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the rank and file in action

# Labor Today

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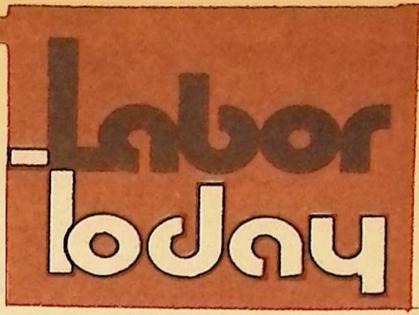


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the unemployed  
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# Demonstrations demand answers



## IN INDIANAPOLIS

by Charles O. Smith  
American Federation of Teachers

More than five hundred trade unionists and other demonstrators braved the snow and cold to greet and deliver a message to President Ronald Reagan when he came to the Indiana Statehouse February 9 to build support for his policies, especially his "New Federalism."

The message given by the demonstrators to the President and to Indiana state officials and legislators was that the need was for "Jobs and Justice," "People Before Profits," and an end to the "Recession, Depression and Frustration."

The demonstration outside the Statehouse was one of the most effective displays of solidarity among trade unionists, civil rights activists, community action leaders, women's rights groups, and other concerned citizens ever seen in Indiana. Steelworkers, teachers, carpenters, sheet metal workers, electricians, state and county public employees, electricians, auto workers, university faculty, students, rubberworkers, senior citizens, unemployed rank-and-file, women's rights proponents -- more than thirty groups were there.

Ernie Jones, President of the Indiana State AFL-CIO, was one of the speakers. He told the

(cont on page 6)



## IN DES MOINES

by Edward Bell

President Reagan recently journeyed to Des Moines, Iowa, to launch his campaign for a "New Federalism." Mr. Reagan, no doubt, figured Iowa would provide him with a quaint heartland setting. But instead he faced three thousand angry trade unionists, farmers, minorities, senior citizens and peace activists. The New York Times called the Des Moines protest the most "vigorous" demonstration against the President since he took office.

Yet, the "wise" would probably counsel that the demonstration was doomed to fail. With only 9 days notice, a wind chill at a brutal -36 below zero and an unemployment rate below the national average. But the protest succeeded for 3 fundamental reasons: 1) leadership; 2) organization; and 3) intensity.

Let's take them one at a time.

(continued on page 6)

This Declaration was presented to President Reagan in Des Moines, February 9, 1982.

## The Heartland Declaration

*We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men and women of all races, nationalities and creeds are created equal. That they are endowed with certain unalienable rights. That among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted.*

*That whenever any form of Government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the Right of the People to petition it, alter it, or to abolish it.*

*The short history of the present federal administration is a history of repeated injuries and abdication of government's responsibility to serve the common good, advance the cause of justice, preserve the peace and to create conditions which allow human dignity to flourish. We the people, from Iowa's labor, church, farm, civil rights, disabled, womens', education, peace and community groups, on this, the 9th day of February, Nineteen Hundred and Eighty-two, submit to President Ronald Reagan these grievances.*

*Your Administration is developing and supporting an economic policy that serves the interests of a privileged band of Economic Royalists, promoting the most brazen redistribution of wealth in this nation's history from working people to a powerful corporate elite; Thereby accelerating a widening gulf between the rich and the poor.*

*Your Administration is abdicating Government's responsibility by declaring the poor, the elderly, the jobless and our children outside of the protections of Government; Thereby fomenting an ideology which declares the people are entitled to nothing.*

*Your Administration is expropriating national funds designed to provide basic human needs in housing, health care, food and education; Thereby systematically transferring them to an elite core of military contractors, increasing the risk of nuclear holocaust.*

*Your Administration is aiding and comforting the sworn enemies of human rights, by working in collaboration with multi-national corporations which exploit poor people and their rightful resources in developing lands.*

*Your Administration is joining with industrialists in a class war against the American working people, thereby denying millions of Americans the fundamental human right to a socially useful job, a safe work environment and their basic trade union rights.*

*Your Administration is collaborating with the most regressive elements of agribusiness and corporate farming, by adopting detrimental economic policies to phase out all equitable price supports; Thereby causing an epidemic of farm failures, and hastening the liquidation of the family farmer, while ignoring measures to conserve soil and protect consumers from potential shortages.*

*Your Administration is endeavoring to pass laws, issue executive decrees and use the prestige of your office to promote a national consensus contributing to the loss of civil, equal and democratic rights for minorities and women in all facets of their daily lives.*

*Your Administration is presiding over callous budget cuts which have induced a cycle of fear and economic insecurity for our elderly and disabled citizens.*

*Your Administration is promoting a vicious cycle of unemployment, poverty and hopelessness for our youth.*

*Your Administration is allowing our lakes, streams and wilderness to be plundered, and our air to be polluted by installing as overseers of our environment, those indebted more to the oil barons and developers than to our quality of life.*

*We the people assembled here today, believe it is our solemn Constitutional right and responsibility to peaceably assemble and to petition this Government for a redress of our grievances.*

*We have great confidence that we will succeed in replacing the politics of despair dominant today, with the politics of hope.*

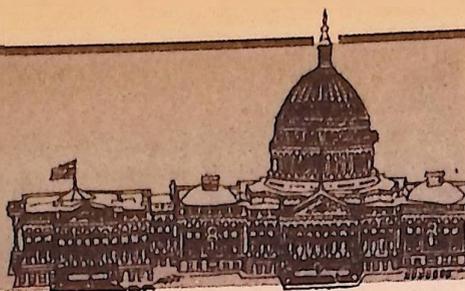
*We the people believe that in our Solidarity, we will be the key to opening the doors to a future with Jobs, Peace, Justice and Dignity.*

