!

struggle guided our comrades; they couldn't be deceived and outmaneuvered, as so many strike leaders of that period were, by this mechanism of sabotage and destruction known as the National Labor Board and all its auxiliary setups. They put no reliance whatever in Roosevelt's Labor Board; they weren't fooled by any idea that Roosevelt, the liberal 'friend of labor' president, was going to help the truck drivers in Minneapolis win a few cents more an hour. They weren't deluded even by the fact that there was at that time in Minnesota a Farmer-Labor Governor, presumed to be on the side of the workers.

"Our people didn't believe in anybody or anything but the policy of the class struggle and the ability of the workers to prevail by their mass strength and solidarity. Consequently, they expected from the start that the union would have to fight for its right to exist; that the bosses would not yield any recognition to the union, would not yield any increase of wages or reduction of the scandalous hours without some pressure being brought to bear. Therefore they prepared everything from the point of view of class war. They knew that power, not diplomacy, would decide the issue. Bluffs don't work in fundamental things, only in incidental ones. In such things as the conflict of class interests one must be prepared to fight."

—James P. Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism* (1944)

Today, the Teamsters union is led by Carey and his "reformers," who came to power through the intervention of the capitalist state. Appealing to the feds to "clean up" corruption in the union, this treachery was dressed up as winning "democracy" for the union ranks.

To be sure, the "old guard" leadership was plenty corrupt. But that isn't why the government went after the Teamsters. The feds' aim was to break the ability of the Teamsters, potentially one of the most powerful unions in America, to shut the country down. The capitalist rulers' war against the Teamsters goes back to the vendetta waged by Democrat Bobby Kennedy in the 1950s, when the IBT under Jimmy Hoffa launched a campaign for a national over-the-road contract. That Carey and his backers delivered the union into the hands of the capitalist state is about as corrupt as you can get. And it is directly counterposed to the

aim of union democracy—the fight for the workers to select a leadership which will fight for their class interests *against* the employers and their state.

In modern capitalism, the unions confront a highly centralized class adversary. The government is simply the executive committee for the capitalist class as a whole. The capitalist state is the enemy of the working class, organized both to prevent it from struggling in its own interests and ultimately to prevent the workers from smashing the system of private property and taking power themselves. Therefore the *only* interest the government has in the unions is to weaken them and reduce their capacity to struggle. By upholding capitalist class rule, the leadership of the AFL-CIO acts to transform the unions from fighting instruments of the workers into an extension of the capitalist state power to discipline and moderate the struggles of the workers.

This is ABC for Marxists. Yet Carey's government-sponsored election as Teamsters president was hailed by a host of groups calling themselves "socialist." Prominent among these is the International Socialist Organization (ISO). In a special *Socialist Worker* (June-July 1997) UPS strike supplement, the ISO cheers: "The elections of Teamster General President Ron Carey in 1991 and 1996 are victories for everyone who wanted to see a more democratic, fighting labor movement." In fact, the ISO actively supports Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), which catapulted Carey into office. In 1987, the TDU literally wrote—and sent to the Justice Department—the blueprint for the government plan to "reorganize" the union.

Implicitly acknowledging widespread hostility among the Teamsters ranks to government intervention, the ISO tries to cover its tracks with a cynical sleight of hand. In its strike supplement, TDU leader and prominent ISO supporter Pete Camarata is quoted as saying, "TDU was opposed to government control of unions." However, in the very next breath, the ISO praises the "independent" government board which ran the Teamsters elections for ensuring "the first-ever dem-

ocratic vote." Quintessential social democrats, the ISO sees the capitalist state as a "class-neutral" instrument which can be pressured into serving the interests of the workers. By the same token, the ISO sees evidence of working-class militancy in "strikes" by prison guards. In this, too, the ISO is faithful to the IBT leaders, who have been "organizing" cops into the union.

