



UNION BUREAUCRATS BETRAY CITY WORKERS

PENSION STRIKE SELLOUT

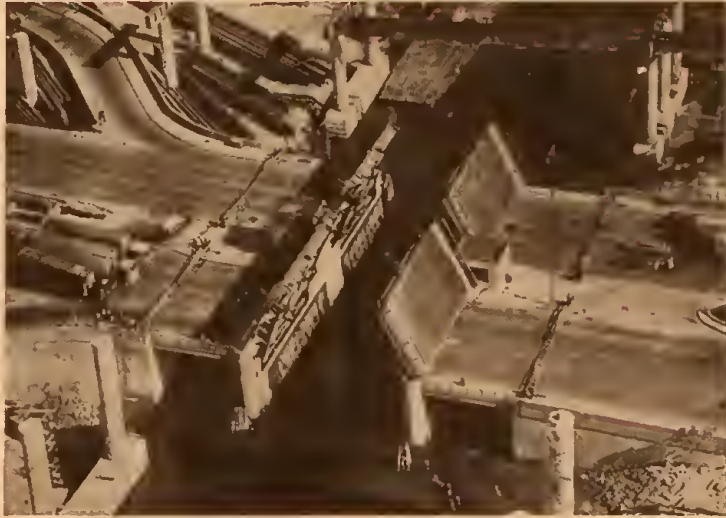
A powerful two-day strike action by thousands of New York City municipal employees that gave the local ruling class and its politicians a foretaste of workers' power, ended in a naked sellout on June 8, when Victor Gotbaum, Executive Director of District Council 37, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, and Barry Feinstein, President of Local 237, international Brotherhood of Teamsters, ordered their members back to work. The strike was called ostensibly to force the State Legislature to approve a pension plan negotiated with the city last July by District Council 37, representing nearly one-third of the city's 381,000 employees. Teamster Local 237, whose 13,000 members include 318 bridge tenders and 500 repair and maintenance workers of the Department of Water Resources, was also affected by the agreement. State retirement law requires that pension agreements negotiated with local governments be approved by the Legislature—a rubber-stamp procedure in the past.

The June 7 strike, the first in DC37's 27-year history, began before the Monday morning rush hour when bridge tenders (Teamsters) locked open 28 of the city's 29 moveable bridges. The combination of open bridges and heavy trucks, many loaded with sand with tires flattened, abandoned by DC37 workers, caused the biggest traffic jam in city history. Police units headed off attempts to cut off the water supply to Wall Street and Rockefeller's Manhattan office. On the second day, June 8, DC37 sewage treatment workers and incinerator crews walked off the job, setting up picket lines. (John DeLury, president of the United Sanitationmen's Association, ordered sanitation truck drivers to cross the picket lines—three days earlier he had threatened a general strike if any city workers were laid off as a result of budget cuts!)

Lindsay denounced the strike as "immoral, illegal and outrageous" and threatened to call out the National Guard as he tried to do in the Sanitation strike several years ago. He did call in the Army Corps of Engineers, who worked with strikebreaking supervisory personnel to get most bridges into operation on the second day of the strike (no protest registered by Gotbaum, Feinstein, or other labor "leaders"). The *New York Times* raged that the city "has become prisoner of its pampered civil service unions" and TV editorials warned of "anarchy!"

Gotbaum Accepts Settlement

On May 4 Gotbaum warned that the city would see "the biggest, fattest, sloppiest strike" in its history if Albany rejected the pension plan. Yet the settlement he accepted on June 8 gave up on every single issue involved! The settlement, worked out with the Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB), calls for re-submission of the pension plan to the 1972 Legislature, a move already scheduled as part of a general study of public pension programs, ordered when DC37's plan was killed. The settlement provides also for renegotiations between the city and union if the pension plan is not then adopted or negotiations for the difference if the full amount is not approved. Failing that, "alternative recommendations," i.e., an equivalent money package, but not the pension plan, shall be granted by the city's OCB; this agreement would not be subject to legislative approval. The agreement capitulates entirely to the principle that the State Legislature can nullify a collective bargaining agreement between unions and the city—a principle not limited to pension plans. Gotbaum had told the OCB that he was prepared to end the strike in return for an equivalent guarantee. When asked if the city had in fact promised alternative money, Lindsay stated, "A flat no. There are no promises." Teamster Local 237 president Feinstein, who had ordered his men back to work before the settlement, stated to the press that the strike had failed in its purpose. Gotbaum claimed a great "victory"—"I was very pleased," he said on June 9. A "near unanimous" vote by the DC37 Executive Committee to end the strike was reported to the press; in reality nearly half had abstained.



Main
New York City
drawbridge
stands
locked open
by
municipal workers
during
two-day strike.

Which Road in Fight for Jobs and Rights?

Struggle in NMU

A renewed period of militant struggle has begun in the U.S. labor movement and is making itself felt in the National Maritime Union. The deteriorating job situation in the industry, combined with the general economic and social crisis, has stimulated opposition to the NMU's Curran leadership, one of the most corrupt, heavy-handed bureaucratic machines in American unionism. Be-set from every quarter—an angry membership, a recent Seattle NLRB challenge to the union structure, a proliferation of organized oppositional caucuses—the Curran bureaucracy is compelled to rely ever more heavily on totalitarian methods and gross intimidation to stanch the rising tide of

The whole strike was a cynical maneuver by Gotbaum to save his own skin from his rank and file, while reminding the city that he does have something to sell out. By Sunday night, after an attempted compromise with Rockefeller and key legislators had failed to materialize, Gotbaum knew that the plan was dead for this year's session. Having promised strike action to save the pension agreement, he was forced to make a grandstand move he knew would have no effect on the Legislature. The strike was organized entirely from the top down, involving relatively few workers, and no membership votes of the affected locals were taken to ratify the back-to-work settlement.

Most important, by this dramatic but meaningless action, Gotbaum intended to head off and deflate the growing mood for a general strike against the state and city budget cuts with their threat of layoffs and job freezes. "Our union has never threatened a strike over layoffs," replied Gotbaum, when asked on June 13 whether DC37 would support a general strike of state employees called for June 16 by the Civil Service Employees Association.

Pensions

Both unions and city have long used pension benefits as a source of compromise settlements. For the city, increased pensions, with their deferred costs, are preferable to wage and benefits

membership discontent. In such a crisis situation it is imperative that seamen avoid the reformist trap and build an effective opposition on the basis of a principled transitional program of struggle against the bosses and bureaucrats.

New York Membership Rebels

In the Port of New York, the situation is developing rapidly. Over the past several months rank-and-file opposition has been repeatedly evidenced in union meetings. The NMU is tightly controlled by Joe Curran, its first and only president. Meetings are a mockery of even the rudiments of union democracy. Points of order and procedure are often blatantly ignored; the officials seem to develop a problem of multiple vision when counting their supporters' votes, combined with temporary blindness to votes against their motions. At the April meeting, the members cast overwhelming voice and standing votes repudiating the officers' suppression of their rights—votes which were simply overturned by the meeting chairman. At an earlier meeting, a member trying to defend a brother speaking at the microphone was attacked by Curran's goons. The May meeting ended in chaos, after the bureaucrats' ruled to silence a dissident against overwhelming opposition. The bureaucrats resorted to provocation, then adjourned the meeting because of "disruptions" when angry NMUers responded. The members remained inside for nearly an hour, but instead of discussing how to fight the leadership, the seamen finally resorted to picketing the union hall in what amounted to a publicity stunt. The main oppositional leader in town at the time of the meeting, James Morrissey, spent more time on the telephone contacting the press than talking to seamen.

The rank-and-file revolt within the NMU has reached such proportions that it was necessary for the officers to organize a full scale mobilization of their supporters for the New York June meeting, to keep the irate membership in check. Loyal pro-administration members were brought

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Editorial:

GOVERNMENT, GOONS and "LEFT-WING" HYPOCRISY

In recent cases of government repression and intra-movement hooliganism, wide sections of the left have revealed a confusion fatal to revolutionary practice—the inability to distinguish between one's opponents within the workers' movement and the ruling class. Groups already tarnished by physical attacks on political opponents reveal even greater revolutionary unfitness by their refusal to defend opponent tendencies against repression by the bourgeois state. Even worse, some groups have defended calling on agencies of the bourgeoisie to silence opposition. The winners, of course, are the bourgeoisie and the most class-collaborationist sections of the left, who profit from the disillusionment of many potential revolutionaries at the spectacle of organizations substituting violence for political struggle and clarification, and abandoning elementary class solidarity with their opponents in the face of ruling-class attack.

