

Against the corporate agenda: 'You're not a democrat if you sell out democracy'

by HARRY C. BOYTE

"It's a new era," Emmett Hines recently gloated. Hines, the Washington representative of Armstrong Cork Corporation, had led a coalition of right wing and big business groups to smashing victory against the Consumer Protection Agency bill, despite President Carter's backing. In a range of corporate and conservative forums, similar sentiments are heard often these days. What George Meany labelled last December as "the alliance of corporations with the most reactionary forces" has now become the dominant power in American politics. Such reality recently moved Representative Benjamin Rosenthal (D-NY) to warn that "these people are in the process of gaining control of the apparatus of government." The corporate-right wing alliances have spurred among progressive organizations renewed coalition-building attempts and increasing discussion about opposing those Democrats with especially cozy relationships to business lobbyists.

Such developments in progressive circles are cause for hope on the democratic Left, in a time of otherwise dismal circumstances. It is time, moreover, to begin discussing the factors that will be needed to translate hope into victory: careful targetting of those races in which to intervene; development of techniques to mobilize the ranks of labor and other progressive con-



ACTWU Labor Unity

AN IMPORTANT NEW ELEMENT IN LABOR'S political program is the use of rank-and-file workers pressing their own case before Congress. Here hundreds of workers who have been victimized by employer violations of the National Labor Law gather for a May 17 "Victims Vigil" for Labor Law Reform.

stituencies; and finally, the formulation of a positive vision of politics around the theme that Doug Fraser recently voiced—the challenge to make American democracy real.

The New Political Situation

The present crisis for progressive politics is rooted in the Nixon era of 1970-72. During that period, behind the public relations rhetoric about a "new American revolution" that would return power to the people, Nixon and his cohorts actually worked out far-ranging plans for a "new majority" conservative coalition which would become the unchallenged political force. One part of the strategy was immediate: the New Economic Policy, designed (in the retrospective words of one of its architects) to "zap labor." The long-range blueprint was sketched out shortly before the election in a *Wall Street Journal* interview with Treasury Secretary John Connally. After Nixon's reelection, Connally explained, there would have to be a large-scale rearrangement of the relations between government, business and labor—in which big busi-

(Continued on page 14)

Inside:

- Needed: a minor recession**
by Michael Harrington page 2
- What now for the French Left?**
by Nancy Lieber page 3
- Watch out for the men in the grey suits**
by Ruth Jordan page 6
- DSOC's progress**
by Jack Clark page 8

White House and Wall Street have decided: A 'minor' recession is what America needs

by MICHAEL HARRINGTON

Business and government are now preparing a new recession.

Is that an excited, leftist exaggeration? How can one say that business and government are really "planning" a recession? Yet here is Leonard Silk, the New York Times chief economic correspondent, summarizing the corporate viewpoint at the end of April: "Wall Streeters, far from worrying that the Federal Reserve may be tightening the reins on the economy too much, are blithely expressing the view that nothing would be so good for the market and the economy as a minor recession—stiff enough to reduce inflation and the trade deficit, although not so steep as to disrupt business plans for new investment or to wreck prospects for strongly rising profits in the next expansion."

On the government side, "an Administration economist" was quoted by *Business Week* as saying, "This is a very sensitive subject politically, but there is a lot of concern that the labor market has so shifted that we are nearly at the limit of unemployment consistent with non-accelerating growth." Barry Bosworth, head of Carter's Council on Wage Price Stability, put the same idea more bluntly: "A recession is likely because that has always been the government's anti-inflation program."

There is a small problem with all this, however. Even as government economists argue that six percent unemployment is as good as we can do, they also admit that a mild recession will not offset inflation. The Council of Economic Advisors figures that, to reduce inflation by just one percentage point through more unemployment, the nation would have to suffer a two-point rise in joblessness over two years and the loss of \$100 billion in output.

The trade-off

The American economy, we are being told, is damned if it does and damned if it don't. Inflation becomes intolerable at six percent unemployment, we are told,

which means that policies leading to a recession must be adopted. Only, recession will not deal with the inflation. Yet a great many Americans—including, one suspects, a great many union members—are more frightened about inflation than about unemployment, at least for the moment. A six percent unemployment rate which has been falling, even if with agonizing slowness, still means a 94 percent employment rate (I simplify, since the Federal statistics are woefully deficient, but the main point still carries). But an 8 percent inflation rate strikes at everyone. Therefore, there is a tendency for people to buy the notion of a "trade-off" and to applaud policies which will not only increase joblessness but also hold down the real wages of all employed workers.

But we have already seen the Catch-22: recession will not buy price stability unless it is impossibly deep and long-lasting. The reason is that workers' wages are not the cause of inflation. What is? Why do we have rising prices? In a recent, schizophrenic article, *Business Week* tried to answer that question. The theme of the piece was stated in its title: "The Great Government Inflation Machine." Washington, you see, is responsible for our plight. But then the text actually qualified that proposition in a surprisingly frank way.

There have been three recent "bouts" of inflation, *Business Week* said. In 1965-68, the cause was overstimulation of the economy by a Johnson Administration afraid of asking for tax increases to finance an unpopular war. In 1969-72, *Business Week* says with remarkable candor, prices soared because of Richard Nixon's "unprincipled use of the power of government to orchestrate the greatest electoral victory ever in 1972." And in the 1973 inflationary push, *Business Week* puts great blame on Arthur Burns' tight money policy in the wake of the OPEC embargo.

In other words, a corporatist magazine also tells us that the immediate causes of the inflationary spurts were not workers' demands or government welfare spending, but Vietnam, Nixon, and Arthur Burns. The democratic Left, then, has an excellent anti-inflationary record since it opposed all three. But *Business Week* hardly gets to the deeper causes of inflation, and those are worth a look.

The roots of inflation

First, there is the power of giant multinational corporations to raise prices even when workers are being laid off. As the Council of Economic Advisors put it in their 1978 Report: "Price reductions are not seen as a means of sustaining revenues and profits during periods of decline in the total market..." On this count, George Meany's statement to Carter that prices should be reduced first, and only then would the unions be ready

(Continued on page 11)

Newsletter of

THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Michael Harrington, Editor

Jack Clark, Managing Editor

Signed articles express the views of the author.

Published ten times a year (monthly except July and August) by the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, 853 Broadway, Room 617, New York, N.Y. 10003. Telephone (212) 260-3270

Subscription rates: Sustaining \$10 per year; Regular \$5 per year; Limited income \$2.50.

Second class postage paid at New York, New York.

The French Left: a majority in sterile opposition

by NANCY LIEBER

In losing the March 1978 legislative elections, the French Left lost its eighth straight national election in the Fifth Republic. The loss can be attributed in part to the usual impediments to Left victory:

- the *electoral code* which gerrymandered to the extent that a left candidate required 62,766 votes to win, while a right candidate needed 44,407. This discrepancy transformed a 1% difference in the popular vote into a 19% Parliamentary seat advantage for the Right. It also permitted the government to direct the 1 million absentee ballots (mainly rightist) into strategic constituencies.
- the government's *abusive control of Radio and TV* which meant persistent pro-government slanting of the news, near-exclusion from the media of opposition spokespeople, and last-minute televised electoral interventions by the "neutral" President.

Despite these institutional disadvantages, however, there were other factors working in the Left's favor in 1978; hence the impression of imminent victory. These factors included the near-crisis situation of western capitalism in the 1970s, the French government's inability to cope with the resulting high rates of inflation and unemployment, the recent franchising of the 18-year olds, and especially the Left's own unprecedented unity status from 1972 on.

Yet, this was not an ordinary election. The Communist leadership was consciously prepared to sabotage an imminent leftist victory if that victory meant the Socialist partner would overtake the Communists as the dominant party on the Left. Lost in the reflection on the Left's defeat is the ironic fact that while the PCF did succeed in sabotaging that victory, it did not succeed in achieving its real goal—stemming the PS's rise in popularity. It is true that the polls had given the PS reason to expect between 25-30%, but the fact remains that the PS, for the first time since 1936, surpassed the PCF in popular votes (PS 22.6%, PCF 20.6%). Equally revealing, the PS was the only party to gain in vote percentages since the 1973 legislative election (up from 17.7%).