*James J. ...*  
Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO  
*Charles ...*  
Int. Assoc. of Machinists Local 81513  
*John ...*  
American Agricultural Movement of Iowa  
*Paul ...*  
Iowa Farmers' Union  
*David ...*  
National Farmers' Organization  
*George ...*  
U. S. Farmers' Association  
*James ...*  
Iowa State Building Trades  
*Jack ...*  
Sheet Metal Workers 645  
*Bob ...*  
FATE, F.I.T.Z.S.I. 1111111  
League of Women Voters  
*Howard ...*  
Int. Bro. of Elec. Wkrs. Local 4947  
*William ...*  
Int. Assoc. of Machinists  
*Frank ...*  
Iowa State Council of Machinists  
*Alvin ...*  
South Central Iowa Federation of Labor

*Pat ...*  
Plumbers & Steamfitters Local 633  
*David ...*  
Rural America  
*Mel ...*  
Iowa Natl. Organ. for Women  
*James ...*  
Advocator Welfare Answering Serv.  
*Patricia ...*  
Vietnam Families Against War  
*Shirley ...*  
Iowa For People's Congress  
*John ...*  
Des Moines Urban Mission Council  
*Bob ...*  
United Auto Workers  
*Butter ...*  
Des Moines A.P.R.I. Chapter  
*James ...*  
Int. Assoc. of Machinists Local 254  
*Ray ...*  
Natl. Assoc. of Social Workers  
Social Policy Committee  
*Forbes ...*  
Plymouth Peace & Justice Committee  
Diocese of Des Moines

*Barbara ...*  
American Friends Service Committee  
*Gwen ...*  
Catholic Peace Ministry  
*Michael ...*  
United Rubber Workers, AFL-CIO  
*Yvonne ...*  
Communication Workers of America  
*John ...*  
NAACP  
*Donald ...*  
AFSCME Council 61, AFL-CIO  
*Cliff ...*  
Iowa State Council of Senior Citizens  
*Frank ...*  
Catholic Worker  
*Joe ...*  
Iowa Peace Network  
*Wanda ...*  
National Democratic Coalition  
*John ...*  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
*Bonnie ...*  
Peace & Justice Committee  
Catholic Sisters Council

# Washington Letter by Hudson Wells

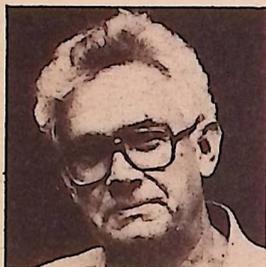


## REAGANOMICS II

When Ronald Reagan sent his annual budget message to Congress last month, the stockmarket plunged and interest rates leaped for the moon.

Why? The business community was registering its judgement that the budget was a recipe for disaster -- theirs. It is also ours, of course, but that is a different story.

It is in the nature of business to worship profits. But you can't squeeze much blood from a stone



Hudson Wells

or much profit from a prostrate economy. Consequently, Reagan, who was the darling of the corporate powers during the cutting binge and the big tax grab of 1981, has, in 1982, drawn their wrath upon his head.

Big business wants lower government spending and higher revenues to achieve a lower budget deficit and thus to get interest rates down. But Reagan has projected the highest budget deficit in history, and it easily may be understated by one-third. And he refuses to budge from his position that ~~his~~ his tax cuts nor his outrageous increase in military spending (which together account for the deficit) can be touched. After last year's spree there is precious little left to cut in social programs.

Reagan's view of the economy resembles the statement of an American officer that he had to destroy a village in Vietnam "in order to save it." But the owners of capital, naturally cannot abide an economy that generates no capital. Either Reagan will change his tune or, politically, he will be a dead duck. These guys have the power.

Odds are they will make him an offer he can't refuse, and Reagan will knock off his hard stand. On the other hand, he may persist. History has known many ignorant men and lunatics in high places.

It should not be imagined that corporate leaders and establishment economists have a whisper of a fundamental cure for the economy. They are only trying to contain the damage brought on by their own policies. There is no consensus on long-term policy. There is agreement on one thing: interest rates are killing business. In this they are not mistaken.

With interest rates high and rising, even a reduction in that old villain, inflation, rather

than being helpful, delivers a double whammy to the economy. This is because the "real" interest rate is what does the damage. "Real" interest is the nominal rate minus the rate of inflation; therefore, it rises as inflation goes down, even if the nominal interest rate is stationary. At present "real" interest is about three times normal. It is even higher than the average rate of profit, creating an impossible situation for investment in production.

No businessman in his right mind is going to invest in industry or agriculture when he can make more in the money market. Yet, since production is the source of all wealth, a society cannot survive by its members lending money to each other or buying and selling without producing.

With big business shaking its fist at the President you might think labor and its allies are gaining a powerful new ally for the anti-Reagan coalition. Hardly.

The danger from big business policies remains and, in certain ways is intensified. As is usual,



the drive is to solve the problem by putting it on the backs of workers and all ordinary Americans.

All remaining social programs are under scrutiny as prospects for the axe. Medicare, Medicaid, Veterans' Benefits and Social Security itself are in jeopardy.

Cuts in the arms budget, now getting some attention, will be minimal or non-existent without a powerful popular movement. Still this is the only area where cuts will truly benefit the economy. Military expenditures create consumer demand without throwing equivalent consumer goods on the market and is therefore inflationary. This year's projected increase in the military budget is higher than in any year during the Vietnam War and holds the record for peacetime. This item alone accounts for the bulk of the Federal deficit and the interest rate problem that derives from it.

An additional drive will be made to saddle workers with the burden of a tax increase. Business is not about to give up the benefits it reaps from the scandalous pro-business tax bill of 1981. Reagan has already been pressed to increase excise taxes.

The real danger shaping up rapidly is of a VAT, standing for "Value Added Tax," in reality a national sales tax. Excise taxes and VATs fall disproportionately on the poor and people with ordinary incomes. A VAT would be tantamount to a wage cut.

The further awful truth is that, as in any economic crisis, there is insufficient demand. Cutting the purchasing power of workers intensifies and extends the crisis.

The anti-Reagan alliance that was pulled together in 1981 may want to think twice about its name, but that is a minor question. The consolidation and broadening of the coalition is indispensable if it is to block the worst deprivations of Reagan and big business.

For the corporations, money is power. For us power lies in our numbers, in organization and in solidarity.