Even those organizations so rotten as to seek an accommodation with the ruling class must be defended against the state when it attacks them at the same time as we expose their treachery. The Communist Party was a rotten class-collaborationist organization in the 1950's, indeed for nearly three decades before that—the "syphilis of the working-class movement." Should revolutionaries and working-class militants then have refused to defend them during the witch hunt? Many trade unionists took just that attitude as CP leaders were being run out in the late 40's. Their assessment of the CP role in the unions was mostly correct—the CP had outdone even the right-wing bureaucrats in demanding no-strike pledges, suppressing the rank and file, etc. But what many workers failed to see was that although the CP leaders had to be removed for their betrayals, the government wanted them removed as the opening move in a campaign against all "Un-Americans" and "troublemakers." It was the job of the workers themselves to remove the CP sellouts and other business-as-usual right-wing bureaucrats. When the government took on the job, of course, it became not a cleanup in the interest of the union members, but an attack on the entire labor movement—part of the Taft-Hartley pattern of government regulation and restrictions on labor in the "public" (i.e., the bosses') interest.

The case of the government vs. James Hoffa is a more recent example. Hoffa, a business-unionist careerist, deserved to be thrown out by the Teamsters. But that is not why the government wanted to get Hoffa. Everyone knows how well the government co-exists with real or alleged corruption everywhere. They wanted him out of the way because he was a tough business unionist who had managed (for his own ends, to be sure) to win substantial gains for some of his membership. Hoffa, justifiably or not, symbolized certain bread-and-butter gains—the business-as-usual union boss who "got out of hand" and actually won more than bare minimum gains for sections of his union. The correct response from labor would have been to seek his replacement by militant leadership while at the same time fighting every attempt at government interference into union affairs, recognizing that behind its ostensible concern for union honesty, the government concealed a drive against union gains in general. Labor misleaders must be ousted by labor itself, not by the enemies of all labor. Within a union like the National Maritime Union (NMU), for example, it may someday be the unpleasant duty for militants to defend even Joseph Curran against the government, not defending his leadership but defending themselves against anti-union interference.

International

In international politics, an analogous principle applies. The Soviet Union has a political dictatorship which behaves in the manner of a typical self-serving elite stratum. In that sense its ruling caste is an irreconcilable enemy of the Soviet

workers and of revolutionary struggle worldwide. We call for its overthrow. But we call for its overthrow to clear the path for socialist development in the Soviet Union, and to facilitate revolution internationally. The State and Defense Departments want it overthrown so that the remaining gains of the October Revolution can be wiped out, and a considerable portion of the globe opened up for renewed imperialist exploitation. Thus our purposes in opposing the Soviet bureaucracy are diametrically opposed to those of the U.S. ruling class. (The argument that the Soviet Union/East Europe—some now add China to the list—are all substantially capitalist and therefore one cannot take sides in any confrontation between these states and imperialism is a trick by which people evade an unpopular stand and still consider themselves Marxists. Political opportunism and/or confusion do make strange bedfellows—ex-Maoist Progressive Labor and the International Socialists both cling to this basically "third camp" conception.)

Gangster Violence and WL Hypocrisy

The American Left has recently witnessed numerous instances of groups attempting to beat their opponents into silence. Members of the pseudo-Trotskyist Workers League (WL) selling their literature on April 9 outside the office of the Puerto Rican nationalist Movimiento Pro-Independencia (MPI) in New York City were attacked without provocation, and three WL members were injured, one seriously. The Workers League then issued an appeal for united defense against this hooliganism (Bulletin, April 19). Does the Workers League "deserve" defense against either government repression, as in the Juan Farinas case, or from gangsterism within the radical movement? Certainly not, if a particular group's ethics and honesty were the criterion for defense support. The Workers League has defended beatings of its own opponents, and has defended violence against other radicals on the part of groups toward which it temporarily felt appetites. The Workers League's disgraceful conduct has done a great disservice to the development of anti-gangster consciousness on the left. But to fail to defend the WL's rights—and thus the principle of free speech within the workers' movement—would be to sink to the WL's own abysmal level.

In an "Open Letter to Workers, Minorities, and Youth" in the April 19 Bulletin, WL National Secretary Tim Wohlforth makes several proposals, concluding with an appeal for united front defense against hooligan attacks.

What Wohlforth's appeal in fact shows is that his understanding of workers' democracy is on a par with that of a union bureaucrat who sees very clearly the need for all-class defense the moment his own hide is threatened by attack, and hopes no one remembers his record of years of gangsterism against the movement to which he appeals. The Workers League and its international bloc, the "International Committee" (IC), has violated every one of its own demands. The Workers League and its British mentors in particular constitute a veritable textbook example of Stalinist-style violence and betrayals of proletarian ethics carried out in the name of Trotskyism.

Wohlforth on Violence

The following underlined quotations are taken from Wohlforth's "Open Letter." He demands:

"That all organizations reject and denounce all physical attacks on other tendencies in the working class movement..." The Workers League has not only violated its own proclaimed principle, but its rapidly shifting political appetites have led it to make unity overtures toward the very formations against which it had upheld the use of violence!

In 1967 California members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) were attacked while dis-

tributing election literature by members of the then-Maoist Progressive Labor Party (PL). At that time the response of the Workers League was to solidarize with PL's attack, describing the SWP as "scabbing on the Chinese Revolution." (The WL briefly held a position of enthusiastic "critical support" to the Red Guard pro-Mao wing of the Chinese bureaucracy.) No defense against gangsterism was offered the SWP then! But 1967 was the year that the WL, following its British mentor, Gerry Healy's Socialist Labour League (SLL), characterized the SWP as "outside the camp of Trotskyism and of the working class" and hence, presumably, fair game for its opponents, even Maoists. Three years later, the Bulletin was repeatedly calling for unity discussions with the SWP-YSA leadership. So in 1967, we are to assume, the SWP was so rotten as to be outside the pale even of defense against gangsterism, but in 1970 the SWP had improved so drastically as to merit unity overtures from Healy, Wohlforth & Co. Needless to say, Healy-Wohlforth's prior behavior gave the SWP-YSA leaders a perfect excuse, if they needed any, for rejecting the IC overtures.

The Queen's Justice

"That we specifically affirm the right of all tendencies to freely present their views and to sell their literature; that we oppose all government or hooligan attacks on these rights."

"The Workers League is prepared to come before an independent workers' commission of inquiry..."

The grossest example of what Wohlforth must conceal now in his defense overtures is the behavior of Gerry Healy of the SLL, who in one widely publicized incident violated all of these principles. In 1967 Healy not only had Ernest Tate (a supporter of the revisionist SWP—"United Secretariat" wing of ostensible Trotskyism) beaten for selling an anti-Healy pamphlet outside a meeting, but threatened him with libel proceedings for publicizing the incident! (The "Tate Affair" is fully documented in detail in an issue of Spartacist magazine, #9, Jan. - Feb. 1967.) So much for the call to "oppose all government or hooligan attacks on these rights." Did Healy accept an "independent workers' commission of inquiry" into this case? No, he was engaged in the very opposite—an appeal through the courts on grounds of "libel" to stop Tate's protests! No weapon is too blunt for Healy and Wohlforth—not back-alley violence, not even the "Queen's Justice." The Healyite practice and public defense of hooliganism and use of the courts against opponents has created the anomalous and tragic situation that in Britain such anti-proletarian swinishness is more closely associated with "Trotskyist" than with Stalinist practice.

Slander

"That all tendencies, whatever their political differences, reject the charge that Trotskyists, and the Workers League in particular, are agents of the CIA and FBI..." But again the WL has violated its own "Open Letter." Presumably the Workers League can attack the Trotskyist Spartacist League (SL) any time it wishes, since the WL is on public record slandering the SL as "the finger-man for world capitalism" (Bulletin, Dec. 2, 1968), a charge they have never retracted. Such Moscow Trials-style slander is always available as a handy rationalization for "left" gangsterism. Simple, and "logical," it is the assertion that one's victim is not legitimately a part of the rad-

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Workers' Action

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The current 5-year contract of the West Coast International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) expires on July 1, 1971, and it appears certain that the Longshoremen face a bitter fight for their very existence as a union.