Despite the PS's gains, the Left's defeat was obvious after the first round. At that point, the PCF suddenly changed tactics, signed a stand-down agreement with the Socialists, and thereby managed to salvage its seat strength (going from 74 to 86, with the Socialist/Left Radical coalition moving from 106 to 114).

Faced with the results of the PCF's sole objective—that of self-preservation—Michel Rocard summed up the Socialists' anguish on the night of the second round of balloting:

Tomorrow, Communist militants throughout France will have to answer these questions: the agreement of March 13, why was it not possible to have signed it on September 22 [the date of the

breakdown in common program updating talks]? Why did the PCF for four months systematically attack the PS more strongly than the Right? Why did the PCF dwell on the question of Communist ministers before creating conditions in which there would be any? Did the PCF think it furthered the cause of victory by harping on the questions of the minimum wage and extent of nationalization, such that today there will be no new nationalizations and the minimum wage will remain at its present miserable level?

The next day the PS released an official communiqué, stating that the disunity of the Left and therefore its defeat "was deliberately provoked by the PCF leadership, whose only concern was to try to reduce the progression of the PS, even though that was one of the requirements for common victory."

For its part, the PCF issued a statement two days later blaming the PS for the defeat (in effect, arguing that since the PS would have reverted to social-democratic practices once in government, it was the duty of

Capital quotes

“The target of the consumer movement is business, the target of the environmentalists is business, the target of the minorities, at least where employment is concerned, is business. In sum, the public interest movement is a lobby, not for the people, but for expanding police powers of the state over American producers.”

William Simon
as quoted in *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*
Friday, April 28, 1978

the PCF to spare the workers such a fate). The statement concluded "The PCF is in no way responsible for the defeat in the legislative elections."

A somewhat less arrogant and infallible attitude on the part of the PCF leadership, coupled with gestures toward debate and self-examination within the party, might have been enough to curb a mounting wave of criticism from the ranks of the Communist militants. As it was, that criticism spilled over into the non-party press in letters and articles from prominent PCF intellectuals and cadres. The militants' and intellectuals' criticisms centered first and foremost on the party's apparent desire to lose the election, evidenced by the sudden signing of the March 13 accord. The accord would have put off the questions of Communist ministers and extent of nationalizations until after the formation of a Left government. The PCF had refused to consider the postponement from September 1977 on. Next, they questioned mechanisms that had allowed the top-level leadership to change the party line at will,

in an "autocratic" manner, as they charged. These mechanisms included democratic centralism itself, the prohibition of party factions, and the refusal to allow dialogue in the party press. Finally, the critics again raised the ideological issue. Was the USSR the PCF's model or was it not? (Some intellectuals went so far as to label the USSR an "antimodel," the "antithesis of socialism.") And if the party had just proved that it wasn't Eurocommunist after all, what *was* it—besides nationalist and centralist?

In contrast, there was considerably more agreement within the PS on what happened and what the party had to do in the aftermath of such a disappointing election. Naturally there was some initial soul-searching e.g. given the PCF's betrayal, had the PS nevertheless made mistakes? Some people close to the party leadership suggested (with the benefit of hindsight) that the "strategy of serenity" followed by the PS in the face of the PCF's unfounded polemical charges had kept the party from taking a stronger offensive position in the campaign. On the other hand, the left, pro-unity faction CERES charged that the PS leadership should have made more concessions to the PCF from September on. Still others felt the party had suffered from placing exclusive emphasis on the common program and the problems of its updating. As a result of the election, this last group (those aligned with Michel Rocard) has been strengthened at the expense of the CERES wing. (Indeed, the CERES leaders were attacked at an early April gathering by their own militants for their authoritarian tendencies, exaggerated criticisms of the Rocardiens, and *suivisme* vis-a-vis the PCF). Despite these differences, the PS remains united around the leadership of Francois Mitterrand.

As for strategy, there is remarkable consensus within the PS that, in spite of everything, the *only way* the Left can achieve power in France is via Socialist-Communist cooperation. Therefore a "union of the Left" remains the way, but no longer union such as practiced between 1972-78. That is, no more programmatic discussions and electoral agreements in anticipation of elections, but rather common action between the two parties on specific issues as they arise. In the electoral interlude (next presidential election in 1981, next legislative 1983), the PS knows it must concentrate on increasing its own initiatives within the trade union, workplace, youth, women's, ecology, neighborhood, and cooperative movements. For though the PS has overtaken the PCF in the electoral arena, the party must begin to equal the Communists' solid presence in the "social battles of daily life."

At the same time, the PS must deepen its own identity and autonomy by further developing its *projet de société*: a decentralized, anti-state, self-managing socialist vision. Here the contrast with the PCF is striking. The Communists no longer seem to have a vision. The PS's, while still in formation, does exist and could prove the party's great strength in the future.

One simple fact has emerged from the Left's experience in the Fifth Republic. When the Left is united, it progresses—but within an advancing Left, the PCF

stagnates. Thus the PCF's dilemma, thus its recent behavior. What does that leave in terms of possible resolutions? One obvious way out would be for the PS to greatly strengthen its position at the expense of the PCF and, to a lesser extent, of the center-left (absorption of the Left Radicals, for instance). But even a reduced PCF, its ranks solidified in retreat to hard-line sectarianism, could still prevent a Left victory in 1981 and 1983. For now, unfortunately, perhaps the most probable course is the continuation of the present situation: a near-majoritarian, if not majoritarian, French Left condemned to sterile opposition in one of the most unreformed societies in Western Europe. □

In the magazines: the

by JOEL LEICHTER

What will the future classless society look like? This question has been pondered by socialists for almost 150 years since the days of the Utopian Socialists like Fourier, St. Simon and Owen. In the latest issue of *Critique* (#8 Summer 1977, \$4.50 per years for 2 issues, from 31 Cleveden Road, Glasgow G120PH, Scotland UK), Bertell Ollman, a professor of philosophy at the New York University and author of *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*, has written an excellent article, "Marx's Vision of Communism: A Reconstruction."

In introducing the article, the editors of *Critique* state that the frequent objection—that Marx was not concerned with outlining the future socialist society, and therefore Marxists should not be—is a form of political evasion. It is moreover untrue, as Ollman then demonstrates, to say that Marx said nothing of a quite specific and concrete nature about the future classless society. Ollman shows the organic relationship which Marx saw existing between the capitalist present and the socialist future. Ollman warns that, if Marx's conception of socialism is shunted aside, Marxism could logically lose its revolutionary significance.

Secondly, unlike the 19th Century, the 20th Century contains societies which describe themselves as socialist, which Marxists must discuss in relationship to Marx's conception of socialism. This is necessitated by the rise of Stalinism and its illegitimate appropriation of the term "socialism." A fundamental critique of Stalinism is impossible without understanding Marx's preconditions for socialism and his view about socialist society. By describing the backward, authoritarian regimes of Eastern Europe as socialist, Stalinists have hindered the development of socialism not only in these societies, but also in the advanced industrial Western societies where Marx himself saw the objective conditions for socialism already existing.

Because of the Eastern European experience and the popular misconceptions which result from those perversions, socialism has become synonymous with totalitarianism and inefficiency. A knowledge of Marx's conception of socialism is vital to counter this distor-

South Korean union faces KCIA harassment

by ELIZABETH GOLDSTEIN and GRETCHEN DONART

Female textile workers near Seoul, Korea are being systematically terrorized by management and fellow workers, apparently with government approval.

In 1972, workers at the Dong-Il Textile Co. in Incheon—85 percent female, mostly in their teens and early 20s—succeeded in organizing a union. Women were elected to head the local branch union (representing approximately 1,000 workers), a first in Korean labor history.

On February 21, as night shift workers went to vote

past and the future

tion and develop the alternative view of socialism as a humanitarian, democratic and abundant society.

The March-April issue of *Socialist Review* (\$2.50 per issue, \$12 for 6 issues, from Agenda Publishing Co., 4228 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, Calif. 94609) has an invaluable article by Eugene Genovese entitled "Reflections on the 1960's."