Labor and its allies are already a force to be reckoned with. And they have some reckoning to do with others -- politicians who drove Reagan's programs through last year and those who fail to listen to the people in 1982.

Reaganism, of course, is not a disease that affects only Republicans. The Democrats, as well, who conceal similar policies behind the clouds of rhetoric had better look to their own records if they don't want to be replaced in the primaries.

The tide of public anger is rising. So is the public's political clout. The message to politicians is:

Remember November.

## AN EDITORIAL

# AFL-CIO and the military budget

Since the founding of the AFL-CIO through a merger in the '50s, its only two presidents -- George Meany and Lane Kirkland -- have been cold-warriors and defenders of high military budgets. Meany imposed his thinking on the Federation from the beginning, even though it didn't square with the opinions of most workers.

At the height of the Vietnam War, for example, polls showed that 70 percent of the population favored getting out, with the proportion of working people against the war being much higher. But Meany and Kirkland, then his chief aide, remained super-hawks.

But out of the AFL-CIO Executive Council meeting last month came a blast at the Reagan administration for its "guns, not butter" budget policy. It was contained in a statement passed unanimously by the 35-member Council. It was delivered by the current president, Lane Kirkland.

There are both hawks and doves on the Council. They seemed to have found a way to condemn Reagan for his arms budget without jeopardizing the unity that has been built in opposition to Reaganomics. This unity has enormous tactical importance for the November congressional elections and the primaries which will take place earlier.

No stand was taken on the specific size of the defense budget. Instead, an 8-member committee that includes both William W. Winpisinger of the Machinists Union and Albert Shanker of the Teachers Union, was set up to study defense expenditures. The study, made with the help of experts with varying interests and opinions, will take at least a year.

The Council's statement called for a surtax to finance the increased cost in the event Congress passed the Reagan arms budget. The Council said one-third of the \$33 billion increase should come from an "inescapable levy" on gross corporation earnings.

While the Council was still in session, Kirkland told a press conference that he had always favored high military expenditures but he was sceptical now, "particularly when this administration is taking it out of the hides of the poor and exempting the rich."

Kirkland, the hawk, for the first time, seemed to utter a dove-like coo. It even seemed that he had drawn the proper conclusions from Solidarity Day. But was this reality or illusion?

(continued on page 6)



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# Organizing the unemployed

One of the brighter spots on today's labor scene is the effort of local unions to deal with the problems of their unemployed members.

In some, like UAW Local 91 in Cleveland, the work is in its earliest stages. Others, like USWA Local 65 in Chicago, have already made a public splash.

We think our readers can learn from these experiences and we are, therefore, sharing them with you.

Since one of the biggest problems facing unemployed workers is that of meeting mortgage payments, we are also sharing a letter we received from Congressman Gus Savage that outlines the essential provisions of legislation he is preparing to protect the homes of unemployed workers. Readers wishing copies of the legislation should write to Congressman Gus Savage, Room 1233, Longworth House Office Building, Washington DC 20515.

Incidentally, Congressman Savage is a member of the Committee of Sponsors for our 20th Anniversary.



GUS SAVAGE SAYS:

## Stop foreclosures

Dear LABOR TODAY:

Thank you for your inquiry about my legislation that would provide relief to persons who are unemployed or who have suffered a drastic reduction in income and cannot make payments on FHA-insured mortgages covering their homes.

Your interest is timely. The latest figures from the Department of Housing and Urban Development show that there were 67,331 defaults on FHA-insured mortgages last November! Foreclosed residences, especially in areas of high unemployment, usually remain abandoned until vandalized. This damages the value of nearby properties, leads to a general deterioration of neighborhoods and adds to the creation of a community environment ripe for juvenile-delinquency and violent crime.

This legislation was drafted after consultation with a number of experts and authorities, including unemployed workers in South Chicago who face foreclosure on their homes. Simply put, it will do the following:

- 1) Require the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to make payments on the homes of unemployed workers threatened with foreclosure. These payments would be for a period of 36 months and would apply specifically to homes located in neighborhoods of high unemployment.
- 2) Allow a person buying a home to remain in title and possession of their home while the FHA is making these payments.
- 3) No person who is qualified for the protection of this legislation would be required to resume payments before the end of the 36-month period, unless the family income once again reached a level at least 80% of what it was prior to the time of default.
- 4) Home owners who qualify for these temporary benefits will not be required to repay the FHA for mortgage payments made in their behalf.

Thank you again for your interest,

Gus Savage  
Member of Congress

## Getting started

by John Gallo  
UAW Local 91, Cleveland

Every UAW local has a Community Service Committee that can be rejuvenated and be turned into active committees of and for the unemployed membership.

In Local 91, the January union meeting decided to reactivate this committee to service our laid-off members. Two Executive Board members and two unemployed members were appointed to the body.

Our first order of business was to compile an updated list of services available to the unemployed. This was printed and is now being distributed. Already we discovered that, due to changes in the law, many of the unemployed are now eligible for food stamps, whereas last year they were not. Most of us were unaware of these changes. So our committee has already provided an immediate benefit to the unemployed members. In addition, important information was made available to the rank and file on free medical services, housing questions, financial aid, free counseling, welfare and food centers.

While such services will not find anyone a job nor provide a decent living, they should not be seen as "charity" or social work activity. Through this kind of work, viewed by some of us as a first stage, the laid off members of the local are re-establishing contact with their union. This is critical when members live over a wide area, are isolated from each other and from the union, and seldom come to meetings. By showing concern for its members' plight, the union is helping to



rekindle, or instill for the first time, the feeling of unionism, of mutual support and protection, between those inside and outside the plant. It will awaken some to the fact that the union, not the company, has brought, and continues to bring, benefits to the workers.

We are now in the process of trying to get more laid off members involved with our committee, by having them contact other members, and by putting in time at the union office helping our members. It is hoped that a special meeting of the unemployed members of the local will be called soon. Such a meeting will speed up the process of bringing the laid off members back to the union and its activity.