Liberals and radical fakery have long touted the ILWU as a "progressive" union because of its verbal stance on political questions like racism and the Vietnam war. Much of this "progressive" image has been due to ILWU head Harry Bridges, who for many years has been the hero of U.S. Stalinism, the Communist Party (CP). Bridges has long followed a CP-supported policy of "labor peace" and "collective bargaining" which drastically undermined the union's strength, especially over the last decade. In collaborating with the employers, Bridges has gone so far as to take a seat on the Port Commission which oversees the Port of San Francisco! Since the union's founding in the San Francisco general strike of 1934, it has engaged in one major strike—in 1948, during which President Truman ordered in troops to load struck ships.

For any labor leader, no matter how well-meaning, there are only two roads: narrow "business unionism," which results in betrayal of the workers to unemployment and poverty; or a perspective of a revolutionary struggle for socialism, which alone can eliminate poverty. Sooner or later the fundamental question arises: Who should own the wealth—the workers or the bourgeoisie? Harry Bridges long ago chose the latter, so like every other labor bureaucrat his task has been to pressure the capitalists to give a little bit more. In a time of general capitalist attack on workers' organizations, such tactics can only prove fatal.

"Mechanization and Modernization"

The roots of the present situation go back to the 1961 Longshore contract with the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) in which the Bridges leadership agreed to a program of "Mechanization and Modernization" (M&M) in return for various monetary benefits. Assuming, as Bridges

LONGSHORE UNION IN LIFE-OR-DEATH STRUGGLE

did, that it was "natural" for the PMA to own the means of production, how could one possibly object to "modernization" and "progress"? In return for this concession, the ILWU got a \$30 million special retirement and wage guarantee fund. Wages were to be guaranteed on the basis of a 35-hour straight-time week. Retirees with 25 years in the industry at age 65 to 88 were to get a \$7900 special payment over and above pensions. With all the special catches, however, few could benefit, and the wage guarantee fund was practically untouched over the entire contract period. When the fund was finally divided at the end of 1966, it amounted to \$980 after taxes per man!

The employers won additional concessions in 1961. By 1959 the union had begun the establishment of a second-class union member—the "B" man—who worked alongside the "A" men but had fewer rights and had to wait for "A" status. This obviously divided the union. The 1961 contract deepened the division by excluding non-"A" men from payments under the M&M agreement even though they were working alongside the "A" men! Further, the contract authorized speed-up through the phrase "unnecessary men": "The employer shall not be required to hire unnecessary men" (Sec. 15.2). This allowed the employer to use smaller gangs and larger loads. The basic hold gang was effectively—through tricky wording and interpretation—reduced from six to four men.

The 1968 contract further undermined the union's strength through cutbacks in manning scales. The two "swing men" who could be added

for one type of operation (hand-pushed big loads) were eliminated. The new "robot"-unit operation, where pallet boards of cargo are stowed by machine, eliminated the gang boss (union foreman) and forced a minimum of two men to perform many different operations, with at most four men in the hold. Most dangerous is notorious Section 9.43, which allowed the employers to bypass the regular union hiring hall for certain jobs and build up a pool of "steady men," rather than distributing the available work daily through the hiring hall. This greatly weakens the hiring hall system, a major gain of the 1934 strike, and thus weakens the union's control over conditions.

Containerization Sellout

By far the most important development in the last decade of the industry is containerization—the shipping of goods in large steel containers which can be transferred by crane to different modes of transport. Once stuffed, the containers require only a crane operator at the docks, thereby eliminating the longshoremen. Although by 1966 the Matson Co. and other companies had major containerization programs going, neither the 1961 or 1966 ILWU contracts made any specific references to containers or containerization! Thus locked into no-strike contracts for a decade, the ILWU leadership gave employers a free hand to undercut the union. (From a claimed membership of 65,000 in 1959, the union rolls have dropped to 55,000 today. The loss in longshore jobs is probably much greater since the present figures include over 20,000 Hawaiian pineapple, sugar and miscellaneous workers.)

Finally in 1968 the Bridges leadership attempted to return the lost jobs by negotiations to bring all container-stuffing and emptying to areas under ILWU-Longshore Division control. Many of the so-called Container Freight Stations (CFS) had by this time fallen into Teamster and ILWU-Warehouse Division locals so there was an additional jurisdictional problem as well. The employers' demands were very heavy in the 1968 negotiations, and only a job action early in 1969 led to an agreement, which was not very good, but which Bridges favored "in order to nail down jurisdiction." Basically, the CFS Supplement to the regular contract agreed to "have all container work brought to CFS on the dock or in areas adjacent to the dock on or before June 30, 1971" (Sec. 1.5). The agreement could hardly be called a victory: for one, the regular Longshoremen's work categories—lift-driver, carman and Ross Carrier driver—do not exist at Container Freight Stations, but are included in the catch-all category of "utility man," which gets less pay than any of them! Second, the CFS men work steadily for one company, thereby strengthening the "steady-man" system and undermining the hiring

Even with the weaknesses in the CFS agreement, the employers were not satisfied and went ahead with their plans to destroy the union. In Feb. 1971 the ILWU set up a fact-finding committee which is said to have traced thousands of cases of illegal container-stuffing. In April Local 10 set up pickets and tied up six ships handling illegal cargo in San Francisco. The action quickly spread but was halted by an agreement to set up a new fact-finding committee and renewed pledges from the employers to abide by the 1969 agreement.

New Fissures Emerge

The membership is becoming furious, and this is reflected in renewed attacks on the leadership and cracks in the old bureaucracy. Initially, of course, the new movement is undirected and confused. In Local 10, this unrest has broken out in increased financial squabbles, during which the membership recently turned down a much-needed dues increase in protest against the leadership. There are grapevine rumors that the International Secretary-Treasurer, Louis Goldblatt, is out to dump President Bridges—which would mean no change at all. Responding to the gossip, the leadership has tried to put on a public show of solidarity.

Reacting to the new rank-and-file restiveness, *People's World* (the CP paper which has always adored Harry Bridges) now appears to have second thoughts, in preparation for dumping Bridges

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Government, Goons and "Left-Wing" Hypocrisy

ical movement at all but rather part of the ruling class apparatus, i.e., a police agent. In this way, Progressive Labor wriggled free of its duty to defend Weatherman against prosecution; they are alleged to be cops. Police agents exist; but simply to assert such a charge against an opponent in order to avoid the unpleasant duty of defending him (or refraining from beating him) is utterly destructive of consciousness. As the WL and other political bandits well know, slander works—up to a point—otherwise it would not be so popular. Most liberal public opinion, after all, and the Stalinist-led working class as well, accepted the preposterous charges against Trotsky and almost all the Old Bolsheviks at the Moscow Trials in the 'thirties.

"Help us to defend ourselves and to prevent similar attacks in the future." In February, 1970, both the Workers League and the SWP refused to sign a letter circulated by the Spartacist League protesting being driven away by Panther guards from distributing literature outside a Panther "Birthday Party" rally in Berkeley, California.

PL: Hooligan Sectarianism

Perhaps the most "consistent" position on defense against gangsterism and government is held by Progressive Labor (the Workers League's consistent violation of such principles has been verbally broken with Wohlforth's "Open Letter"). PL's policy seems to be to defend no one outside their own organization, and attack anyone (except as modified by the size and popularity of the group in question). PL will not defend Weatherman but will defend the more popular Black Panthers—though they are in fundamental political disagreement with both groups. They, and the PL-controlled sections of SDS, refused defense support to Juan Farinas, now a member of the Workers League, in his prosecution for anti-war "crimes" allegedly committed while he was functioning as a member of PL! (Was this a warning to PL members considering leaving the organization?) And they refused support from "Trotskyites" when PL member Bill Epton faced a "criminal anarchy" frame-up growing out of the Harlem police riots of 1964.

Where attacks on other tendencies are concerned, PL takes a back seat to no one. On PL's

recent May Day March in New York, Spartacist salesmen were beaten; at a demonstration held June 19, a Spartacist salesman in New York was knocked to the ground and beaten, and the attackers appealed to nearby police for help in clearing out the "troublemakers." In May 1970 PL-SDS attacked a YSA member at a Boston SMC conference; when the YSA members defended him, PL-SDS retaliated by storming a SMC meeting at MIT on May 24. Such tactics represent partly a genuine ignorance in PL of the most elementary meaning of workers' democracy and proletarian means of struggle. Physical attacks on groups to one's left are a hallmark of Stalinism, and the attacks on Spartacist are partly an attempt to harden up PLers organizationally against Trotskyism, since PL has now repudiated Maoism and has no defense against Trotskyism politically. The violence against organizations to PL's right (like the SWP-YSA which PL has often criticized, essentially correctly, for their class collaborationism) actually strengthens the right wing of the movement, as it enables their leaderships to link left criticism with Stalinist hooliganism, and reinforces the loyalty of the members to an organization under attack. PL's position seems to be that every group has an equal right to beat anybody else up, and an equal right to face the repression all alone, one group being suppressed after another.