*This is obscene!* The cops aren't workers, they are the armed fist of the capitalist rulers. Their job is to "serve and protect" the property and power of the bosses who live off the exploitation of labor. Teamsters should know what role the police play only too well. During the 1994 national freight strike, cops busted heads and arrested strikers for trying to stop scabs. L.A. Latino trucker Jesse Acuna was only recently released from prison after being thrown behind bars for defending a Teamsters picket line. Numerous UPS workers were also arrested during the recent strike. *Drop all the charges!*

The police, prison guards, security guards and legions of "private" strike-breaking outfits are the biggest "growth industry" in America. This increase in the forces of repression is aimed at heading off any protest against the increasingly raw exploitation and oppression of those at the bottom of this system. But for the labor bureaucrats, organizing the cops and the screws is the means to increase their flagging dues base.

## Labor Lieutenants of Capital

The class traitors who currently run the unions long ago separated themselves from their working-class base. In the words of early American socialist leader Daniel De Leon, the top union officials serve as the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class." So strong are the bureaucrats' ties to the capitalist order that they have renounced the very means by which the unions were built. Those unions were built in *opposition* to the bosses' cops and courts. Leaders, then, went to prison and died for the union cause. Strikes were virtual wars. Now the union tops call for "informational" picket lines, impotent consumer boycotts, moral witness "protests" at stockholder meetings, corporate campaigns...anything except the hard class struggle that is necessary to win even in defensive battles.

The Minneapolis strikes were won by bringing to bear the weapons of labor that lie in its collective strength. Picketing was organized on a mass basis to keep out scabs. Carloads of flying pickets were dispatched to deliver a clear message to the operators of scab trucks that picket lines mean don't cross. Effective use was made of the "secondary boycott" as unionized truckers refused to handle cargo shipped by scab labor. Twice the organized power of labor brought Minneapolis to a grinding halt in a general strike. These battles presaged the plant occupations of the great CIO organizing drives later in the 1930s.

But it wasn't just the militant and "illegal" tactics of mass picketing and sitdown strikes that built the unions. The Trotskyists who led the Minneapolis strikes organized women workers and the wives of strikers to take part in the class battle. They organized the unemployed and through fighting for their rights brought them in behind the strike. The later organizing drives in auto, steel, meatpacking and other industries broke down the traditional Jim Crow system as blacks poured into the ranks of the newly organized industrial unions. As a result, during that period the black ghetto masses identified with the labor movement.

Yet the reformists, the social democrats and the Stalinist Communist Party, channeled the turbulent class battles of the 1930s into support for Franklin D. Roosevelt's Democratic Party and its "New Deal" coalition, which included the diehard Dixiecrat segregationists of the Deep South. This coalition aimed at co-opting the unions through a series of government regulatory boards and, more broadly, at buying "class peace." During World War II, the labor misleaders

Minnesota Historical Society



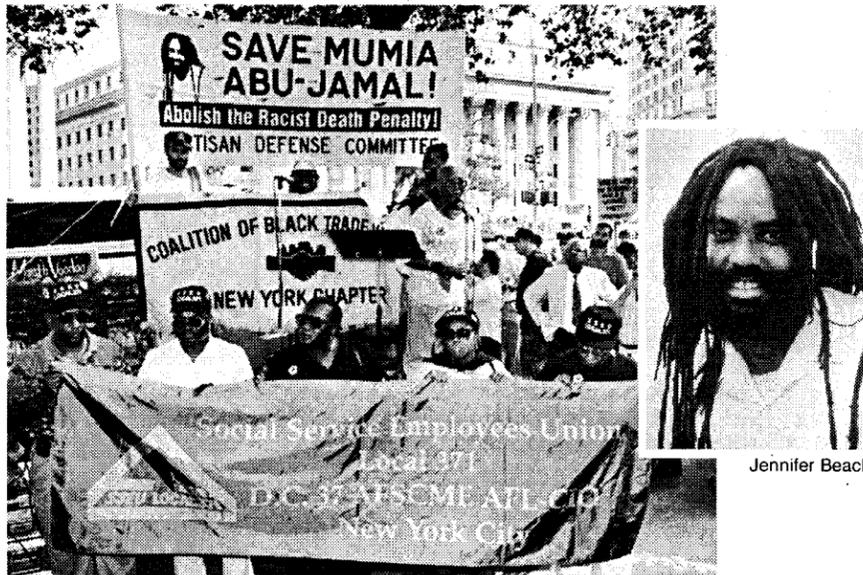
Class war on the streets of Minneapolis as Trotskyists lead 1934 general strike which helped forge Teamsters as powerful national industrial union. Daily strike bulletin, *The Organizer*, hailed workers' victory.

# Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

A focal point in the struggle against racist capitalist repression today is the fight for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal. A former leader of the Black Panther Party, a supporter of MOVE and an award-winning journalist, Jamal was railroaded to death row in 1982, falsely accused of killing a Philadelphia cop. The Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle, nonsectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League, has worked for over a decade to bring Mumia's cause to the labor movement in the U.S. and internationally.

Jamal's case exemplifies the racist American "justice" system. From the time he was a 15-year-old Black Panther spokesman, Mumia was targeted by the Philly police and the FBI, whose "Counter-Intelligence Program" (COINTELPRO) resulted in the assassination of 38 Panthers and the imprisonment of many others. This June, former Black Panther leader Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt) won his freedom after 27 years in prison for a crime the government knew he did not commit. In its attempt to "neutralize" an entire generation of black activists and leftists, the government used the same arsenal of state terror that has long been employed against labor militants, from the execution of IWW leader Joe Hill to police attacks against workers' picket lines.

Jamal's 1982 trial was a mockery of justice—and this has continued right up to his current appeal, which is now before the Pennsylvania State Supreme



WV Photo  
**Labor-centered protest in New York City, August 1995, was part of international outcry which stayed the threatened execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal that summer.**

Court. Albert Sabo, who presided over the original trial as well as recent appeal hearings, is a notorious "hanging judge" who has sent more people to death row than any other sitting judge in the country. All the elements which have been highlighted by recent exposures of Philadelphia police and prosecutors were massively evident in Jamal's trial: suppression of evidence, exclusion of blacks from the jury, coercion of witnesses, and much more. Sabo denied Mumia the right to represent himself and even barred him from much of the

trial. Finally, the prosecutor argued that Mumia should die because of political views he had expressed years earlier as a Black Panther.

Mumia's cause throws a glaring spotlight on the racist and barbaric death penalty, which stands at the apex of the capitalist injustice system. While driving down wages and taking the ax to social welfare programs, this country's rulers are drastically beefing up their apparatus of repression. Central to that is the speedup on death row, where executions are taking place at a rate greater

than any time since the 1930s.

Overwhelming evidence of Mumia's innocence continues to emerge. But Jamal did not and cannot have a fair trial in the capitalist courts. What stayed Jamal's scheduled execution in August 1995 was an outpouring of protest from around the world, including the support of trade unions from the U.S. to South Africa, Japan and France. If the labor movement is to be revitalized, it must actively take up the fight against racist terror and champion all those victimized by the capitalist rulers. As Mumia continues to struggle and speak out from death row on behalf of the oppressed, it is urgent that labor and all fighters against racist injustice take up his cause. Free Mumia now! Abolish the racist death penalty!

\* \* \*

Join the fight to free Mumia! Pass resolutions and raise much-needed contributions for Jamal's defense in your unions and campus and community organizations. Order bundles of the PDC pamphlet, *The Frame-Up of Mumia Abu-Jamal*, as well as the latest issue of *Class-Struggle Defense Notes*. Contact the PDC—New York: P.O. Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013-0099, phone (212) 406-4252; Chicago: P.O. Box 802867, Chicago, IL 60680-2867, phone (312) 454-4931; San Francisco Bay Area: P.O. Box 77462, San Francisco, CA 94107-0462, phone (510) 839-0852.