If our work is consistent and persistent, and more laid off members get involved with the committee, more should start coming to regular union meetings. Then, as the spirit of cooperation grows, the spirit of political and economic fight-back can be nurtured and will develop. Our local has just endorsed a call for a state-wide march for jobs on the state capitol and a petition supporting that endorsement is being circulated in the plant. Out of this work can be born a higher level of political struggle, a struggle that will unite the laid off members with those still working, rank and file and leadership.

## Keeping going

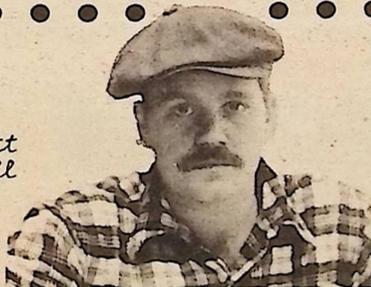
by Scott Marshall

It was 10° below outside with a foot of snow on the ground, but 500 steelworkers inside warmed Local 65's South Chicago Union Hall with their call for the reinstatement of the Federal extension of unemployment compensation benefits and a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions. Nearly 3,000 of the 6,000 union employees at US Steel's South Works plant which Local 65 represents are now on lay-off.

The meeting, called by the Local's newly-formed Unemployed Committee launched a comprehensive action program: first, to insure that the unemployed members are aware of and receive the full benefit of any assistance programs available, and that they do not have to face the bureaucracy of the various agencies

alone; second, to do whatever is necessary to see that no member goes homeless, heat-less, or hungry; and third, to organize a vigorous lobbying campaign on behalf of these demands.

Congressman Harold Washington addressed the steelworkers, attacked the Reagan Administration's economic policies and was particularly sharp in his attack on the military budget and the proposal to establish "Enterprise Zones." He urged the meeting to make elected officials at every level accountable for their position on these issues.



Scott Marshall

# We got problems!

by Sondra Patinos, National Council  
Women for Racial & Economic Equality

The decade of the 1970s was one of renewed hope by working women that they could make substantial progress toward economic equality with men. In 1975 -- International Women's Year -- attention around the world was directed toward this inequality and US women took full advantage of the opportunity to focus the public spotlight on their problems. The air was filled with optimism that real gains could be made to improve the economic position and conditions of life for millions of working women throughout the nation.

## TROUBLE EVERYWHERE

But the advent of Reaganomics has splashed icy water on these hopes. Reagan's economic program has brought with it sharp increases in unemployment that deeply affect working women and their families. His barely disguised contempt for working people generally has had a specially tragic impact on the programs that working women need to maintain themselves and their families in decency.

Not only the ERA -- which is in serious trouble with barely three months to go to achieve ratification -- but child care programs, public education, food stamps and school lunch programs are all suffering from the drastic slashes in domestic spending instituted in the first year of Reagan's enforced belt-tightening. These cuts have a sharp racist edge as well, as millions of Black and Spanish-speaking women, only recently permitted entry to higher paying jobs in industry, are among the first to be laid off. And ~~with~~ cuts in social services affect white women and their families in larger total number than they do Black and Latino families, the impact on families of color is devastating.

## UNEMPLOYMENT

Most women work for the very same reasons that men do -- they must in order to survive and feed their families. In 1979 (the last year for which statistics are available), nearly two-thirds of all women in the labor force were single, widowed, divorced or separated or had husbands whose earnings were less than \$10,000. Of all women workers, about 1 out of 6 maintained a family; and about 1 out of every 4 Black women workers maintained a family.

When we probe the numbers of unemployed a little more deeply, we learn that the highest rates are for Black youth -- and young Black women are unemployed in even greater numbers than Black male youth. (Although figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics represent serious undercounts of women and minority unemployed workers, they do show the magnitude of the problem that had begun to develop as early as 1979.)



Women  
organize  
first  
CLUW  
Convention



In the U.S. there are slots for only 1 of 6 children needing day care.

PHOTO BY TRINA LITTON

## WAGES

Similar problems exist in the area of wages. And with the present drive of the Reagan Administration in support of take-aways and give-backs it is difficult to anticipate that women's wages will show substantial improvement in the months and years ahead.

The reasons for this stubborn failure to raise the average wages of working women to little more than half that of their white brothers -- and even less for Black and Hispanic women -- are many. Among the most important is the inability to win the fundamental principle of equal pay for work of comparable value -- a failure which results in millions of dollars of extra profits for giant corporations.

In general women, and especially "minority women" are relegated to the lowest paying job classifications. In 1979 more than one-third of Black women and almost a full half of Hispanic women earned less than \$150 a week (\$3.75 an hour). Almost one-third of white women were in this abysmally low category as well.

## CHILD CARE

Perhaps the fastest growing section of women workers -- and certainly the section facing some of the most severe problems -- are mothers of small children. Some 40% of all mothers, who have over 6,000,000 children, are working. Yet there are only 1,000,000 licensed child care slots for these children. Only a tiny fraction of these slots are in publicly supported centers, and only a handful of unions have either organized their own centers or negotiated with management to set up child-care facilities. The bill recently introduced in Congress by Representative Cardiss Collins (D-IL), demands support. Yet its chances in a Congress intent upon dismantling public education and all other social services in the name of "getting government off the backs of the people" can hardly be called encouraging.

## ORGANIZE!

Like all workers, the best weapon working women have to improve their livelihoods and their working conditions are unions. But women have historically been greatly underrepresented by unions. In 1973, women were only 20.7% of all union members, even though they were almost half of all workers. A study published by the Coalition of Labor Union Women in September 1980 (Glassberg, Baden and Gerstel, "ABSENT FROM THE AGENDA: A Report on the Role of Women in American Unions") indicated that "since 1960, the number of women on union rolls has risen 34%, compared with the overall increase in union membership of just over 13%. In fact, women account for 50% of the total membership increase over the last twenty years." Despite this relative gain, only 30% of all members of unions are women (approximately 6.9 million women). The impact of lack of union representation on women workers is felt keenly in the pocket-book. Organized women earn almost 30% more than non-union women. And contract provisions which prevent discrimination are the most potent weapon women workers can wield -- certainly more potent than legal and legislative remedies, which, as the CLUW study states, "have yet to pay off after almost twenty years."