Genovese begins the article by lauding the anti-Vietnam War and anti-racist movements of the 1960's. He notes, however, that deep fissures appeared in the Left during this period over fundamental principles and the assessment of revolutionary possibilities. On one side were those who saw these movements as the first phase of a Socialist revolution, while the other side, of which Genovese was a part, foresaw a long, slow struggle. Both sides became openly hostile to each other and the possibilities of unity evaporated. Geno-

(Continued on page 15)

at 5 a.m. in their union election, they were attacked by rubber-gloved male workers—prompted by the government and the factory management—who smeared bucketfuls of excrement over their bodies, in their hair, ears, and mouths. The men then destroyed the ballot box and the desk it was sitting on. Police, standing by, watched, but did nothing. To the women's cries for help, they answered, "Keep quiet, you bitches."

The violence seems to arise from two sources, according to Korean church sources. The first is the reactionary stand government and management have taken toward unions. Korea has reasonably good labor laws on the books. The laws give workers three basic rights: to organize, to bargain and to strike. The last two have been negated by subsequent legislation or by the actions of the Korean government. As a result, the government-recognized National Textile Union has done nothing to aid the local union.

The other source is this local union's association with the Urban-Industrial Mission, an ecumenical Christian organization which supports workers in their struggle for human and workers' rights.

Since late winter UIM has been the target of a government harassment program. On many occasions, the organization has been accused of being communist—an explosive charge in South Korean politics.

UIM organizers deny the communist charge, and points out that UIM was founded to support and encourage the dignity and well-being of the working people of Korea.

The Korean government, however, does not want to be convinced. It is doing everything in its power to make life difficult for the UIM. For instance, it has been ordering audits of the Yong Dong Po UIM Credit Union and has denied their ability to unite adjacent pieces of land, which the UIM had bought to build a community center, under one title.

The Korean government has gone so far as to accuse the Australian and German churches of taking money from Communist governments and passing it on to the UIM. Reverend R. F. Wooton, Secretary for Justice and Human Development of the Commission for World Mission Uniting Church in Australia has released a statement to the press refuting these accusations. He has demanded a retraction and clarification.

The UIM association with the textile local union led the Korean Central Intelligence Agency to set up committees, one of whose tasks is to launch a joint countermeasure against the intrusion of outside forces. And on March 28, approximately 120 women workers at Dong-Il Textile Co. were fired following their refusal to sign statements demanded by management.

The local union leaders see themselves as sacrifices to the Park-government's goal of producing \$10 billion worth of export goods this year.

The World Council of Churches and its Asian affiliates are asking people to pressure Korean representatives around the world and to appeal for the women whose human rights are being so badly abused.

Youth Conference

The Institute for Democratic Socialism will sponsor its annual Youth Conference over Labor Day weekend (September 1st through 4th) at the Jackson Mill State 4-H Camp outside of Weston, West Virginia. Leading socialists and youth participants from throughout the country will be there, so it promises to be an exciting and educational conference.

Yes, I'm interested in more information about the Youth Conference.

Name Phone

Address

City State Zip

Age School Union

Send to: Institute for Democratic Socialism, 853 Broadway, Room 617, New York, N.Y. 10003.

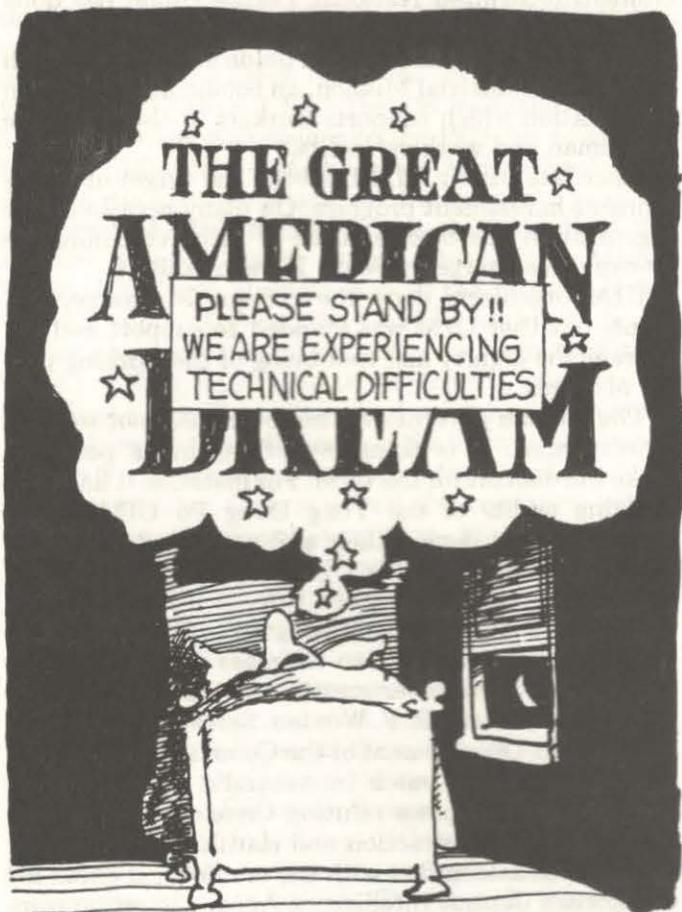
Watch out for the bad guys in the grey suits

by RUTH JORDAN

Twice in one week I have testified before Federal regulatory agencies on highly charged emotional issues. And twice I have watched Federal bureaucrats, even those whose appointments we on the Left applauded, approach these issues with a style that aims to neutralize them, make them less emotional, less of a moral question.

It gives one an eerie sense that there is contained within every bureaucracy the seeds of the "good German." For democratic socialists it puts a special urgency on the obligation to look at the organization of government and the way that it can dehumanize those who work for the policy makers.

The Coalition of Labor Union Women, for which I testified during one of these hearings, was offering its



opinion on the regulations of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), issued last year, that would have charged full rent to day care centers which now serve the children of Federal employees in some agencies. The going rate is so high in Washington, D.C. and its suburbs that it would in fact make these centers unaffordable, and shut them down.

At present, workers are charged either on a sliding scale of payments or at a minimal rate. The centers were instituted as an incentive to the agencies to encourage female and minority employment by improv-

ing the ability of working mothers to meet job requirements. The centers were also intended to develop models and leadership for the nation in the field of child care. Spending for these centers has been either approved by Congress or expressly authorized.

There are some in Washington who have always been nervous about the increasing powers of the OMB to make decisions about the merits of agency programs on the basis of cost efficiency alone. By reducing all considerations of policy and program to budget considerations, the office has grown increasingly mechanical and cold in its deliberations. This decision, to impose an equality of fees on all "private" organizations which use government properties, was described by the OMB bureaucrats as an effort to "regularize" and "equalize" benefits to all workers.

The man in the grey suit was a young, open faced, pleasant person who opened the hearings by saying that there was no malice in the ruling to charge rents. After all, he contended, it's our job to coordinate the activities of the agencies so that no one is treated unfairly. We looked at a variety of special services like credit unions and employee recreation associations, blind stands that sell candy and newspapers etc, he said. Child care just happens to fall under that heading and we're just doing our job of being fair-handed and treating all employees and special programs alike.

He was appealing to the mostly female crowd that packed the hearing room to look on him as a good guy, a lover of children. He told us he had four of his own. He was, he insisted, not out to cut programs for children but he was simply "doing his job" and if in the course of his job he wound up throwing these children out of centers where they enjoyed a good developmental program, if it involved shutting down the centers, well that was just an accident—the real issue was not the centers but "minimizing the cost of government rental." In this oh-so-subtle and nice way he attempted to redirect the anger of the hearing policies because the policies were "objective."

The fact is that the issue was not neutral, the results of the hearings not objective and the impact on working parents not unimportant . . . the parents, mostly union women, members of AFGE locals in Social Security, the Labor Department, and Health, Education and Welfare were angry; they didn't remain cool and calm. They reminded the man in the grey suit that there were many inequalities among the benefits enjoyed by government employees, including executive bathrooms and special dining facilities, health clubs and other privileges for upper level employees. The bureaucrat began to back down. He didn't like being a bad guy, he didn't like having his back against the wall, and he began to ask questions calculated to get across the idea that the witnesses would have an impact on the eventual rulemaking.

I watched another man in a grey suit try to clean up the air around the Department of Labor, too, where,

later in the week, an embarrassed group of DOL officials heard witnesses on regulations to permit 10 and 11 year olds to work during non-school months and hours in the harvesting of hand-picked crops.