Contributions for Mumia's legal defense should be made payable to the Bill of Rights Foundation (earmarked "Mumia Abu-Jamal Legal Defense") and mailed to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, 163 Amsterdam Ave., No. 115, New York, NY 10023-5001.

served to enlist working people in the inter-imperialist slaughter. For their opposition to the imperialist war, 18 Trotskyist leaders, including Minneapolis Teamsters militants, were prosecuted and jailed for treason under the Smith Act. Aiding and abetting the government was the IBT bureaucracy, which sent Jimmy Hoffa into Minneapolis to purge the Trotskyists from the union.

The arrest of the "Minneapolis 18," which outrageously was backed by the pro-Roosevelt Communist Party, presaged the Cold War purges of the late 1940s and early '50s. After five years of "no strike" pledges imposed by the labor bureaucracy during World War II, the year 1946 saw the biggest strike wave in the history of the country. The following year, the union-busting Taft-Hartley Act was passed. The purge that was then launched not only destroyed whole unions but beheaded the labor movement by systematically removing some 25,000 of the most militant union members, including the Communists and socialists who had been key leaders and fighters in the CIO organizing drives.

The "red purge" laid the basis for the fusion of the AFL craft-union federation with the CIO in 1955. The first president of the AFL-CIO, George Meany, bragged that he had never walked a

picket line. Thus was created the post-war anti-Communist leadership which has presided over the steady decline of union power to the point where only about 10 percent of the industrial workforce remains organized.

Meany and his successors were among the most rabid proponents of the interests of U.S. imperialism around the world, from the Cold War against the Soviet Union to Washington's dirty war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants. While fostering support for military adventures against the peoples of the "Third World," in the U.S. the labor misleaders were virulent in their denunciations of the Black Panther Party and any militant struggle against the racist status quo.

As Leon Trotsky wrote in 1940 at the time of the "New Deal," modern monopoly capitalism demands of the reformist labor bureaucracy "that they become transformed into its political police before the eyes of the working class." As a result of the unprecedented mass struggles which built the CIO, the government began setting up a series of legal restrictions to limit the power of the working class. Ever since then the tendency has been for the unions, through their bureaucratic leadership, to grow more closely together with the capitalist government itself. Stressing as primary the call for "complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state," Trotsky noted:

"The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat."

### Mobilize Labor and Its Allies!

The fruits of the racism, anti-Communism and class collaborationism of the labor bureaucracy have been seen in the sharp decline in union membership and wages and the deepening immiseration of the ghetto masses. The union tops have

agreed to multi-tier wage systems and a massive expansion of part-time labor. Such schemes pit one section of the workforce against another, furthering the exploitation of black, immigrant and younger workers while making older, mainly white workers more vulnerable to being replaced entirely. While millions of blacks and immigrants have been condemned to starvation, disease and death by the destruction of social welfare programs, the AFL-CIO officialdom has not lifted a finger in protest. Now thousands of formerly unionized jobs are being filled under slave-labor "workfare" programs.

**Enough!** The situation is crying out for a real drive to organize the unorganized. Not the bureaucrats' despicable mooted bids to organize separate "workfare" unions as low-wage ghettos to feed their dues base, but a class-struggle fight for full union wages, benefits and protection **for all!** Down with two-tier wages! Equal pay for equal work! Combat unemployment through the fight for a shorter work week at no loss in pay!

Even to realize the most basic right—to a job at decent pay—leads directly to challenging the capitalist profit system. In the 1938 Transitional Program—a

system of demands linking the felt needs of the workers to the fight for proletarian state power—Trotsky noted amid the devastation of the Great Depression:

"The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralization, and ruin. The question is one of life or death of the only creative and progressive class, and by that token of the future of mankind. If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish."

Many of the AFL-CIO misleaders openly support racist anti-immigrant laws in the name of defending American workers from the influx of "cheap labor." But the treacherous policies of the bureaucrats created a huge reservoir of "homegrown" cheap labor. Refusing to defend the rights of immigrants, they have simply opened the door for the capitalists' rapacious exploitation of foreign-born workers who literally have no rights. The labor movement must demand: Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

While they scream about the "outsourcing" of jobs abroad, for years the bosses have been shipping jobs, not to Mexico or Taiwan, but to the "open

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# Unchain Labor...