There is a great need for massive organizing efforts to bring the benefits of union organization to industries where women work. District 925 -- formed through cooperation between a Boston women's organization and the Service Employees International Union -- has made some important strides. But what is really needed is a massive, coordinated organizing effort by the entire trade union movement.

In this, the unions are hampered by continuing under-representation of women in leading positions. The AFL-CIO Executive Council elected its first woman member only about two years ago. Today it counts only two women among its 35 members. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that approximately 12% of all national union and association governing board members are women, although women comprise almost 30% of total union and association membership. These national leadership figures have changed little since the 1950s. Of fifteen major unions studied by CLUW, women hold only 29 out of 412 seats on governing boards. The International Ladies Garment Workers Union, which has a membership of 80% women, has only two women on its General Executive Board!

Clearly, the 1980s will be a period of decisive battles for working women. The assault by the right -- "old" and "new" alike -- will have to be met by new strategies. Organizations like CLUW and WREE (Women for Racial and Economic Equality) will play a major role in these struggles, and the trade union movement's willingness to take on the special problems of women workers will be decisive.

# A must for working women

Angela Y. Davis, *WOMEN, RACE AND CLASS*  
Random House, 1981, 244 pp, \$13.50

Reviewed by Roberta Wood, Trustee  
Local 65, USWA

*WOMEN, RACE AND CLASS*, Angela Davis' new book, is one of the rare books on American women that sees the women's movement in its broad reality: focusing on the issues of concern and the participation of millions of working class women, highlighting the outstanding history of Black women. It has much food for thought for women trade unionists.

A popular button among women activists says "9¢". It expresses our anger and indignation at the state of the fundamental injustices of women's situation -- our average pay is 59¢ on the dollar that of the average male. There are other buttons we could wear, too: "Overworked," "Overburdened," "Unemployed," "No Respect," and "Holding up society's share as well as my own of taking care of these kids."

The women's movement in the labor movement is still growing and becoming stronger. It is seeking tactics, not just to raise consciousness, but to come to grips with these urgent questions.

Perhaps the most important conclusion that can be drawn from the in-depth analysis of Davis' carefully researched, yet highly readable, book is that only through the struggle against racism in



Angela Davis

no doubt, too, that racism is responsible for a big block in Congress that is not only consistently anti-Black, but also anti-woman and anti-labor.

Working women reading *WOMEN, RACE AND CLASS* will be gratified to see Davis demolish the myth of the American housewife. American women, she points out, have always worked. The idea of the housewife had its birth in the 19th century as "the guardians of a devalued domestic life," reflecting only a partial reality as a symbol of the economic progress of the emerging middle class which "was boldly contradicted by millions of women who toiled away from home as the unwilling producers of the slave economy in the South ... as well as the vast numbers of immigrant women flooding the ranks of the working class in the Northeast." Even colonial women didn't just "keep house": they were home manufacturers of soap, butter, candles, clothing, etc.

This book got me to thinking. On a world scale, US women certainly have a rich history of not only participating in the work force, but also in struggles -- the abolitionists, for women's rights, public education, against child labor, for peace.

International Women's Day was born in the US -- yet our economic and social conditions are among the most backward of all industrialized nations. Why is it that our male/female wage differential is among the highest? Why are we the only such country with no national child care system, no national health care? Many other countries issue stipends to parents on the birth of children and monthly thereafter. In the US the vast majority of working women have no maternity insurance whatsoever, since coverage depends on the existence of comprehensive disability insurance which few women have on the job. We have absolutely no protective legislation on the books to protect women against lifting, chemicals which are particularly hazardous to women, etc.

Women as a group with special responsibilities and burdens -- especially working class women -- are particularly affected by social legislation (or lack of it). Racism on the political scene is an important factor in this country's disgraceful lack of progressive social legislation.

How about on the job? Despite explicit Federal legislation on the books for nearly 20 years that outlaw employment discrimination against women, the prevalence of "women's" jobs and the exclusion and expulsion of women from non-traditional (read that "better-paying") jobs, is the rule rather than the exception. How is this maintained??

In the steel industry, where I work, women have been hired, but still face enormous discrimination. The steel industry is noted for a shameful history of blatant racism in assignment of Black and Latino workers to the dirtiest, hottest, most dangerous, lowest paying

departments, like the coke ovens, blast furnaces, open hearths, etc. An incredibly intricate seniority system was developed to perpetuate this and to prevent the minority workers from exercising their seniority rights to break out of these least desirable jobs.

Although this system was modified in 1974, with the institution of the Consent Decree which was the result of long struggles by Black steelworkers, much of the system is still intact. And this same system has served management very well to keep women from advancing to better, more secure jobs. After the Consent Decree set out quotas of minorities and women for the companies to meet in entrance into apprenticeship programs, the Companies immediately moved to revamp these programs, making them so difficult that vast numbers of the new apprentices "wash out." Both women and minorities come out in the wash. A lengthy probationary period makes it easy for management to maintain a "revolving door" getting good marks for hiring women and minorities and then getting rid of them while they're still on probation.

In their fight for survival in the steel industry, women steelworkers in the Chicago-Gary area formed a District-wide Women's Caucus 6 years ago. The lesson was not lost on any of us --



Black, white and Latina. Our very entry into the steel industry came with the victories of the Civil Rights movement and our future progress is tied to the position of the Black workers. Black women steelworkers, all outstanding trade unionists, proved to be the driving force in organizing the Caucus, bringing the strength and cohesiveness of the Black community, their own determination, and organizing experience, and a deep sense of indignation at injustice, to our work.