The DOL hadn't wanted the rulings; they were forced to issue them under an amendment passed by the Congress last year providing for an exemption for such child labor. It came as a result of the pressure from strawberry growers in the Northwest and potato growers in Maine. The farm associations spoke, picturing the healthy and wholesome activity the children would be engaged in with a fidelity to life that could only be found in a Norman Rockwell painting. Like the OMB, the DOL had issued its regulations hoping there would not be a need for a public hearing. Organizations like the National Consumers League (NCL), for which I testified, the United Farm Workers and other long-time advocates of protective legislation to prevent child labor abuse demanded a public hearing.

Once again, the hearing officer was a man in a grey suit. This time, he was an affable, elderly administrative law judge.

And once again I heard the same words, rephrased somewhat: this could become an emotional issue, but we're not here to hurl invective or insults at each other, we're only fulfilling the will of Congress.

To show how eager they were to fulfill the will of Congress they bowed and scraped the entire time Maine Representative William Cohen recreated the charming scene of children at labor in the fields. He was

thanked warmly for his "interesting and valuable" testimony, including the part that said children could get an education in the field they could never get in the classroom. He was thanked for requesting an amendment to the regulation, so that the DOL could grant a waiver to an entire industry upon application by an officer of the state grower's association without checking out the individual capabilities of each child or even the safety of each field.

When the NCL offered our much more biting and angry testimony, we received no such warm approval. Instead the law judge chided me for running over my allotted time and warned others not to do the same. Incidentally I had kept to exactly the twenty minutes provided.

And so it goes; issues that demand outrage and fury are treated with sanitized objectivity. You are urged not to raise your voice or "get emotional" because then you would be injuring the sensibilities of the administrators—who aren't to be blamed after all. They're not responsible; they're only doing their job.

What did I expect, some might ask? I expect a DOL officer to open hearings on child labor regs by saying forthrightly, "Our job is to protect children from the exploitation of their labor and to protect adult workers from the unfair competition of children. I want them to say, "We intend to promulgate the best protective regulations we can, consistent with the will of Congress; the history of the child labor struggle in this country, the needs of the nation and the other laws we must enforce." □

Newsletter expands!

The NEWSLETTER OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT has expanded to 16 pages this month, added a second color and photographs (sorry, we hadn't heard about photographs until just this year). All this is part of DSOC's plan to enlarge and improve the NEWSLETTER. (One way we have been able to do this is through the exploitation of a highly talented and under-paid [free] intern from Beloit College, Elizabeth Goldstein.)

Seeks subscribers!

Now it's your turn, dear readers. Help us meet the increased overhead of production costs by signing up more readers. Better yet, help us build a socialist movement by signing up more NEWSLETTER readers. At five bucks, most of your friends will subscribe just to get you off their backs.

See your name in print!

You can also help us meet higher costs by responding as generously as possible to the annual Labor Day issue appeal which we'll be sending to you shortly.

Rip out this page:

Dear Editor:

I arm-twisted three friends into subscribing to the new! improved! *Newsletter of the Democratic Left*. Enclosed is \$15 . . . and their names and addresses.

Name

Address

City State Zip

Name

Address

City State Zip

Name

Address

City State Zip

by JACK CLARK

With this issue, the NEWSLETTER goes into its summer hiatus and won't reappear again until September with the now traditional Labor Day issue. Shortly after putting this issue to bed, I will be involved with the last minute work of preparing for the June meeting of the DSOC National Board. Right now seems like a good time to take stock and look back over some of our activities of the last several months. Instead of using the regular Socialist Notes format, I'm taking the opportunity to express some of my own views as well as to report on the activities of DSOC locals and groups.

Last fall the focus of our work was absolutely clear. In November, hundreds of active DSOC members and hundreds of other progressive activists from various constituencies attended an exciting—and even electrifying—conference in Washington. The DEMOCRATIC AGENDA brought together the constituencies of the democratic Left; socialists were visibly present, and our work was respected and praised. The sessions were intellectually and programmatically serious, and we united around a dramatic demonstration outside the Democratic National Committee's headquarters in a demand that the Party live up to its full employment and social justice campaign promises.

Since November, there has been no single event which clearly represents all our work. We've had less drama and excitement and much more hard, day-to-day work. But, I would argue, the progress we've made since November reflects a new level of organizational development. Let me cite some specific areas:

Democratic Agenda

Lots has been going on with the DEMOCRATIC AGENDA project. Under the direction of Libby Moroff and Marjorie Phye, we've been deeply involved in Democratic Party work, lobbying and making contacts at Democratic National Committee (DNC) meetings and at DNC executive committee sessions, building toward the Memphis mid-term conference, emphasizing that we and all the people we're working with want the most open discussion of Party policy. We want votes, we want substantive discussion, we want delegates to the mid-term conference to be able to affect Party—and Congressional and Administration policy.

The day before I wrote this, we put the final touches on the second issue of a special DEMOCRATIC AGENDA newsletter sent to Party activists (and available on request from the DEMOCRATIC AGENDA office). It will reach people early enough to affect their thinking before the June DNC meeting. In it we're listing the names and states of people running for delegate to the mid-term conference who've been in touch with us. It's a long and impressive list, and another indication that progressive Democratic activists are looking to us as a coordinating center for the mid-term conference.

With the able assistance of DSOC Vice Chair Ruth Jordan, we've also been acting as a grass-roots lobby. The Full Employment Action Council credits our work with making a big difference in getting Humphrey-

Hawkins passed in the House without crippling amendments. All taken together the post card campaign, the telephone calls asking people to set up meetings, send telegrams, make phone calls, made a difference. Members and friends in places like Wisconsin, Texas and Maine applied crucial pressure. With a Senate vote coming up in mid-June, work on Humphrey-Hawkins continues. But before we get to that, labor law reform is before the Senate (see Jimmy Higgins item, page 16), and the AFL-CIO has called on us to help build grass-roots pressure. With the formation of a Citizen-

Several months of

Labor Energy Coalition, which we've joined, new fights are coming up, and there will be lots more work to do nationally and locally. In all these coalition efforts, we're working to counter offensives by the New Right, the business community and the new conservatives. We're responding to the initiative of other groups, but we're also activating our own membership, bringing the organization more and more into daily political struggle and building the legitimacy we need. And every time we work in one of these coalitions, we can and do bring in socialist ideas about plant closings, about income and wealth redistribution. We need to develop more ideas and programs with relevance to our many allies.

Regional conferences

On Long Island the Full Employment Action Council predates the formation of DEMOCRATIC AGENDA, and DSOC members work actively in that coalition along with academics, trade unionists and community organizations. In April, the L.I. FEAC put on a day long conference featuring two DSOCers: UAW V.P. Martin Gerber and economist Robert Lekachman.

Like the Philadelphia Unemployment Project (which filled 17 bus loads for the April 26 Jobs Lobby), the Long Island Coalition has been organizing for more than two years. In full employment work, as in other political organizing, quick and easy successes are often illusory. As has been reported there have been other DEMOCRATIC AGENDA efforts this spring in central Illinois, in North Carolina, in Detroit and in New York.

In the international arena

This spring, DSOC has been deeply involved in solidarity work. Members from several major areas have become involved in work pertaining to the plight of Chile this spring, as we established close ties with the Chilean Radical Party because of Anselmo Sule's visit here in April. As this is written, we're involved in the planning of a major national conference on the future of U.S.-Chile relations to be held in Washington in late June; among the other sponsors are the Steel Workers; the UAW; Senator Edward Kennedy and the National Education Association. Chicago and Boston have already held meetings to discuss Chilean issues.

Earlier this spring, Larry Birns, a DSOC member and the director of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, represented DSOC on a Socialist International delegation to Latin America (headed by Portuguese Prime Minister Mario Soares). Partially as a result of that tour, DSOC's work on Latin America in general has increased. An example of this increasing interest is that the writing of this article needed to be interrupted so that a telegram to Secretary of State Vance could be written and sent in protest of the abrogation of democratic elections in the Dominican Republic.

movement-building

In other solidarity work, DSOC members (particularly on campuses) have been involved in South Africa protests, and the national office helped the Urban Industrial Mission make contact with American trade unionists about the plight of women textile workers at the Dong-Il plant in South Korea (see article on page 5 of this issue).