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shop" American South. The last, feeble attempt to organize the South—obscenely called "Operation Dixie"—was in the 1950s. But that was immediately shipwrecked on the shoals of the red purges, racism and the bureaucrats' ties to the Democratic Party. In many cases, to get the "reds" the labor bureaucrats worked to destroy already existing Southern unions that were largely Communist Party-led and had a huge black membership. Meanwhile, the bureaucrats' loyalty to the Democrats made them incapable of organizing the South, which would have meant a fight *against* the Jim Crow white-power structure, which was run by the Dixiecrats and their Ku Klux Klan auxiliaries.

Here is a monument, in the negative, to the understanding that there can be no effective defense against union-busting unless the labor movement becomes the champion of black rights. The burning cross which was ignited by plant managers in Alabama a few years back to "discourage" workers from joining a union testifies to the crucial need for integrated labor action against racist terror to break the "open shop" South.

The Spartacist League has initiated labor-centered mobilizations—bringing to bear the power of black and white workers at the head of mobilizations of all the intended victims of Klan terror—that have successfully stopped the fascists in a number of cities. In these mobilizations could be seen the powerful combination of black and red: labor united in its own defense and in defense of all the oppressed under a communist leadership. At the time of the Civil War, Karl Marx captured a fundamental truth of American society in his statement that "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded." Union rights and black rights will go forward together or fall back separately.

The forcible subjugation and segregation of much of the black population at the bottom of this society is an essential foundation stone of American capitalism. At the same time, the capitalist rulers have fomented racial hatred and made the color bar a fundamental dividing line in this country in order to obscure the irreconcilable class divide between labor and capital. Once supplying a "reserve army of labor" to be employed when the bosses needed them, the ghetto poor have been discarded by a ruling class that no longer needs their labor power. But black workers remain a significant component of organized labor, integrated into strategic sections of the proletariat in whose hands lies the power to break the chains of capitalist exploitation and racist oppression. As we wrote in the Spartacist pamphlet, "Capitalist Rulers Wage War on Blacks, Immigrants" (*Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 14, January 1997):

"The road to black freedom lies in the struggle to shatter this racist capitalist system through proletarian socialist revolution, and the power to do that lies with the multiracial working class. But this power cannot and will not be realized unless a class-struggle labor movement actively champions the cause of black liberation and is mobilized in defense of the rights of immigrants and all the oppressed. The key to unlocking the chains, forged by the trade-union misleaders, that shackle labor to its exploiters is the political struggle to build a revolutionary internationalist leadership of the working class."

## Labor's Fight Is International—Workers of the World Unite!

The union tops see the world through the same lens as the capitalists and their government. Complaining that workers in other countries are "stealing" American jobs, the labor bureaucrats tie the interests of the working class in the U.S. to maintaining the competitive edge of American imperialism. Carey and the rest of the AFL-CIO officialdom are now trying to wield the UPS strike to mobilize labor against any extension of the



Ruben R. Ramirez

**Strikers at RCA Thomson maquiladora plant in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, February 1995. AFL-CIO misleaders push racist protectionism. What's needed is international labor solidarity in struggle.**

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Labor *should* be mobilized in opposition to NAFTA—but not on the basis of "stars and stripes" chauvinism and racist job-trusting protectionism exemplified by recent IBT protests against Mexican truckers. We oppose NAFTA as a "free trade" rape of Mexico, under which the U.S. rulers are increasing their profits and power through the superexploitation of Mexican workers. There should be a drive to organize the workers in the giant U.S.-owned maquiladoras in northern Mexico. This cause would be mightily assisted by, for example, solidarity strikes by the unionized workforces of these same corporations in the U.S.