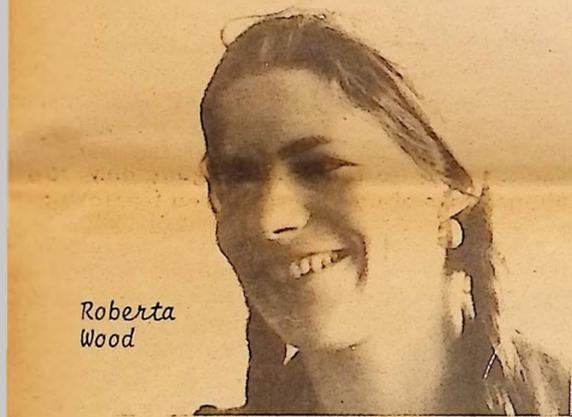
All women can be appreciative of Davis' book for bringing recognition to the outstanding resources of strength, and fighting spirit that Black women bring to the women's and working class movements.

Women's Caucuses, committees, individual leaders and rank-and-filers can make an important contribution to the whole labor movement if we can show from our own experience that the struggle to advance the position of all workers is dependent on carrying out a united campaign against racist discrimination, both on the job and in every other aspect of American life.

Davis' book contains an important chapter dealing with rape and the myth of the Black rapist. Many writers in the modern women's movement have begun to correctly identify rape as a means of subjugating women, not a sexual act but Davis completes the analysis and proves historically how the myth of the Black rapist was deliberately fabricated to provide a rationale for terrorizing the Black people and, at the same time, perpetuating harmful myths about women.

In another chapter, Davis strongly supports abortion rights while no less forcefully calling for an end to forced sterilization and fascist population control measures foisted on Black women.

*WOMEN, RACE AND CLASS* provides the basis for higher levels of principled unity between three important movements for social progress -- the Black liberation movement, the women's movement, and the labor movement -- and points to the unique leadership role to be played by Black working class women, like the author herself.



Roberta Wood

the work place and on the political scene can working class women fundamentally improve their position.

Davis traces the inter-relationship of the emancipation and suffrage movements in the 1800s; it was in the Abolitionist movement that the suffragists received their early political training -- public speaking, tactics, contacts and recognition. Their earliest male supporters were abolitionists, including of course, Frederick Douglass. American women, Black and white, really became a political force for the first time in this campaign.

Then a tragic split took place. Some important white leaders, in the first place Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, failed to recognize the political as well as moral relationship of the struggle of Black people in the US to that of American women, and they refused to support the passage of the 14th and 15th Amendments because women were not included in these measures which were intended to guarantee the vote for the newly-emancipated slaves. The participation of Black women in the conventions and activities of the Suffragist movement was blocked and they even went so far as to try to convince racists to support women's suffrage as a way of cancelling the power of the Black vote with that of white women.

The damage that these misleaders did lives with us today. To whatever extent they succeeded in protecting racism, they have contributed to Dixiecrat-controlled State Houses that won't pass the ERA but will pass right to work and other anti-labor legislation that keeps women unorganized and defenseless on the job. There's

## This is UNCOLA!

Dear LABOR TODAY:

The first thing I noticed when I was hired into his factory on Chicago's north side was a blue notice hanging on the bulletin board. After reading it even the morning paper looked good. It was an announcement of our cost of living adjustment for the months January through June, 1981. The final tally amounted to a wage increase of one and three-quarter cents an hour! Then I read in the contract that if the CPI rose at a rate less than what was anticipated in the contract (9% for 1981-82) the company would deduct money from our checks. That's not COLA, that's Un-COLA.

The COLA formula gives you an idea of the problems facing us at this shop. The contract we have to live with for the next three years is a blueprint to bring down our wages and benefits even further. A woman that has worked there for 18 years told me that she dreads retiring at 65 because her pension is so small.



This company (it employs 110 factory and another 60 office/technical workers) hands out turkeys at Christmas to try to make up for the other 51 weeks during which the paychecks just don't stretch far enough. You hear a lot about "one big family" and other nonsense, and office people conduct a very efficient football pool during the season. They installed surveillance cameras all over the plant but cry "we're just a small company" when it comes to providing better lighting, ventilation and modern upgraded equipment.

We're part of an amalgamated local with about 5,000 members scattered through several hundred shops. I went to the last few unions meetings and was surprised to see no more than 30-40 people present, mostly staff. A fellow at work told me that as far as he knew our shop only met once every three years, to ratify the contract.

Considering how hard it is to find a job these days, I'm happy just to be working. But this contract leaves a lot to be desired. My questions to LABOR TODAY are these:

How can we turn our shop around and make it a fighting local union?

How do we prepare ourselves to win a decent contract the next time around?

What can our union do to defend our falling living standards against the Reaganite attack?

JO Hill

rather than scrambling to put one together in an emergency situation.

Inside the Statehouse, President Reagan, reading from his two electronic prompters, was greeted with a standing ovation by Governor Robert Orr, Lieutenant Governor John Mutz, and the 450 legislators and invited guests. His speech was interrupted five times by applause. White House planners could not have found a more friendly audience for the President to appear before on national TV to achieve a new "mandate" for his "New Federalism."

The President came to Indiana to tell the legislators that the federal government is giving the power back to them. They were told that they must solve the problems of massive unemployment, rebuild the state's economy, deal with the problems of cities, and provide job training opportunities. They were told that they would have to educate all children, provide for the needy, solve the problems of prison overcrowding, handle crime preventing and detection, feed hungry school children, help provide access to higher education, and to foster the arts.

While it is not yet clear how the Indiana General Assembly will meet these problems, it is clear that the peoples' movement in Indiana is going to demand answers. That's the meaning of the February 9 demonstration in Indianapolis.

## AFL-CIO & the budget

(continued from page 2)

Within days after the Council meeting, a column signed by Kirkland, appeared in the Washington Post giving the answer. He is still the cold-warrior. It turns out that he need not resign as a renegade from his position as co-chair of the Committee on the Present Danger, the corporation-dominated organ of the military-industrial complex.

In his column, Kirkland flatly states his support for the "true believers" in the Reagan Administration, whom he calls "... principled anti-communist ideologues" as well as for some "non-Republicans now called neo-conservatives."

According to Kirkland, these "true believers, to their credit, provide the administration with its tough anti-Soviet rhetoric."