Socialist women

New York DSOC held two meetings related to international activities in recent months. Both were well attended, and both featured an analysis of the situation facing European socialist feminists. In February, Lucy Komisar offered her observations about the feminist currents in the Spanish, Portuguese, French and Italian socialist movements. At a subsequent reception in May, leading feminist activists from the Dutch and Swedish parties spoke about conditions in their countries and their parties.

Such activities have stirred an interest in establishing greater contact and therefore coordination between the substantial numbers of DSOC members who are so heavily involved in feminist activity. In Coalition of Labor Union Women and in other working women's organizations, in university affirmative action groups, in National Organization for Women and the National Women's Political Caucus, many DSOC feminists are involved. There is rarely an opportunity for them to get together and share insights and experiences.

Hispanic Commission

In the past nine months or so, we've made a completely new breakthrough on minority recruitment with the formation of a Hispanic Commission. Ever since its formation in October, the Commission has played a highly visible role in the organization: at the DEMOCRATIC AGENDA conference; at the January National Board meeting; in work on the Sule visit; on follow up DEMOCRATIC AGENDA work all over the country. And just having an organized group around has meant greater attention to the problems of Latin America, and to the problems of Latins in the U.S.

The New York Labor Forum held a session on undocumented workers where commission member José LaLuz, spoke. A number of Hispanic trade unionists

participated in that discussion, and it led to their pushing for a resolution at the national convention of the Labor Committee for Latin American Advancement in April (where LaLuz was elected to the national board of the organization and the resolution passed).

One controversy has flared around the National Board's passing a resolution favoring self-determination and independence for Puerto Rico. Actually, there was no controversy at the Board meeting where Commission members Steve Ramírez and Michael Rivas led an excellent discussion. But some people who had not attended the Board meeting thought that the Board was mistaken to call for independence and said it should have called for self-determination.

Actually, the resolution called for self-determination, and characterized the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico as exploitative. It went on to favor independence without any economic sanctions against the Puerto Rican people if they choose independence. A full text of the resolution and an excellent background sheet on the discussion prepared by Frank Lugovina is available from the office.

Local and regional development

Virtually every local has grown and developed over the last year. In New York City, our largest local, great strides have been made. Just a few years ago, the local could barely function and any spare energy in New York was immediately snapped up by the national office. Now, a local with a life of its own, it publishes a monthly newsletter, holds a regular forum series, participates in the New York Labor forum, and engages in electoral and trade union support work. A membership committee welcomes new members, recruits and is helping to organize neighborhood meetings.

Chicago has had a series of lively meetings and continues its excellent work in mass arenas. This year's Debs-Thomas Dinner in Chicago was the largest ever, and DSOC member William Winpisinger gave a speech which brought the house down. In our other large locals, there is similar promise. Los Angeles is publishing a regular newsletter and has established regular monthly meetings. In San Francisco, another large (and previously weak) local is sending out a regular bulletin and preparing for a fall conference.

Two of our locals, Boston and Washington, have taken the lead in holding regional weekend retreats. The New England retreat was held last fall (and will be repeated in late September this year). The Mid-Atlantic locals (ranging from Philadelphia and Pittsburgh to Richmond) met in a regional retreat the weekend of May 13 and 14. About 50 people came to the camp in western Maryland; members from Baltimore, Washington and Philadelphia predominated and Pittsburgh and Virginia also sent contingents. Most agreed that the high point of the retreat came Saturday evening with a panel on labor issues featuring Frank Wallick of the UAW and Baltimore members Alan Fisher and Barbara Fite, rank-and-file members of the Steel Workers and Brick Layers respectively.



Photo Press Associates, Inc. (PAI)

SOME 500 UNEMPLOYED rallied through the rain at the April 26 Mass Jobs Lobby called by the Philadelphia Unemployment Project. The day's activities also included lobbying for Humphrey-Hawkins, increased CETA public service jobs and other Federal action to create jobs. DSOC members from Philadelphia, New York and Washington, D.C. helped to organize the event.

California has tentative plans for a similar sort of weekend membership conference next fall.

Outside our major centers, there's a lot going on, too. The three Texas locals (Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston) held a regional planning meeting to discuss closer cooperation early this spring. Both Austin and Houston are publishing a regular monthly newsletter while in Dallas plans are underway for another DEMOCRATIC AGENDA-type conference. In Minnesota and Wisconsin, relatively new locals are growing and solidifying contacts with progressive elements in the respective state Democratic parties and in the labor movement. Socialist efforts in Michigan are directed toward the gubernatorial campaign of DSOC member Zoltan Ferency; for the first time, there is also a DSOC statewide newsletter, and our prospects there look superb. Colorado DSOC'ers plan a high visibility effort at their state Democratic convention this year with a literature table and a meeting. New Jerseyans are organizing in record numbers for DSOC, and prospects are there for a central and a north Jersey local by the fall. New locals are also organizing in San Diego, Richmond and Pittsburgh. Atlanta and Columbia, S.C. and Ithaca, N.Y. may not be far behind.

Religion and socialism

One of the freshest and most interesting aspects of DSOC is its active religious committee which publishes a quarterly newsletter (available for \$2 by writing its editor, John Cort, 1 Maolis Road, Nahant, Ma. 01908) and has had meetings in Chicago and Boston. Recently, a Committee on Religion and Socialism was organized in Washington D.C. In late April, the Committee organized a meeting featuring a lecture by West German theologian Dorothea Solle on "Theology, Politics and Human Liberation." Heavily influenced by the Latin American Liberation Theology activists, Solle and her

husband were founders of the now world-wide organization known as Christians for Socialism. She is currently a visiting professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York. The Washington group got 17 Protestant and Catholic groups to co-sponsor her lecture which drew 200 people.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that there was no central event defining DSOC activity this spring and winter, we have come through an incredibly productive period of organizational growth and development.

New locals are developing and growing, older and more established locals are taking on a more serious character. Cooperation among locals is beginning to occur: with the hiring of staff, the holding of regional retreats, and the planning of major coalition efforts. Activity in several areas of the country is as intense as the activity of the entire national organization was as recently as two years ago. In addition, the religious socialist committee offers a model for further development and involvement of socialists from different geographic areas who share similar interests. There have been the barest beginnings of discussion about extending that model of communication to DSOC trade unionists, feminists, academics and community organizers.

Our relations with the larger forces outside the organization have also improved. Because of our work in building grass-roots support for Humphrey-Hawkins and labor law reform, we've won a reputation as an organization with real troops "out there in the field." Others are looking to us as a resource for ideas, for committed and energetic activists, for contact with mass organizations.

None of this is to say that all is well. Our membership remains much too small, and too small a portion of our membership is active. We need to redouble recruiting efforts for new members (and new subscribers to the NEWSLETTER); we also need to educate and activate more "cadre" members. Our outreach to the minority communities needs extensive build-up, and we're just beginning to reach the secondary leaders and activists in the labor movement. Perhaps most urgent of all, we need to develop and fill out our programmatic ideas to give ourselves, our friends and our political opponents a more clear idea of what it is we want. Our work in that area has just barely begun.

But all the problems we face (and I have enumerated only some of the more obvious points) are problems of growth and development. DSOC passed the stage of having the constant question "can we survive?"

In less than a year DSOC will hold its fourth convention. The June Board meeting will set a date and place. As we approach that occasion we need to plan, to discuss, to set direction. We need to involve the broadest possible numbers of our members in setting new goals and planning next steps. If we're successful, next year at this time we'll be facing many more problems, problems of growth and of movement-building. That's the happiest prospect socialists in this country have faced since the 1930s. □

Recession needed . . .

(Continued from page 2)

to discuss wages, is not simply good, aggressive politics. It is common sense in an economy where corporations, not workers, dictate the market.

Secondly, there are the specific causes of inflation emphasized in Leslie Nulty's excellent analysis for the Exploratory Project on Economic Alternatives. Medical costs are soaring because of a wasteful, unfair health delivery system in which third party insurers, with no concern about prices, pay for fee-for-service medicine. Housing costs go up because "anti-inflationary" policy at the Federal Reserve tightens up money, sends interest rates up, and has an inflationary impact on people who want to buy homes—but leaves giant corporations largely unaffected. Energy costs have risen because of OPEC policies—as aided and abetted by half a century of Federal subsidies to oil companies which made us unnecessarily dependent on Mid-East sources. And finally, food policies which enormously benefit agribusiness and plantation owners but leave striking farmers to face bankruptcy, increase the consumer's grocery bill.