Defend the Left!

Fortunately for groups like Progressive Labor and the Workers League, a group need not be decent in order to merit support from revolutionaries against the cops and courts, and against hoodlum violence when it is practiced against them instead of by them. Defense of such groups—coupled with intransigent criticism like the defense of misleaders in the trade union movement against outside attack—is a necessity proceeding from larger requirements of the movement as a whole. Such groups are part of the workers' and radical movement, although a malignant part, and it is within that movement that their rottenness must be exposed and combatted. Neither government frame-ups nor physical attacks from other sections of the radical movement can be tolerated if the necessary process of political clarification is to take place and a revolutionary party built.

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No More Peace Picnics for Labor Fakers and Politicians!

BRING WORKING-CLASS POWER AGAINST THE WAR!

The trade unions today have only two roads open to them: reformist conciliation to the capitalists or revolutionary anti-capitalist struggle based on a transitional program. There is no middle course. All attempts at a partial break with the system are doomed to failure, since the interests of the workers are in complete contradiction with the system at all points and the bourgeoisie ultimately uses any leader who in the slightest way compromises on the question of the continued existence of capitalism.

This is the only context in which to judge the role of labor's so-called "progressive" bureaucrats in the anti-war movement, displayed in the recent April 24th peace marches in Washington and San Francisco. The chief organizers of these annual peace picnics, the reformists of the SWP-YSA-SMC, brag of the great increase in "labor" participation in the marches. This mostly refers to endorsements by trade union bureaucrats, but also, they emphasize, a great increase in "involvement" of the rank-and-file. This turns out to consist primarily of attempts on the part of a few extra zealous trade union leaderships, such as District 65 and 1199 DHW in New York, to recruit backing for the marches from their members. What we're not told, of course, is that all these bureaucrats are ex-supporters of the war, most of them clearly and outspokenly so. The entire UAW executive board, including Emil Mazey, for instance, voted to endorse the war before 1965.

In some cases (local 400, city employees in San Francisco) membership meetings voted overwhelmingly to endorse the march. More typical, however, was the kind of action which took place in the Alameda County Central Labor Council, in which a majority of delegates overturned delaying tactics by the leadership designed to sabotage endorsement. Labor Council delegates are invariably the hand-picked representatives of the local union bureaucrats, and their actions in several California labor councils besides this one (as well as anti-war actions by "left" bureaucrats as a whole) must be seen as a struggle of one wing of the trade union bureaucracy against another.

Bureaucrats Face Exposure

The context of these developments is the rising tide of class struggle and attempts of rank-and-file workers to defend their gains against increasing attack by the bosses. All the ruling-class measures designed to deal with the deepening economic crisis take the form of attacks on the working class: wage-price controls, curbs on the right to strike, mass layoffs, attacks on welfare (last refuge of the unemployed), spending millions in tax money to prop up bankrupt corporations, continuing inflation, and disguised devaluation of the dollar. The clear need for defense against these attacks combined with a dramatic rise in rank-and-file militancy has put the bureaucrats on the spot. Militant teamsters are now demanding strike action to free Hoffa, despite Hoffa's clear record of opposition to any such rank-and-file action over his case. Rank-and-filers are protesting against bureaucratic squabbling over crumbs, as in the Teamster-ILWU dispute over container stuffing on the West Coast. Contract negotiations, wildcat strikes, demands which go way beyond the capitalists' immediate ability to grant concessions, together with open opposition to the war, hatred of Nixon and disillusionment with the two parties of capitalism are increasingly tormenting the professional compromisers and conciliators who run the trade unions.

These fakers, who based themselves on the anti-communism and apparent class peace of the previous period to advance their personal careers in the "business" of unionism, are now forced to lead limited struggles in order to retain some credibility with the angry ranks and some ability to continue conciliating, compromising, and selling out in favor of accommodation to the system. This tense situation has led naturally to disputes within the bureaucracy over how to proceed. The dominant right wing, most strongly representative of the "cold war" anti-communism, led by George Meany, Joseph Curran, the building trades, etc., is being challenged by a broad variety of "progressives" who seek to appear more militant in order to strengthen their own position, as in Reuther's cold split with

Meany to form the "militant" ALA. That these "progressives" are really no different is proven time and again. In the fifties and early sixties, they were all practically indistinguishable from Meany himself. Now, after the war and the ruling class that started it have driven the workers to desperation, these "leaders" protest. Something is wrong; we need new leaders, they say. But before the last election, when all the "lefts" of the New York labor movement mobilized against the Meany supporters at the state AFL-CIO convention, the question they raised was which Democratic Party candidate to support!

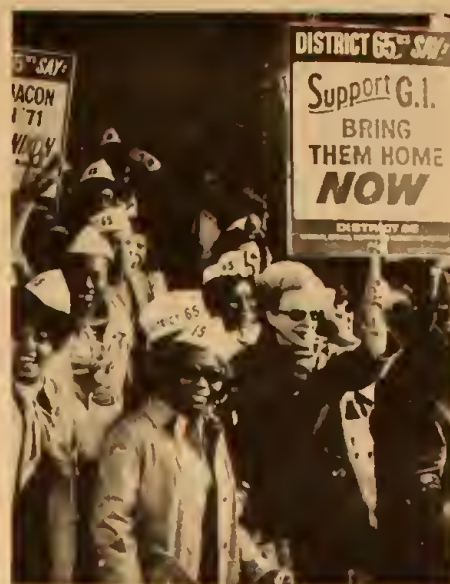
Progressive Cover for Sellouts

The "single-issue" anti-war movement, for which the SWP-YSA has been the chief ideologue and organizer from the very beginning, has played right into the hands of these "left" reformers. It has handed the new careerists a "movement" which appears militant but which is actually perfectly safe and compatible with both the continued existence of capitalism and, importantly for them, their continued existence as professional conciliators and reformists within the labor movement.

But the war question cannot possibly be separated from the class question or the class struggle as a whole. That is why the much-louted "unity" between the various "nationalists" (as well as feminist, homophobic, etc.) groupings at the marches is so tenuous, fragile, temporary — in fact, non-existent. The various "nationalists," so the theory goes, who normally pursue their contradictory, me-first politics separate from each other, find their "common ground" in the anti-war demonstrations. This did not, however, prevent the Brown Berets from asserting their "nationalist" machismo against everyone else in the San Francisco speakers' rally.

"Labor" is viewed as though it were just another "nationalist" grouping, finally splashing into the pool in a big way. The bureaucrats are assured of being treated like little kings, eagerly counted and appreciated for the size of their "mass" followings. Their role as betrayers of their own members will not be challenged; after all, "self-determination for everybody" means that all the little tin-pot despots and aspiring bureaucrats get to run their own bailiwicks without "criticism" from "outside." The SWP-YSA adheres to this in practice — making only harmless, occasional, general "criticisms" and pushing "community control" instead of class struggle and generally ignoring work in the unions. The class struggle, the only real force uniting the interests of most women and blacks and other minorities with each other and with the interests of the working class as a whole is deliberately papered over with this false grab-bag multi-class "unity."

Thus the "left" bureaucrats are able to appear militant on the war, which is, of course, intimately tied up with inflation and unemployment, while selling out the real struggle around these very issues. They can mouth slogans about the war and the role it plays without committing themselves to a serious struggle on any class question — including the war itself. Clearly these fakers' commitment to opposing the war does not extend far enough to include anti-war strike action by their unions, for example; that would be too dangerous! But speaking next to the same capitalist politicians with whom they regularly hob-nob — as well as some who are openly anti-labor — at a rally that is assured to be "legal" and "peaceful" (as



Members of the
Direct Mail Local of
District 65, NCDWA
in Washington, D. C. on April 24.

though those were moral categories) by parade marshalls whose only militancy is directed against "leftist disrupters," cannot be considered very dangerous even by a labor bureaucrat.