Then, mournfully, he states that the "true believers" once "had every reason to count the President in their camp." Imagine that! The President of the AFL-CIO accusing Reagan of being soft on communism. While Kirkland doesn't identify the foremost of all the "true believers" in the administration, the world knows his name. It is Casper Weinberger, Secretary of Defense -- the architect of the stupendous increase in the war budget.

In the article Kirkland develops a contorted argument that the other side of economic repression by big business at home, is big business appeasement of the communist evil abroad.

He tries to build his case on the fact that the banks who have lent money to Poland are unwilling to lose their investment by declaring a default. Reagan has -- for the moment, while keeping his options open -- supported them.

But this is skinny reasoning. Everybody knows that the giant banks and industrial behemoths would do anything for a lousy buck.

Workers in this country know very well that the jackasses who would devastate the American economy would just as willingly incinerate the entire population of the world. That is, of course, if they could somehow save the miserable hides of their boards of directors.



## Indianapolis (continued from page 1)

assembled demonstrators that the AFL-CIO was committed to achieve a program for jobs and justice. ~~The~~ ~~current~~ 12.4% unemployment rate will not be reduced by faith in an economic system propounded by Herbert Hoover when he kept insisting that prosperity was just around the corner," Jones said. He demanded that the federal government maintain its role in providing a jobs-oriented economy, that it maintain job training opportunities, and that necessary social programs continue to have a high priority.

Signs carried by the demonstrators delivered the message better than even the most eloquent speakers: "Give me a job -- I'll buy the cheese"; "Money for jobs, not for bombs"; "I want a job, when will it trickle down?"; "Make jobs, not war"; "Get us out of El Salvador"; "Reagan diet -- jellybeans, catsup, cheese"; "Reaganomics hurts student's"; and "November 2, Solidarity Day II."

Finally, intensity. The combination of organization and an intensive style of work proved to be a powerful combination. In practice it meant 9 days of a total and all sided organization effort. Here's a sampling:

- 95 people showed up for an I.P.C. meeting on 3 days notice.
- In one day 20,000 leaflets were printed for distribution. A "flyer" committee distributed them at unemployment offices, senior citizens centers, shops, schools and union halls. Also about twenty organizations distributed leaflets to their own memberships.
- A sign committee was formed. 85 people showed up on short notice to produce 1000 signs. They called for "Jobs, Peace and Justice"; "Jobs not Bombs"; "Parity for Farmers"; "One Hoover in a Lifetime is Enough"; and "Nancy Gets Red Gowns, We Get Pink Slips."
- These grassroots efforts were reinforced with an intensive local and national media blitz.

The outcome of these activities was a loud and clear message from our nation's heartland for Jobs, Peace and Justice, not Reagan's raw deal. More importantly, it strengthened the influence of the Iowa Progressive Coalition as an independent force in state politics.



Demonstrators, Des Moines, February 9

## Des Moines (continued from page 1)

Firstly, leadership. The Iowa Federation of Labor, headed by Jim Weagert, made a decision to lead. That took guts, with only nine days to produce the troops. A decision based on the political resolve that Mr. Reagan should be confronted with protests everywhere and anywhere he goes. If there was no protesters the administration would claim "the real people support our program." Instead, the real people stopped the "New Federalism" dead in its tracks -- at least for the time being.

Secondly, organization. It would be deceptive to claim the demonstration was organized in nine days. Actually, it took about one year. That's how long the Federation spent organizing the Iowa Progressive Coalition. The successful demonstration was the organizational payoff. It showed the value of having a coalition in place,

# Frame-ups threaten all labor

## In Pennsylvania...

by LABOR TODAY Staff

It's an old story, repeated over and over again throughout the history of the labor movement. A strike takes place. Eventually there's a settlement. And then, after things quiet down and the issues tend to cool, the union and some of its strike leaders are charged with some illegal action during the strike and are taken to court.

One of these cases is now in the US District Court in Western Pennsylvania.

The C&K Coal Company (owners of the region's largest non-union mine) and three sister companies (all scab outfits), all owned by the Gulf Resources and Chemical Corporation of Houston, Texas, have taken the United Mine Workers of America, to of its Districts, several Local Unions and at least 11 UMWA members to court. They are charged with an arm-long list of offenses allegedly committed during the UMWA's 110-day strike against the Bituminous Coal Operators Association in 1977-78. (The fact that the Hunt Brothers, one of whom sits on the National Board of the John Birch Society, own Gulf Resources, adds an additional twist to this attempt at union busting.)

Charles Ponce, President of UMSA Local 6132, puts it this way. "The C&K Coal Company says we stopped production at their mine by harassing 'their' employees. They are trying to collect \$4 million in damages because they say that they lost money and contracts and their employees lost wages because of our 'illegal activities.'"

Ponce gets angry when he talks about the case. "They are trying to leave the impression that we did \$4 million damage by destroying property and equipment -- and they've got the papers in the area believing them."

"Look," he says, "I'm a third generation coal miner. All my life I've been taught that when you are forced out on strike you have the right and the obligation to halt the production of scab coal. If a union doesn't try to do that, then you aren't doing your job, either as a union leader or a union member. So we did what we had to do and set up an informational picket line at C&K property. Wouldn't you have done the same thing?"

There is more at issue in this case than the charges against the individuals involved, although that, in itself, is an important question. If C&K wins their case they will have established a very dangerous precedent. Not only will they collect their \$4 million -- if they win they'll collect \$12 million in triple damages -- but, in order to win, C&K has to establish that the activity it charges is a violation of the anti-trust laws. If the Court finds the UMWA

and the individuals involved guilty, the entire labor movement will be set back and the door will be opened for endless law suits that will bleed the labor movement of millions and millions of dollars.

Instead of trying to get the case dropped or going for an out-of-court settlement, Brother Ponce and the other victims of C&K's frame-up have decided to take the case "all the way." Their non-jury trial got underway before Judge Donald Zeigler in January. "We decided to fight it out," Ponce says, "because we think we have to. If we don't then the UMWA -- and eventually every union -- will be open to endless lawsuits and damage claims."