Separating business and government

How can we deal with these causes of inflation? The program to combat rising prices is not radical in the sense of requiring anti-capitalist measures; but it is radical in the American political context, since it would take strong moves to counter the structural sources of inflation—and unemployment. Thus, national health security is not a proposal to shunt aside during the current economic emergency. On the contrary, it offers the only possibility for the nation to cope with ballooning medical costs. A commitment to the housing of the majority, with easy money in that sector, would put building tradespeople to work and satisfy the demands of would-be homeowners. A farm policy geared to maximum production, lower prices, and a fair deal for the family farmer, is another essential. So is an energy plan which would include public ownership of an oil and gas corporation, and which would aim at breaking the links which have bound Washington to the oil multinationals since the 1920's.

And finally, there is the point raised by George Meany at the White House: an attack on the market power of giant oligopolies which fix the market to their own liking.

Solutions may be too radical

Under present political conditions the program which I have just outlined, even though it does not challenge the essential capitalist nature of the society, is much too radical for a Congress which is having great problems in passing even moderate proposals for labor law reform and full employment planning. And yet, the democratic Left cannot possibly follow an Administration—and a business community—which is now moving toward pro-recession measures even as it admits that they will not have the anti-inflationary impact which justifies their use. And here, it is critical that we do a

much better job of mass education than we have yet done. My impression is not that the American people are conservative in these matters, but that they are confused and worried—tending to prefer a bird in hand to two in the bush as long as the signals coming from their political leaders are so utterly contradictory.

The crisis is not temporary

While that work of mass education is going on, it is important that an even more disturbing possibility be placed on the agenda: that the United States may be entering a long, downward cycle of stagnation, chronic recessions and weak recoveries. Lately, the business press has been discussing the possibility more and more. Last year, W.W. Rostow wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* that we might be on the down side of a "Kondratiev cycle" (named for the Russian economist who first identified a long-range pattern of up and downs). In January, Jay Forrester, the MIT economist who helped design the first "Limits to Growth" study, made the same point in *Fortune* magazine. In May, both *Business Week* and the *Wall Street Journal* took up the idea.

Simply put, was the period 1945-70 the result of a long-range upswing powered by petrochemicals, electronics, and a tremendous increase in consumer durables—washing machines, cars, etc? And will the period from 1970 on be marked by saturated markets, protectionism, the preparation of a new boom by means of decades of social misery? That is by no means certain. But it is a real enough possibility to command the attention of the corporate analysts. The democratic Left should be at least as radical as they are.

Humphrey-Hawkins

Finally, all of these considerations make me see the passage of the Humphrey-Hawkins bill as even more imperative than before. In the Carter Administration and on Wall Street one senses the re-emergence of a fatalism more appropriate to the age of Herbert Hoover than to the post-Keynesian epoch. The coming of a recession is being discussed as if it were a natural phenomenon, as if we were reading the storm warnings of an impending Nor'easter and were battening down the hatches. Only, the American economy is not the product of God's will or meteorological forces; it is the creation of human beings.

It is time that we stop planning for a recession which will not stop inflation; it is time that we start planning for those structural changes in the American economy which will make full employment and price stability possible. Humphrey-Hawkins is a first step—a modest, but unmistakable first step in that direction—and it is more necessary than ever, now that Washington and Wall Street are doing rain dances around the American economy instead of rationally dealing with its structural problems. And if those speculations in the business press are right and we are headed for another long-term cyclical downturn, Humphrey-Hawkins, which provides a mechanism and goals for full employment planning, becomes all the more urgent. A long-term cyclical downturn, it must be stressed, is not an act of God, but of human beings; so human beings should combat it. □

'F.I.S.T.': the danger

by ERIC LEE

If America were entering an era of mass radicalization in which the trade union movement played a vanguard role, *F.I.S.T.* would be a film of immense significance. It would serve as a valuable weapon in the hands of a movement that the vast majority of Americans now believe to be corrupt, the labor movement. It would be viewed as part of the impact of the radicalization process on cinema. As an expression of the politicization of cinema, the film would be a success.

But rather than reflect the reality of American political life, *F.I.S.T.* represents an attempt by Sylvester Stallone, an honest and intelligent attempt, to change that political reality. *F.I.S.T.* is a bold challenge to the average American on the question of the labor movement. But by attempting to change the reality rather than merely interpret it Stallone and his film ultimately fail.

The film is a success in a number of ways. To his credit, Stallone has demonstrated once again his ability to play a working-class character with intelligence, complexity and wit; he gives depth to a character too often portrayed (as in films like *Joe* and *Blue Collar*)



courtesy of United Artists

A SENATE RACKETS COMMITTEE hearing scene in *F.I.S.T.* recreates sense of 1950's McClellan hearings.

as a mindless, atavistic barbarian. The direction and cinematography are competent: the early scenes are a conscious imitation of the 1930's Warner Brothers "worker" films and later scenes imitate 1970's blockbusters like *The Godfather*. The sets are exceptionally realistic in the early scenes: one gets a rich picture of working class communities and warehouses in 1937 Cleveland, the scene of bloody labor battles. The supporting cast—particularly Rod Steiger and Melinda Dillon—play their roles, which could easily have been two-dimensional stick figures, with sufficient energy and creativity to sustain interest throughout.

The intention behind the film is worthy of some comment. Stallone is a member of two unions, and a public supporter of Labor Law reform. In preparation for the film—whose screenplay he co-authored—he read up on the history of the American labor movement. That knowledge of labor history and his commitment to the labor movement are evident throughout the film. His intention appears to be to confront the issue of corruption in the labor movement head-on. He seeks to explain that corruption not on the basis of the evil nature of some trade union leaders, but as the result of sincerely-motivated, though poorly planned, compromises made with organized crime by Johnny Kovacks, a leader in the Federation of Interstate Truckers, skillfully played by Stallone. The film is both complex and subtle. It is difficult to watch; there are a few bad guys but no good guys. Every character is flawed and is therefore real. But Stallone need not have made *F.I.S.T.* in this way.

In 1925 when Sergei Eisenstein made *Potemkin*, a conscious attempt to stir up working class rebellion, he made a straight good guys/bad guys shoot-em-up Western. At high noon, the Earp brothers (the working class) meet the Clanton gang (the Czarist soldiers) at the O.K. Corral (the Odessa steps). The brutality of the bad guys is matched only by the innocent decency of the good guys. While Eisenstein's film is filled with artistic merit, the plot is stunningly shallow. Yet when *Potemkin* was first shown in Weimar, Germany, accompanied by piano music written by a German Communist, riots broke out in the theaters. The Government ordered that the music not be played. The German working class of the 1920's, organized into massive social democratic and communist parties, which had recently fought two revolutions, was an audience ready for a Marxist Western. The happy ending in *Potemkin* (in sharp contrast to the historic reality, which was the defeat of the 1905 Russian Revolution), undoubtedly stirred the heart of many a European worker in the 1920's (and a few sectarian leftist hearts today).

There are no riots in theaters where *F.I.S.T.* is being shown. Johnny Kovacks is assassinated just as Jimmy Hoffa was assassinated. The audience is left in mid-air. Who were the good guys? Who were the bad guys? Some leave the theater, forgetting the first hour of the film, thinking that Kovacks was corrupt and that Senator Madison (Rod Steiger) was the hero of the film. The feeling that Stallone was merely playing a corrupt, powerful labor boss may be more powerful than Stallone intended.

Yet Stallone makes every effort to present a fair and balanced portrait of the growth and corruption of the truckers union. The union is organized by workers, not by corrupt labor leaders or gangsters, or Communists. The militancy of the workers is entirely their own passion. The union is integrated from the beginning: there is no discrimination among ethnic and

of telling the truth

national groups who comprise its ranks. The role of the union wives is made clear in one especially effective scene in which the women are shown playing an important supportive role. This is preceded by scenes of a sweatshop filled with women workers, which demonstrates both the cruelty of their occupations and the sexist abuse they were forced to put up with. The union is shown to be part of a national, class-wide movement; there is a scene in which striking truckers are read a telegram of solidarity from John L. Lewis, speaking for the whole CIO. Finally, Stallone even differentiates the violence of the workers from the brutality of the bosses: even the gangsters brought in to help the union do little more than threaten scabs and destroy company property. In contrast, this limited union violence is preceded by several brutal scenes of company goons beating up union organizers and murdering the local union president.