The AFL-CIO's protectionism, particularly against Japan, is part and parcel of lining U.S. workers up behind their "own" bourgeoisie in the face of escalating inter-imperialist rivalry. This is a dangerous business. Trade wars lead to shooting wars, as has been demonstrated in the two world imperialist conflagrations in this century. More immediately, "yellow peril" racism has played a big role in derailing class struggle. This was clearly seen in the defeat of the strike against Bridgestone-Firestone in the central Illinois "war zone" a couple of years back, where instead of building mass pickets the union bureaucracy pushed appeals to the U.S. government against the company's Japanese owners.

The strike against UPS, close to half of whose workforce is employed outside the U.S., underlined that labor's fight must be *international*. Transport unions in Europe were planning solidarity demonstrations and Filipino workers mounted a labor protest against UPS in Manila. The watchword of the working people must not be the deadly trap of defending "American jobs" against foreign competition, but the words which Karl Marx inscribed in the *Communist Manifesto* 150 years ago: "Workers of the world, unite!"



Washington Post

**Spartacist League initiated 5,000-strong labor/black mobilization that stopped KKK march in Washington, D.C., November 1982.**

tion has meant a catastrophic assault on the conditions of working people in the former Soviet Union, leading to nationalist slaughters and massive impoverishment. This has also meant intensified attacks on working people internationally, as the chief imperialist powers—the U.S., Japan and Germany—seek to drive down wages and slash social benefits to increase their competitive edge.

Two possible roads lie before the working class. There is the revolutionary strategy proposed by us Marxists. In the course of sharp class struggle and through the instrumentality of a revolutionary party that patiently educates the working class in the understanding not only of its social power but of its historic interests, the workers will become conscious of themselves as a class fighting for itself and for all the oppressed against the *entire* capitalist class and its government. Or there is the continuation of the bureaucrats' acquiescence to what is possible and "practical" under capitalism, which over the past two decades and more has led to disaster. Despite their "socialist" pretensions, the latter view is one amply shared by reformist groups like the ISO.

At best what the ISO offered during the UPS strike was simply more "militant" trade-union struggle, and barely that. They were among the loudest in the bureaucrats' game of shouting "shame" at scab trucks which a few minutes later were allowed across the picket lines. Their demands for the strike were to simply add a few dollars and jobs to what the Teamsters bureaucracy called for, conspicuously omitting any demands addressed to the crucial need for the union to fight against racist harassment and discrimination. Insofar as the ISO even pretended to offer an "alternative" to the Carey leadership it was to appeal for building a "rank-and-file" movement to simply pressure the bureaucrats.

But having supported the election of Carey, which was brought through the intervention of the capitalist state, what alternative could the ISO have to offer to the class collaborationism of the labor bureaucrats? Rather than the desperately necessary task of struggling to bring revolutionary consciousness to the working class, the ISO reinforces the stranglehold of the treacherous misleaders of labor who keep the working class trapped within the framework of capitalist exploitation.

The mobilization of the proletariat in pursuit of its own class interests requires a political struggle against the pro-capitalist labor tops. This is integrally linked to the fight for a workers party based on the program of the class struggle, a party whose purpose is not to serve as an electoral shill for the Democrats—like Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers bureaucrat Tony Mazzocchi's "Labor Party" sham—but to give revolutionary leadership to the struggles of the workers in the fight for a workers government to expropriate the bourgeoisie and construct an egalitarian socialist society.

When those who labor rule, the tremendous wealth of this society will be used to provide a decent life for the working people, the poor, blacks, immigrants, the young, the aged. The fight for black freedom will be realized in the overthrow of the rule of American capital. When the workers have the industrial wealth that is now being squeezed out of the working class for the profits of the bosses, we will begin to build a planned socialist economy on an international scale. Then we can right some historical crimes and pay off some debts, like some of tens of billions of dollars to the Vietnamese and others whose countries have been maimed under the passing treads of American tanks and the bombs of American planes. As for "compensation" to the people who lined their pockets with fat profits while driving everyone else to ruin, the victorious proletariat can offer to those who don't get in its way that they too will have the right to honest labor and will live to see their grandchildren prosper in a truly humane society. ■