Because of the strict limitations of federal law, the UMWA can not provide legal counsel to

defend the individuals charged in the case. In order to help raise the money needed to defend Brother Ponce and the others, a number of Pittsburgh area labor leaders have established the Coal Miner's Legal Defense Fund. Among those associated with the fund are Clifton Caldwell, Past President of Local 590, United Food and Commercial Workers; Henry Dropkin, International Vice President, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers; and Kay Tillow, Vice-President Local 1199P, National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, RWDWU. (Sister Tillow is also a member of TUAD's General Council.)

LABOR TODAY readers who wish to help should make their checks payable to the Coal Miner's Legal Defense Fund and send them to PO Box 5425, Pittsburgh PA 15206.

## In Georgia...

### Charlene Mitchell arrested

EMERGENCY!

On February 1, 1982, Charlene Mitchell, Executive Secretary of the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (NAARPR) and Mike Welch, her husband and an Alliance activist, were brutally dragged from a New York-bound Amtrak train and arrested at Gainesville, Georgia. Both sustained injuries from this unprovoked attack. Welch's left hand required surgery for a fracture and ruptured tendon.

Mitchell and Welch, along with Frank Chapman, NAARPR Assistant Executive Secretary, and other Alliance staff and Board members, had taken the train in New Orleans that morning, returning home from a weekend Executive Board meeting.

Almost from the moment they boarded the train, they were harassed by Amtrak personnel, whose behavior was so irrational the group concluded that they were faced with an attempt to provoke an incident.

When an Amtrak-Southern Railroad security agent and two Gainesville, Georgia police officers entered the train, they immediately focused on Charlene Mitchell, ordering her off the train with no explanation. When Mike Welch protested, they were both dragged from the train.

At the Gainesville jail Mitchell and Welch were told that they were charged with public drunkenness and obstructing an officer. No rights were read, and no test was given to establish drunkenness or sobriety. No witnesses or complaints on the train were cited -- only the word of the railroad security agent.



Charlene Mitchell

During the next few hours over a thousand phone calls poured into the Gainesville police station demanding to know why Mitchell and Welch were being held. They were released on bail early the next morning. Trial was set for March 5th.

Speaking at a recent news conference, Ms. Mitchell said, "This attack was no accident. ... This is only the latest incident in what we believe to be a pattern of attacks on the leadership of our organization and many other organizations involved in movements for equality, peace, economic and social justice.

"We believe that these attacks are conceived by governmental agencies to tie up our leadership -- and that of others -- with contrived legal cases."

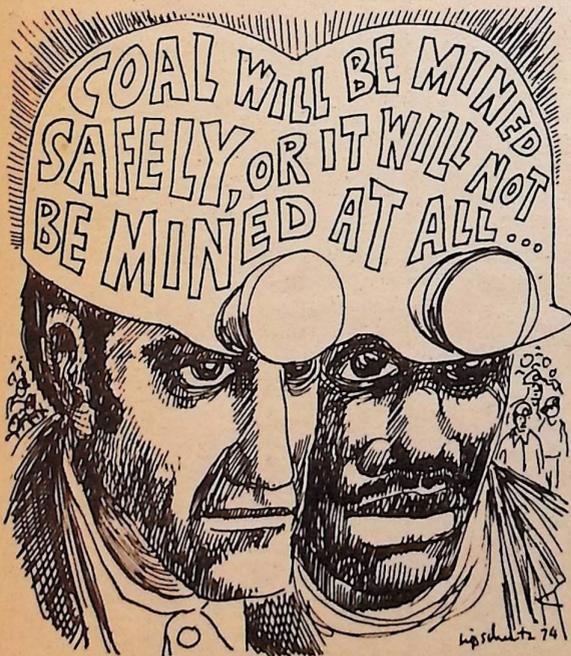
## HOW YOU CAN HELP

WRITE, TELEGRAM, CALL the Civil Rights Division of the US Department of Justice (WDC, 20530). Demand an immediate investigation into the treatment of Charlene Mitchell and Mike Welch by Amtrak, its agents and the local police. Insist that the investigation be made public. Further, demand absolute assurance that the safety of all passengers engaged in Constitutionally-protected interstate travel are in fact protected from police surveillance, harassment and provocation.

Also demand Amtrak (400 N Capitol St, WDC 20001) drop these phoney and ridiculous charges, and that Amtrak-Southern Railways immediately cease the employment of these gestapo-like practices. Demand immediate redress for individual damages; and demand Amtrak account fully for this incident and any similar incidents past and future.

Finally, WRITE, TELEGRAM, CALL Solicitor Howard Oliver, Jr. (State Court of Hall County, Gainesville, GA 30503) demanding the charges be dropped and the harassment cease immediately. He can be called at 404-535-5349.

SEND A GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION to aid NAARPR in fighting off this latest attack upon our leadership and activists: NAARPR, 27 Union Square West, #306, NYC 10003.



THERE'S STILL TIME TO JOIN

# Labor Today's "20-4-20" club

We will close the books on our "20-4-20" Club April 15. That means you still have time to join, but you'll have to hurry.

It's really not that hard. Just send us a check for \$20.00 -- a buck for each of our first 20 years -- and you become a Charter Member, entitled to all of the rights and privileges that go with membership. Your name will be published in our Anniversary Issue (May) and all "20-4-20" Members will be eligible for a \$100.00 cash prize to be drawn at our Rally-Concert on April 30.



# 20

## 20th Anniversary update...

Roberta Wood has got things moving. Tickets for our April 30 Rally-Concert with William Winpisinger and Congressman John Conyers are on sale for \$5.00 each.

We've gotten several new sponsors and the membership list of our "20-4-20" Club gets longer every day.

Our special Circulation Campaign has begun to pick up steam. We hope that more of you will take advantage of our 5 subs for \$15.00 offer between now and May 1 when it expires.

So far, so good. Thanks! Now let's really make things happen!

### 20-4-20 Membership Application

I wish to join LABOR TODAY's 20-4-20 Club.  
Here's my check.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

PHOTO BY JAMES M. REED