The sense that justice is on the side of the workers is so strong that, during the riot sequence when the strikers wreck an entire set, the audience burst into cheers and applause. By the time the film comes to a close, however, Rod Steiger, interrogating Stallone at a McCarthy-type witchhunt hearing, calls the event a "labor riot" and accuses Stallone of murdering a company goon who the audience had seen only a few minutes before (20 years had elapsed in the film) shooting at Stallone with a pistol. The irony is that the Senator comes off as a hero and Stallone as a murderer; the earlier image is forgotten too soon.

This is the danger of a complex and rich film. An alert, politically sophisticated audience will at once see the role played by Rod Steiger: an anti-labor witchhunter. He begins his interrogation of Stallone by asking if he (Stallone) believes that the concentration of so much power—the ability to lead three million truckers organized in the F.I.S.T.—should be concentrated in one man. (It never crosses his mind that a greater concentration of power has occurred in the corporations.) Stallone replies: "I represent the men." And he does: unlike the blatantly anti-union film, *Blue Collar*, in which the union delivers high wages but workers want much more, the F.I.S.T. union delivers what the workers want—overtime pay, better wages, pension plans, health insurance, etc. Stallone represents the men: he is no more nor less corrupt than they are. His "original sin," which brings him into contact with the criminal underground, is motivated by the desire for revenge against Consolidated, a virulently anti-union company whose guards beat, shoot at, and ultimately murder union members. Is Stallone's action justified? Of course not. His gangster associates insist that only with the help of organized crime can the union lick the bosses; in fact, it is Stallone's relationship with the mobsters that is his undoing.

In *F.I.S.T.*, both Stallone's compromise with organized crime and the later intervention of the Senate Rackets committee are detrimental to the union. While

F.I.S.T. ends, quite literally, with a question mark, in fact the struggle to democratize the Teamsters continues not in the halls of Congress, but through the activities of the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) and other insurgent groups. The imperative for change in the labor movement is the workers themselves. This purification of labor will not be the work of a government whose aim—which *F.I.S.T.* demonstrates with the police goons of the 1930's and the Rackets Committee at the end of the film—is to bust the union. In Stallone's view, the role of the government appears to be continually hostile to the labor movement. The purpose of Labor Law Reform and, I imagine, the reason for Stallone's support of it, is to turn the government role around.

The film does not have an ultra-leftist theme. "God damn Franklin Roosevelt," says the boss of Consolidated as the workers throw up their first picket line. The Wagner Act and the New Deal form the backdrop to the whole organizing campaign that constitutes the first half of the film. Unlike the heavy-handed ultra-leftism of *Blue Collar*, which ends with a paranoid freeze-frame that has "them" hopelessly controlling "us," *F.I.S.T.* ends as the story itself ended. Hoffa was assassinated.

I left the theater with the feeling that I had just seen a pro-labor film that would be misinterpreted and distorted. It is being advertised as a working class "Godfather" epic. It is not; it is a history of an imaginary union which parallels the history of the Teamsters.

F.I.S.T. has one merit which I have ignored until now. It is a film about working people. There have been some films about working people made in the past few years, but not many. *Rocky* was one. *Blue Collar* was another. But many of the more serious films today, like the films of the 1930's and 1950's which they emulate, are about that section of the American population that lives in the upper crust of society. A film like *An Unmarried Woman* is a good example. But *F.I.S.T.* puts its bourgeoisie in supporting roles; the workers are the heroes and the villains of the film.

F.I.S.T. is Stallone's second major film. It will not bring him the success that *Rocky* brought him. People will not line up around the block to see a film about the labor movement. The Saturday night performance at a major Manhattan theater that I attended was sparsely attended. Much of the critical response has been negative. This is another element in the film's failure.

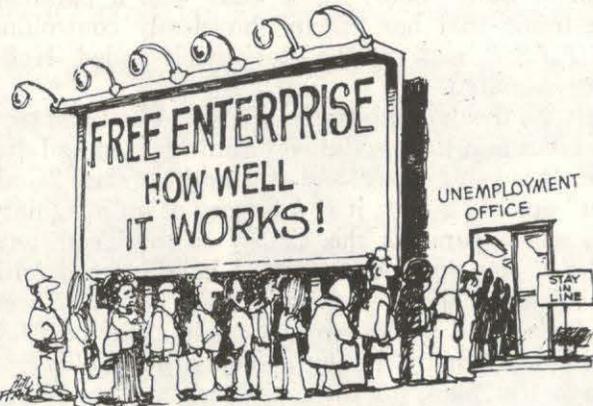
Somehow I cannot shake the feeling that when the labor movement again will play the role of spearhead in the drive for social change, when millions of people will be in motion and capitalist society will be challenged by a radicalized populace, *F.I.S.T.* will return with a vengeance. In such a context, all its radical meaning will become clear. All its subtlety and irony will be understood by one and all. Its failure today is a tragedy, because in the sense described by Marx, it comes too soon. □

Corporate agenda . . .

(Continued from page 1)

ness would end up with unquestioned supremacy. Anti-trust, environmental and other regulations would be cut back—indeed, the government might act instead to facilitate mergers among corporations. Labor would be pressured to sign no-strike agreements. Social services would be redesigned to make them more directly useful to business. And a range of other measures would be sought to make government the “partner,” not the “governor,” of corporations in the search for markets and profits.

There is deep irony in Nixon's demise, for the schemes he crafted have come increasingly to dominate national politics through the seventies. The entire array of business organizations took up the cry against “excessive public expectations” which purportedly competed with profits. The Business Roundtable, an organization of corporate executives founded in 1972, became an omnipresent though often surreptitious power on the Washington scene. It brought corporation heads to lobby directly against full employment, minimum wage increases, anti-trust leg-



islation, consumer protection, controls on toxic chemicals, and it made alliances with traditionally conservative business groups like the National Association of Manufacturers and the Chamber of Commerce.

In coalition is strength

Similarly, around the country big business made coalitions with right wing groups once deemed irresponsible, opposing measures like the ERA, progressive tax reforms, social services, and the existing occupational health and safety regulations. Using tactics that ranged from threats of runaway plants, to massive increases in the number of corporate political action committees (from 89 in 1974 to 566 at present), the legions of business largely got their way, despite Democratic majorities. Supposedly progressive Democratic governors cut back social services and launched witch-hunts against public employee unions. Corporate strategists divided environmentalists from labor, or unionized workers from women and blacks, on issues of job loss. Last summer, Vice-President Walter Mondale pledged to a meeting of the Roundtable that the administration's “central role” would be to spur busi-

ness investment, a role far different than the promises of a year before.

It is such harsh reality that has caused major rethinking among a wide range of progressives; signs of change and a new openness have become visible in many areas. Ralph Nader and environmentalists backed labor law reform. Eleanor Smeal of NOW began to make regular appearances as a featured speaker at building trades and other union events. The Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition initiated by the Midwest Academy has been able to ally unions, community, public interest, church, minority and other groups around alternatives to the plans of energy monopolists. The realization has grown rapidly: forces for human justice and social progress must stand together. As George Meany put it at the AFL-CIO convention in December: “No group—not the labor movement, not the civil rights or women's organizations, not the churches—can by themselves match the raw political and financial might of big business. But, together, these groups represent millions of people, and people, not money, are what this nation is all about.” Moreover, the growing alarm at the performance of a Democratic Congress has led many leading officials in labor and other groups to begin thinking about opposition to “pro-corporate” or “anti-labor” Democrats. “We want them to understand they can't take our support for granted,” said COPE director Alexander Barkan. “We're putting them on notice.”

Strategy

Several factors are essential to a strategy that hopes to succeed in replacing pro-corporate Democrats with true friends of labor and the public at large.