New York, which saw some of the "best" response by labor (trains and buses were hired by District 65 and 1199 to get the members to Washington) is the best example, since the crisis is particularly acute there. "Fun City's" politically ambitious wonder-boy liberal anti-war speaker Mayor Lindsay has exactly two ideas for dealing with the grinding economic and financial bind in the city: more municipal taxes (on the workers and poor, of course) and laying off up to 90,000 city employees. If he doesn't get you one way, he gets you the other. The very same bureaucrats who have been selling out over the layoffs already going on, as in welfare (SSEU-371) over the anti-strike Taylor Law, and over the rotten conditions of work in New York (see "New Era Closes," WA #7) are the ones the SWP is so glad to have in its coalition. Those who urge their members to "fight the war and racism" by marching on Washington are actively sabotaging the growing struggle against the layoffs. The anti-war movement as presently constituted is a made-to-order cover for their betrayals.

Beyond Protest

The most elementary understanding of the war and its connection to the class struggle leads inescapably to the conclusion that the only meaningful anti-war movement is one which fights against all sections of the trade union bureaucracy, around a revolutionary working-class program. "Protesting" the war in the company of the Lindsays, while ignoring the class fight against layoffs, inflation, etc., is a gross betrayal. The SWP-YSA has lent a "left" cover to this charade ever since it adopted, in 1965, the single-issue perspective and began the drive to lead a "mass" movement on an opportunist basis.

Only the program of turning the anti-war movement into an anti-capitalist movement points the way forward. Anything less can only leave the serious anti-war militant with the questions "What has been accomplished?" and "What next?" A working-class program must include open solidarity with the revolutionary struggle of the Indo-Chinese workers and peasants (although giving no political confidence to the Stalinist leadership), aggressive struggle against the inflation (for price controls), layoffs, unemployment, etc., caused by the war-related economic crisis, and a political struggle not just for a slogan acceptable to the bureaucrats but for strike action against the war as well as for a new revolutionary trade union leadership, and a political party of labor based on this program to break the hold of the two capitalist war parties. Only this program can break both the anti-war movement and the trade union movement out of reformist accommodation to the system. Anything less is as meaningless and impotent as Senator Hartke addressing a Saturday rock concert on the mall.

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Struggle in NMU

in from other ports; many members believe they were paid for this. Even NMU National President Joseph Curran was at the podium for the first time in years; only his presence prevented a recurrence of the events at the May meeting. The antics of the bureaucrats reflected their acute awareness of the rising pressure of the seamen's militancy. Robert's Rules of Order were flagrantly violated, discussions cut short, and the usual vote counts, distorted to favor the officers, were reported.

The first vote, however, revealed open defiance by the rank-and-file and exposed the rest of the meeting as a sham. On a procedural motion to place New Business first on the agenda, the bureaucrats recorded a vote of 163 for to 620 against. Feeling confident, Curran offered a recount with oppositionists also counting. This vote was recorded 257 for to 277 against the motion. Although the officers manipulated this vote also, it was clear that the opposition remained determined and won in the face of the polished Curran machine.

The most significant development at the June meeting indicated a new turn in the rank-and-file militant struggle. Curran made his usual slanders, accusing oppositionists of being "S. I. U. agents" or "paid stooges." But he dropped allusions to the "Commies" (Communist Party) concentrating instead on the "Trotskyite" label for some of his opponents. Pushing one of his pet deals which would sink \$2 million of the NMU pension fund into a passenger ship company, and while thwarting (alternative) proposals for the job rotation system, Curran repeatedly referred to "Trotskyite" forces and ideas. At one point Curran specifically referred to a leaflet issued by the Group 2 Rights Committee of the NMU Militant-Solidarity Caucus as "Trotskyite." Significantly, Curran spent more time warning the members of dark conspiratorial forces within the union than of the real threat to the union's existence posed by the shipping bosses; he obviously feels closer to management and government than to militant forces in his own union, "Trotskyite" and otherwise.

Reinforcing the growing discontent have been the Group 2 seamen—the NMU's second-class members who are hired onto ships only after those with the required seetime are taken. Excluded from full union membership and union meetings, the Group 2's have repeatedly gathered outside the hall to distribute leaflets demanding an end to the group system which divides the union. The seetime required for Group 1 status and full union membership has been continually increased, so that many seamen who have been sailing for up to 5 years have not been able to accumulate the 800 days (2 years and 2 months) of seetime within a 5-year period currently required for Group 1 status. While union officers defend the group system because of the scarcity of jobs for "regular seamen," their real motivation is fear of the younger seamen, who feel they have more to gain and less to lose in a struggle against the bureaucracy.

The seamen face a desperate situation. The inflation which eats away their real earnings is compounded by acute problems within the maritime industry: job attrition through containerization and automation and the owners' use of cheap labor through foreign ship registration. Union officers work hand in hand with the companies, saddling their members with long-term contracts (the previous contract covered a 9-year period!), reduced manning scales, antiquated work rules and substandard wages (until June 1971 many job categories were paid less than \$100 per week). Enforcement of even the existing contracts is minimal.

Three opposition groups within the NMU have organized against the union administration. The first formed was the "Committee for NMU Democracy," led by James Morrissey, which issues *The Call*. Two split-offs from Morrissey's group developed into the "NMU Militant-Solidarity Caucus" (MSC), issuing *The Beacon*, edited by Gene Herson, and the "Seamen's Defense Committee" of Gaston Guyon, which issues *S.O.S.* (Save Our Ships). Only Morrissey's group and the MSC have maintained a sustained level of activity. The MSC has been instrumental in organizing the Group 2 seamen through the "NMU Group 2 Rights Committee."

Morrissey's Liberalism

Vital issues divide the two major oppositions. Morrissey's group holds a bread-and-butter and

simple union democracy approach; the MSC contrasts to this self-limiting liberal perspective a full program dealing with the immediate and long-term interests of NMU members: the Vietnam war, unemployment, racial oppression, anti-labor laws and the role of the government and the capitalist Democratic and Republican parties. It is essential that NMUers understand how their particular problems of jobs, wages and conditions are related to the struggles of all workers and the organization of society as a whole. As long as the capitalists own the means of production and control the government, there can be no real or lasting gains for the great majority of workers. The struggle against Joe Curran and his thugs must be inseparable from the fight against the capitalist system which Curran and his ilk represent within the labor movement.

Morrissey's approach is fundamentally inadequate to confront even the immediate problems of the seamen, which go beyond simple economic trade unionism. Curran's response to the danger to seamen's jobs posed by foreign ship registration is to cuddle up to the Nixon government with social-patriotic rhetoric about "American flag" shipping. Morrissey has no answer to this, for the only real solution is a demand which does not pit workers against one another along national lines but which unites them in mutual solidarity: U.S. seamen and longshoremen must demand that the workers on any ship which touches a U.S. port must be paid U.S. union-scale wages—a demand which both expresses international solidarity among workers and also removes the bosses' extra-profit incentive for foreign registration—and back up their demand with the refusal to service any ships not paying a decent wage.

Nationalization

Another crucial issue which implicitly raises an anti-capitalist solution is nationalization. In 1968 *The Beacon* (MSC) began calling for the "nationalization of the U.S. merchant marine under seamen's control" to eliminate the companies' lucrative government subsidy drain, improve efficiency and create more jobs with money saved from profiteering operators. When the last of U.S. passenger ships on the East Coast were laid up several months ago, *The Call* (Morrissey) proposed nationalization of passenger ships. *The Beacon* criticized both the limitation of the proposal to passenger ships and *The Call's* failure to take a stand on the vital issue of seamen's union rights under nationalization, especially the right to strike. Nationalization of shipping under seamen's control would not in itself solve the seamen's problems, although for the seamen to see the need for centralization and elimination of private profiteering in their industry would be an important step forward. Any particular branch of industry could be nationalized by a capitalist government for its own ends with no change in class relations and no substantial improvement in workers' conditions. At the same time, however, nationalization is an incursion upon the "right" of private ownership of the means of production—the foundation of capitalism. The correct Marxist attitude toward limited nationalization is one of critical support from the standpoint of the workers' interests. Our support is distinguished from piecemeal reform (e.g. the nationalization program of the British Labour Party) in its insistence upon workers' control, reliance on organization of the working class to safeguard the partial gains won and using the question of partial nationalization to build a workers' movement which will take control of the entire economy and state.

Job Rotation

Another critical issue in the NMU is job rotation. The laying-up of older vessels used in the Vietnam war sea-lift and of the passenger ships, along with the effects of automation and foreign ship registration, has severely reduced the available jobs. The union bureaucracy's response has been to impose stricter requirements for retirement and reduce other benefits in an attempt to squeeze members out of the industry—a direct bid to ease pressure on the companies. Both Morrissey's group and the MSC are calling for a genuine rotation system for jobs. This would mean that each job assignment would last a limited period (7 months) after which the seamen would return to the union hiring hall and register to get another job. While ashore, vacation pay and unemployment insurance coverage would be provided to maintain a continuous income. The West Coast seamen's unions have had a similar arrangement for many years. The present NMU procedure permits jobs to be taken on a steady basis, allowing

a minority of seamen to monopolize the limited number of jobs and freeze out the large body of union brothers and sisters.

The demand for a job rotation system, which would provide jobs for all seamen, has profound significance for all workers in conjunction with MSC's fight for demands to place the burden of full employment on the companies and the government. A program for full employment through such means as "30 for 40" (shortening the work week with no loss in pay) is an alternative to the "guaranteed annual income" welfare system currently touted by labor bureaucrats.

The NMU is only one union among many which encourages the development of a small stratum of senior members in "job trust" situations: their relatively greater income and security in a tightly-controlled small pool of jobs is a powerful conservatizing factor in the unions. (In many unions it has obvious racist overtones as well; black workers are far less likely to get the good jobs and keep them long enough to build up seniority.) No union can be a fighting unit for the interests of workers as long as it encourages the monopolization of jobs by a select few union members. But the fight against job monopolization ("homesteading") is little more than a proposal to share unemployment equitably unless it is coupled with demands for measures such as "30 for 40," nationalization, etc. Thus Morrissey's liberal approach will be unable to mobilize most of the high-seniority NMUers to fight homesteading because he cannot demonstrate a perspective of ensuring the younger members' equal rights without taking away some of the older members' jobs.

This relatively simple question is unfortunately complicated by the entry onto the scene of the professional confusion-mongers of *The Bulletin*, publication of the so-called Workers League. In its attempt to "intervene" in the NMU, *The Bulletin*, which a few years ago distinguished itself by shamelessly tail-ending Morrissey, has now come up with the fantastic position that both the MSC and Morrissey are accepting Curran's program on job rotation (*Bulletin*, June 14). (Curran's "alternative" to job rotation, of course, is to require seamen to take their vacations, opening up a small number of extra jobs.) In order to lump the MSC and Morrissey together, *The Bulletin* conveniently ignores the rest of the MSC program for extending the anti-homesteading fight beyond a simple democratic reform to a fight for jobs for all at the bosses' expense. Pointing to the inadequacy of the job rotation proposal in itself, *The Bulletin's* position is, by implication, that the present unfair hiring practices should continue until a struggle for such measures as "30 for 40" is successful. This stand is a direct affront to the majority of seamen who are the victims of the Curran-management-sponsored practice of homesteading.

Role of the Government

Another key issue separating the two NMU oppositions is the question of using government agencies, particularly the courts, to remedy internal union disputes. Morrissey's group has continually advocated using the capitalist courts, and its leaders have on a number of occasions sought recourse for union affairs by appealing to the government. The MSC has strongly condemned this practice of relying on the government, pointing out that significant gains will not be won through the courts, NLRB, etc.; the most that can be expected are token gestures. In exchange for these tokens, Morrissey's committee abandons the basic principle of class independence, and encourages militants to rely on their class enemies instead of on the struggle for consciousness among fellow union members. (It is ironic that *The Bulletin*, which slanders the MSC as no different from Morrissey over homesteading, has itself defended using government agencies against opponents in the labor and radical movements.) *The Beacon* emphasizes that the government, run in the interests of big business, will not permit—much less facilitate—freedom within the unions for militant labor activity. A recent MSC leaflet on job rotation urges NMU seamen to rely on their own organized strength. Militants can never overcome the widespread illusion of government "impartiality" by appealing to it for aid.

Struggle for Revolutionary Leadership

With Morrissey's attitude toward the government, no fundamental struggle by the workers is possible, least of all a revolutionary struggle to appropriate the product of their own labor. Consistent with his liberal reformist outlook, Morrissey does not see the need for an independent political party of the working class; Morrissey shares Curran's treacherous class-collaborationism, the difference being that Curran hobnobs with

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Pension Strike Sellout

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

concessions with their more immediate impact on the budget. The union bureaucrats in turn use the increased pension benefits to dress up a cheaper money package and obscure other sellouts. The DC37 plan provides for retirement at half pay at age 55 after 20 years of service up to a maximum of full pay after 40 years. The latter was highly touted, even though very few workers ever reach 40 years service. Nonetheless, it is substantially better than pensions in the private sector, and businessmen have recently been complaining to Lindsay and Albany of demands from their employees for pensions equal to government workers. Gotbaum's tactic is to aim the fire at Albany, leaving Lindsay in the position of the "friend of labor" supporting a dead measure, after he only feebly recommended it to the Legislature in the first place. His acquiescence to the Legislature's rejection of the city-approved pension enables Lindsay to argue strongly against other "excessive" demands in negotiations later this year with sanitationmen and firemen. Gotbaum is a long-time political supporter of Lindsay. He mobilized DC37 to support him for Mayor in the 1969 election, killing a voted work action by the welfare workers Local 371 because it would have "embarrassed" Lindsay and "jeopardized" his election.

But a "friend" at City Hall isn't going to do much for the three bridge tenders suspended the day after the strike ended on charges of removing equipment from three bridges. Other workers have been questioned by the staff of the Commissioner of Investigation and face possible prosecution by the District Attorney. In addition, the city announced that the 8000 strikers are to be notified of possible penalties for violating the Taylor Law which forbids strikes by public employees and provides for fines of two days' loss of pay for each day on strike plus one year's loss of Civil Service tenure. DC37 could be fined an unlimited amount and could suffer a loss in dues check-off for a year.

Any attempt to penalize the workers or the unions should be met by immediate city-wide strike action in a united front of all city employee unions against the Taylor Law. The response of the "militant" strike leaders? "We won't fight it because we broke the law for a bigger principle. We'll take the punishment," said Gotbaum on June 13 after notification by the city. Teamster Local 237 president Feinshtein took the same no-fight position: "My reaction is that our membership will be proud to have their pay checks deducted whatever amount is determined and deem it little to have paid for the war we waged." (Gotbaum's salary is \$31,000 compared to the \$7,500 average salary he claims for DC37 members.) Gotbaum and Feinstein hide behind the integrity of "the law" to keep their memberships from taking "irresponsible" strike action, as have Shanker of the United Federation of Teachers, and DeLury of the Sanitationmen in previous strikes. Preventing massive strike action is a primary function of their jobs as the "labor lieutenants of capital."

The Lindsay-Gotbaum Crisis

With the pension dispute conveniently shelved until 1972, all that has been accomplished is a return to the critical situation of April. At that time Mayor Lindsay announced in screaming headlines that as many as 90,000 jobs could be eliminated through layoffs and job-freeze attrition on July 1, the beginning of the new fiscal year, as a result of an alleged \$1 billion deficit in the proposed 1971-72 city budget. At that time Lindsay presented a series of four budget options with varying budget totals depending on amounts of restored state aid and newly authorized taxes, ranging in descending order from "a forward looking budget" providing for expansion of city services and continued new hiring, to "a very tight 'mandator,' 'budget' demanding a total job freeze for the fiscal year with substantial personnel cutbacks through 'attrition.'" The other two options included elimination of either 50,000 or 90,000 jobs in hospitals, sanitation, education, welfare, firemen, etc., with various severe cutbacks in essential services including closing of hospitals and welfare centers, no freshman class at City University, elimination of drug treatment programs, etc. This "doomsday scenario" served to place the burden of responsibility for layoffs and

cuts in services on Rockefeller and the State Legislature who had already reduced the amount of revenue sharing state aid to the city when voting the State budget in April, and who had to authorize any new taxes requested by the city to balance its budget.

Two months of horse trading, charges and counter-charges of exaggerated or underestimated revenues and spending followed the April announcement, which hit supposedly "secure" city employees like a blockbuster. In fact it was this cynical manipulation of the fears of city workers and residents in general—especially the poor and working poor—that was the principal leverage in the Lindsay arsenal in pressing for his administration's budget program.