1) Races must be carefully targetted, with intense regard for timing, the incumbents' records, prospective opposition candidates for primary races, and realistic possibilities for succeeding. As William Dodds of the UAW recently put it, whatever the disappointment with Congressional performance, progressives stand little chance of success if they adopt a general “feeling of punishment” toward Congress as a whole. To make the point that candidates must *deserve* support if they are to win, requires a clear demonstration of the consequences of betraying the Democratic Party heritage. Such a demonstration, in turn, depends upon skillful campaigns to replace “pro-corporate” Democrats with genuine Democrats, using the methods pioneered by the highly successful Environmental Action “dirty dozen” campaigns. Candidates opposed should be vulnerable. They should be judged on their records about a number of key issues of concern to diverse progressive constituencies. They should be located in districts where strong challengers can run in primary contests.

2) In addition to highly refined target selection, winning efforts against pro-corporate Democrats must also mobilize the rank and file to campaign and get out the vote. In the face of the massive resources which the big business community and the right wing are now able to pour into selected races, such mobilization becomes an essential foundation for winning efforts.

One important precedent for such mobilization has been the remarkable drive for labor law reform, which has seen the unions generate unprecedented quantities of mail and use workers themselves as lobbyists. Another is the victorious campaign of Dennis Kucinich last fall, when he won against the highly favored, right wing incumbent mayor of Cleveland, Ralph Perk. In the Kucinich campaign, a coalition of labor, neighborhood, senior citizen, church and other groups, engineered in part by the Ohio Public Interest Campaign, was able to turn out tens of thousands of volunteers and voters, using the slogan that "you can't run Cleveland if you sell it out."

3) Finally, all campaigns that actually succeed must be more than defensive efforts or parochial-sounding appeals. To win against breathtakingly cynical right wingers who now use the rhetoric of liberty to veil their attempts to destroy basic freedoms, campaigns must tap the wellsprings of discontent which millions of Americans feel. An effective politics of change must expose the hypocrisy and deceit of the adversaries. It must also offer—in the place of fear, hatred, and despair—a promise and vision of a better America.

Opinion polls in the last several years reveal a consistent and overwhelming pattern of public sentiment which also appears in events like the miners' and farmers' strikes, neighborhood groups and feminist organizations. People simply feel left out of the decisions which shape their lives, in government and economic institutions alike. Indeed, no plan for expansion of the areas of government initiative is likely to succeed, in the face of corporatist opposition, as long as people believe that government itself thwarts the democratic impulse.

In a farsighted article for the 1977 Labor Day issue of the NEWSLETTER, UAW President Douglas Fraser outlined a vision for America that speaks to such sentiments and helps develop a compelling theme for a new politics of change and progress. "The labor movement's finest moments have been those when it became the conscience of the nation," explained Fraser. "We must enhance the self-esteem of workers, minorities, the disadvantaged and, indeed, all 'ordinary' people by giving them a sense of genuine involvement and responsibility—and capability—to participate and to count—to make a difference in the political life of this nation . . . Without mass participation by those who are denied a real stake in our society, how can we hope to achieve full employment, tax reform, labor law reform or a redistribution of wealth?"

Thus the only alternative to the right wing threat is the defense and strengthening of democracy. With such a strategy, building the forces of authentically democratic politics as the bulwark against the Right, the democratic Left has the opportunity to help fuse separate progressive agendas into a new movement — a movement dedicated to winning in our third century the promise of our nation's beginnings.

Author's note: I am grateful to Henry Bayer and Elizabeth McPike, for helpful comments and criticisms on this article. □

Magazines . . .

(Continued from page 5)

Genovese regrets his own role during this period, which did not contribute to a healing process, but engaged the other side in a sectarian manner. At that time he did not realize that those who stood for immediate revolution brought a certain militancy and freshness to a moribund movement.

Two issues in particular, the attitude towards the working class and the stance towards the universities, are analysed by Genovese. A disdain for the working class and its culture characterized the 1960's New Left. The alienation of the working class from the movement was exacerbated by the New Left youth culture (long hair, jeans, obscenities). Those who defended the revolutionary potentiality of the working class were maligned by the youth culture advocates.

Both tendencies on the Left saw the universities as a major terrain of struggle. Those who saw an impending revolution became enamoured of confrontation politics. Those like Genovese saw the value of preserving the university as an ideological arena for confronting bourgeois hegemony; they were against confrontation politics, and rapidly became the enemy for the militants. He also criticizes those like himself who, while opposed to confrontation politics, had not engaged in the day to day political work with students which builds mutual respect and confidence.

Today, Genovese says, the best of the New Left survivors have criticized their errors and turned towards the working class, while their erstwhile adversaries on the Left have sought to learn not only from their own mistakes but also from the constructive contributions of the New Left.

In conclusion, Genovese calls for both sides to acknowledge their past mistakes and debate theoretical differences in a spirit of comradeship, to work out a program of action. □

The Newsletter of the Democratic Left is published ten times a year by the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee. It is available by subscription or by membership in the DSOC.

I want to subscribe. Enclosed find my check or money order. (\$10 for a sustaining subscription; \$5 for a regular subscription; \$2.50 for a limited income subscription.)

I'd like to join the DSOC. Enclosed find my dues. (\$15 regular dues; \$8 limited income.)

Send to: Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, 853 Broadway, Room 617, New York, N.Y. 10003.

Name

Address

City/State Zip

Telephone

Jimmy Higgins reports . . .

TANKS INTO SOLAR COLLECTORS . . . A British firm, Lucas Aerospace, may convert for peace. As the number of military contracts coming the company's way has diminished, the engineers and workers have been going to the drawing board in an attempt to save their jobs. The ideas include kidney machines, a new power pack to power vehicles, solar collectors and heat pumps. The question now is not whether conversion from military goods to civilian products is possible, but whether management can be convinced it is good and profitable to convert. The prospects for conversion in the United States would be greatly enhanced if such a project could be pulled off.

LABOR LAW REFORM IS IN DANGER and immediate action is required to insure its passage. As we go to press, the Labor Law Reform Act (S-2467) debate is just beginning on the floor of the Senate. The usual reactionary coalition is leading a filibuster and pushing hard for weakening amendments. Aiding the efforts of the Strom Thurmonds and Russell Longs is a big business campaign (conducted by the Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers and the Business Roundtable) against the legislation. According to veteran Washington observers, the business effort against this bill far outstrips the ferocious campaign against situs picketing legislation.

OVERCOMING THAT CORPORATE PRESSURE is a big job. Fortunately, labor law reform is a crucial issue for all progressive constituencies. Leaders and spokespeople from the women's and black movements, the Hispanic community, the organizations concerned with saving our cities, and the environmental groups have rallied behind Americans for Justice on the Job. Every reader of this Newsletter can aid their efforts by first, calling and/or telegraphing your Senators' offices to let them know that

you support passage of S-2467 without weakening amendments and that you expect them to vote for cloture; second, by contacting major unions in your area to find out what you can do to help in the campaign to secure justice on the job. Please write the Newsletter office to let us know what you did and how it went.

HARASSMENT IS THE ONLY WORD to describe the suit filed last month against the Association for Union Democracy and several foundations. The plaintiff in the suit is the United Steel Workers union, and it charges that the Association acted as a conduit for tax-exempt foundation money to be used on behalf of the unsuccessful candidacy of Ed Sadlowski for USW president. Since the foundations also hold substantial steel company stock, the Steel Workers charge "employer interference" in union affairs, which is forbidden by the Landrum-Griffin amendment to the national labor law. USW President Lloyd McBride was most explicit about the charge: "In the past the old robber barons tried to use the money they exploited from workers to break their unions, and today their heirs and beneficiaries, set up in plush foundations, are using their ill-gotten and tax-exempt gains to try to run the unions."

ANYONE FAMILIAR WITH the Association for Union Democracy or its founder and director Herman Benson knows how ridiculous that charge is. Long before rank-and-file movements became glamorous big news, "Ben" was fighting for the democratic rights of obscure members of the Painters, the Machinists, the Mine Workers and the Maritime unions. He says that the foundation money went to non-partisan poll-watching. It's sad that the Steel Workers union, which faces such a deep crisis in its industry, remains so divided a year after the last elections. A suit which seeks to tar not just Sadlowski and his supporters but even a poll watching operation as tools of the bosses won't do much to unite the union.

NEWSLETTER OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT
853 Broadway, Room 617
New York, N.Y. 10003



SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID
AT NEW YORK, NEW YORK.