On June 9, the Republican-dominated Legislature, with Democratic support, authorized a \$525 million increased tax package. The overwhelming bulk of the new taxes will come out of the city wage-earner's pocket. The biggest increase is an 80 per cent rise in the city income tax. Other major taxes included an extension of the thoroughly regressive sales tax. New Yorkers now pay a total 7 per cent sales tax (a 3 per cent city sales tax and a state sales tax recently increased to 4 per cent). Neither party wanted to take full responsibility for the crushing burden of the new taxes on city residents, already the highest per capita taxpayers in the country. To reassure the Democrats, Lindsay is said to have pledged only "minimal" layoffs of city employees with job cuts coming through a freeze on hiring. The most optimistic variant promised by Lindsay is a total freeze on hiring with an anticipated 14,320 jobs vacated this coming year staying empty, and an additional 5000 jobs being abolished, producing the involuntary increase in "productivity" that Lindsay has been demanding during recent contract negotiations. Most municipal union bureaucrats are willing to accept this and have pleaded with their members to be grateful for small things "in these hard times," expressing sympathy for poor John Lindsay and his fiscal problems. Gotbaum, instead of urging a general strike to protect city workers, has waged a virtual pro-Lindsay "Save Our City" campaign since April.

Shortly after Lindsay's announcement of the cutbacks, Gotbaum organized a protest trip to Albany to "Restore the Budget Cuts" and "Save Our City." The whole operation was a hoax de-



AT DISTRICT COUNCIL 37 headquarters, Mayor Lindsay, Finance Administrator Perrotta and Labor Relations Director Haber listen as DC37 Executive Director Gotbaum outlines union's campaign effort to re-elect Lindsay administration. Others in photo include Council Pres. Zurlo (left), Associate Dir. Roberts, Vice-Pres. Hughes and Political Action Dir. Corcoran.

signed simply to back up Lindsay's tax requests and place the blame on Rockefeller. 20,000 workers assembled at City Hall on April 27 for a rally heard Mayor Lindsay proclaim that "your fight is my fight too!" 15,000 actually made the bus trip to Albany, the biggest turnout in the capital's history. Yet at no time during the day were these angry working people able to confront their phony leaders and the capitalist politicians as a body. They were kept moving the entire day, with many being shunted back to the buses only minutes after arriving in Albany. Those who missed the rally didn't miss very much, however, with a



Post Photo by Arthur Pomerantz

VICTOR GOTBAUM

speakers' lineup of Democratic "liberals," most of whom later voted for the giant package of new taxes to alleviate the city's fiscal crisis out of the pockets of city workers.

Gotbaum Capitulates

Since October 1970, over 2300 full-time and 2,000 part-time city employees have been laid off, and thousands of other jobs eliminated. None of these workers would have been fired but for Gotbaum's tacit cooperation with the city. As far back as June 1970, Lindsay, backed up by the Democratic City Council, launched an anti-labor offensive with leaks to the press concerning a "study" of the pay cuts, furloughs, layoffs and payless paydays for city employees carried out by former Mayor LaGuardia during the Depression. The announcement was clearly aimed at the large municipal employee unions of sanitationmen, firemen, welfare workers, etc., that were to begin contract negotiations in the fall.

In an editorial in the June 19, 1970, issue of DC37's *Public Employee Press*, Gotbaum declared righteously that times had changed and "today there is a union representing some 120,000 city employees that has the strength, the resources and the political apparatus to assure that our members are not made the fall guys for a national crisis." The real test for Gotbaum came only a few months later in November when the first 500 of the "provisional" workers—all covered by DC37—were fired, the first such layoffs since 1935. ("Provisional" is a civil service designation meaning that some requirement has not been met and the worker is not "certified." Many "provisionals" have been on their jobs for years.) Gotbaum's predictable response was a telegram "fired off" to the Mayor which read in part: "I would respectfully suggest that a solution presents itself: The New Off-Track Betting Corp. is now hiring hundreds of employees in the very titles in which your layoffs are occurring... a constructive mechanism should be established to

move these people into the newly-created jobs." Gotbaum didn't mention the fact that these jobs did not yet exist and certainly weren't going to take care of all the 4000 who have since lost their jobs. At a meeting of the DC37 Delegate Council later that month, Gotbaum opposed proposals for a city-wide strike against the layoffs "because it will divide our members and hurt our efforts to help the laid-off people." In other words the union bureaucrats decided that "provisional" workers didn't need their jobs as badly as "certified" workers. This calculated betrayal served several purposes. It gave Lindsay the go-ahead for more layoffs of provisionals and job freezes; it provided the opening for Lindsay's "crisis" campaign for more money from Albany; it served as a warning to the thousands of workers whose contracts were expiring December 31 that bargaining was going to be rough this year. The lay-offs served a similar purpose for Gotbaum and the other bureaucrats in bargaining. The city had

already announced that wage increases would be limited only to small cost-of-living increases and these only with assurances of increased "productivity." Allowing some to be laid off would hopefully keep Gotbaum's membership cautious and lessen the demands for strikes against job freezes or for wage increases.

Gotbaum has worked very hard since 1966 at betraying the interests of city employees in order to cultivate a privileged position as a "responsible labor leader" with the Lindsay administration,

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Pension Strike . . .

possibly even hoping to ride on the coattails of Lindsay's presidential aspirations. He has been rewarded for his treachery, first with "majority union" bargaining rights for thousands of city workers not members of DC37, and then being awarded the agency shop as part of last year's City-Wide Contract, whereby all city employees covered by DC37 will have deducted from their paychecks the equivalent of union dues. If they are not members. When implemented this will be worth a couple of million dollars to Gotbaum's treasury. The agency shop (or dues checkoff, union shop, etc.) is an advantage in ensuring a strong union, but in this case, the agency shop was clearly a "good conduct medal" from Lindsay for a job well done. The potential power of municipal employees displayed in the two-day pension strike and Gotbaum's ability to sell them out may have enhanced his chances to displace Harry Van Arsdale for leadership of the Central Labor Council, but the explosive contradictions within the city labor movement continue to mount.

Ruling-Class Offensive

Besides the layoffs, job freezes and new taxes, thousands of working poor have been thrown off Medicaid because of increased eligibility requirements, driving more onto welfare. Medicaid will no longer cover dentistry and eyeglasses—two of the most heavily used services—or orthopedic treatment for artificial limbs, braces, etc. As welfare rolls increase due to the highest unemployment in 9 years, meager welfare food allowances are cut 10 per cent, making it more difficult therefore to qualify for assistance. And rent control will soon be a fond memory. Starting July 1, any apartment vacated is automatically de-controlled. This is a major blow to working people in New York City, where two-thirds of the city's families are tenants, and will affect 1.3 million apartments, rent controlled since 1943. Rents are expected to rise an incredible \$50 to \$100 per apartment, accompanied by landlord harassment to vacate apartments. As if all this were not enough, the Metropolitan Transit Authority has promised another fare increase by January 1, from the present 30¢ to as high as 50¢. This move will mean an increase of 100 to 150% in bus and subway costs in two years for that majority of working people dependent upon public transportation. What is behind New York's economic crisis?

Since the Roosevelt New Deal, New York and other big-city administrations have assumed burdens in addition to the usual services such as streets, water supply, sanitation, etc. They have taken on an increased load of social services required mostly by either unemployment or insufficient wages (such as various kinds of welfare) and also assumed a number of functions formerly performed by private business. Outlays for low-cost housing, health services, transportation, education, various kinds of economic development, have all increased over the years, accompanied by very sharp growth in public employment. The police force in New York City has also been steadily increased to a small army of over 31,000 (not counting Transit, Housing, and other cops) with a budget of almost \$600 million for next year! At the same time the major source of revenues has gradually shifted from real estate and business taxes over to taxes on wage earners, with most tax money going to State and Federal treasuries. In 1915 business tax revenue made up to 96% of the New York City budget with real estate taxes paying 92% of the total. But today real estate taxes make up only 24% of the budget revenue and much of that is from individual homeowners with big interests getting off light.

The severe recession and soaring inflation being fed by the Indochina war have resulted in reductions in revenues from the income tax, sales tax, stock transfer levy and other major taxes. Compounding this is an erosion of the tax base itself by increasing unemployment and the flight of thousands of "middle class" people and numerous businesses from the city to escape its expensive and miserable conditions. Meanwhile the influx of the poor searching for rapidly disappearing jobs continues—from Puerto Rico and other Caribbean Islands, from the South, etc. All of this adds up to a financial and social crisis of explosive proportions.

Cops and Racism

The ruling class politicians have been utilizing the situation to ride the welfare hobby horse, blaming the victims of the economic system for being the cause of the problem. Last December Lindsay made a dramatic threat to cut off all further welfare, claiming it was excessive wel-

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STRUGGLE IN NMU

Nixon while Morrissey would prefer the "friends of labor" touted by more "progressive" union bureaucrats. Only a labor party can represent the working class. To be sure, a labor party will not automatically represent the workers' interests—that is a question of revolutionary leadership and program. The class-conscious workers, through the intervention of a Marxist vanguard party, must struggle in such a party against the reformist sell-outs as they must fight them now in the unions. But only a party of the workers themselves can be an instrument of working-class interests; the capitalist parties can be only our enemy.

Only through struggle on the broadest possible

front can NMU members escape the double trap of their declining industry and treacherous union leadership. This is why the program of Morrissey's "Committee for NMU Democracy" is fundamentally deficient and even dangerous. For once the seamen have waged an all-out struggle to unseat the Curran machine, it may be a decade before they are prepared to undertake such a fight again. The Curran machine stands nakedly revealed as corrupt, despotic and conservative; to topple it only to raise in its place a "good guy" leadership which does not differ from Curran on fundamental class questions would be a gigantic betrayal of all NMU seamen.



DC37 (AFSCME) WORKERS PROTEST BUDGET CUTS

fare costs that were bankrupting the city finances. Rockefeller recently signed into law a series of anti-welfare measures including a bill requiring one year's residence in New York State for public assistance eligibility. The new law feeds the popular myth of herds of poor people coming to New York City to "get on welfare," which persists even though this category accounts for only one percent of the welfare rolls.

As poverty and squalor increase, so does crime. The combination of the welfare and crime issues has fed into a racist "law and order" reaction of a cop/white versus black split, polarizing the working class racially. The cops in New York City continue to develop an extremely dangerous sense of bonapartist mission. They are aware of their own strength and increasingly conscious of their social role as guardians of capitalist property relations and "law and order." They are politically organized and demonstrate growing independence from control by city authorities. Many police look with admiration at the "police state" proposals being raised by the "toughest cop in the country" Rizzo, the ex-cop mayoral candidate in Philadelphia. The "law and order" reaction was the underlying current that gave the Conservative Party in New York City and State a mass base for the first time last year, resulting in the election of James Buckley for Senator. The bulk of new Conservative voters were young, ethnic white workers. The abolition of rent control, with its immediate disastrous effects on most working people, may offset Conservative popularity somewhat, since an anti-rent control position is one of the basic planks of the Conservative Party program. But a real solution to all these attacks on the social condition of the working class goes right to the heart of the capitalist system itself.

"Solving" the Budget Crisis

Examining the present city budget (New York Times, June 15, 1971), one can come up with several ways of "finding" at least a billion dollars for higher wages and pensions, more jobs, better services, etc. Fire the police force, and replace them with armed workers' militias to enforce working-class law and order. This would save the \$594.8 million listed in the budget. (In the Oakland general strike in 1946 of over 100,000 workers, the cops fled the city or went into hiding and all aspects of maintaining civil order were assumed by the Central Labor Council.) Naturally this immediately raises the question of the class role of the police, how the capitalists enforce their system, etc. (see Workers' Action #8) Next, cancel the entire Debt Service of \$705.1 million. This is money paid to banks and other holders of municipal bonds, interest, loans, etc. Another point is the dissolution of all the various separate semi-autonomous agencies—Housing Authority, Port and Bridge Authority, Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), etc.—which consume hundreds of millions of dollars. None of

these are even formally under the direct control of the taxpaying electorate; they are either responsible only to the State Legislature or are multi-state setups. The MTA uses millions of New York City tax dollars for boondoggle projects in other parts of the state.

The solution to the rent control situation is not theoretically a difficult one. The buildings should be purchased from the landlords by the city, forced by a city-wide rent strike, at their assessed tax value. Since the city can't run anything right, the buildings should then be turned over to the tenants to be maintained on a cooperative basis.

The point is that only measures of this scope offer any possibility of solution to the city's financial crisis, examined even from a "practical" standpoint. But the immensity of the objective situation—employment, housing, wages, health care, mass transportation, etc.—tends to reveal what has been true since World War I: that every one of the demands necessary to resolve these problems transcends what is permitted (or possible) in the capitalist system.

Even a defensive, rear-guard action by workers against the mounting attack on them requires a city labor movement capable of wielding the organized labor power of a general strike. Bureaucrats like Gotbaum, Feinstein, Shanker, DeLury or Van Arsdale understand very well the vast potential of such a labor movement, and spare no effort to keep the unions within the framework of existing "law and order."

Workers Party

But general strikes, though a necessary expression of massive, organized workers' power, are not the answer pure and simple. To carry out an effective city-wide rent strike, for example, requires a powerful organized labor force, but one with a political arm, a workers party. This is the main lesson to be drawn from the abortive strike over DC37's pension plan and the reliance on various "friends of labor" to "restore the budget cuts" and "save our jobs." When the final hour came Liberals, Democrats, Republicans and Conservatives all lined up against the working people of New York City, making deals to avoid any one party from sharing sole responsibility. We have no illusions that a genuine workers party—based primarily on the trade unions and fighting in the interests of the working class as a whole, including the unemployed, racially oppressed workers, radical students, etc.—will be built by the existing union bureaucrats. This is not Britain with its long history of labor reformism. The essential part of building for a workers party must be an organized determined fight within the ranks of the unions to build a militant leadership that will sweep out labor traitors like Victor Gotbaum and Barry Feinstein. The trade union program of Workers Action must be a key part of that fight.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

LONGSHORE UNION IN LIFE-OR-DEATH STRUGGLE

should a new bureaucrat arise on the scene (perhaps Goldblatt). An editorial in the March 13 *PW* attacks Bridges for not caring about the rank-and-file (a new discovery for *PW*). Specifically cited is Bridges' support of the British Trades Union Council when it opposed the recent British workers' strike against anti-labor legislation. In this extended and obviously bitter dispute, Bridges had attacked *PW* in the union paper *Dispatcher*, charging *PW* with making "snide cracks, distortions and plain lies about our union, its leadership and activities." (March 13 *PW*, quoted from *Dispatcher*). But it appears the CP at least is not yet ready to make a final break—the March 13 article states later on, "The ILWU is a good union; one of the best. Its leadership has a record of protecting, defending and extending the powers and well-being of the members unequalled by most!" The dispute continued in the April 17 *PW*, with a long, diplomatic letter from Archie Brown, long-time pro-CP hack in Local 10, correcting various "mistakes" of *PW* regarding the union leadership. The sore spots may be temporarily patched up, but the CP will latch onto a less tainted bureaucrat whenever the opportunity arises.

Along with the fissures in the old bureaucracy, genuine rank-and-file opposition has surfaced. One example of this is Local 10, where a small group began publishing the "Rank-and-File T-Letter" in May 1971. The principal authors of this letter originally ran in the union elections in October 1970 for caucus (contract committee) and convention delegate, around militant contract issues such as "For a Six-Hour Day and No Extended Shifts," "Eliminate 9, 43 Steady Man Section," "Defend Our Right to Strike—Return to Job Action" and vital political issues including "Repeal All Anti-Labor Laws," "Keep the Employer-Controlled Courts and Government Agencies Out of Internal Union Affairs," "End Racism and Other Tools of Big Business," "Immediate and Unconditional Withdrawal of all U.S. Troops from Southeast Asia" and "Build a Labor Party Now." Recent leaflets have attempted to cut through the intra-bureaucratic wrangling and prepare the union for a hard fight, particularly warning of the dangers of government intervention and bureaucratic betrayal. While there is at least one important programmatic defect in the literature of these oppositionists (acceptance of the ILWU versus Teamsters framework in the container-stuffing jurisdictional dispute) they are aiding the development of political class consciousness among the ranks.

As the July 1 deadline approaches, what does Bridges offer to counter the employers' offensive? Here are highlights of Bridges' program (from the union's mimeographed "Contract Demands"):

1—Raise of \$1 per hour in basic longshoreman's pay for each year of a two-year contract. (The employers are offering a three-year contract with raises of 38-1/2¢, 25-1/2¢ and 25-1/2¢. This, of course, would not even make up for inflation losses in the last five years!)

2—Full compliance with CFS agreement by July 1, meaning that all container work ("except shippers' loads") must be moved to the docks under Longshore jurisdiction.

3—"Provide for no further reduction in manning under Section 10."

4—"Existing language in the PCLCD covering Section 9, 43 shall be changed so as to guarantee exclusion of lift-, jitney- and winch-drivers from that Section."

5—"Work opportunity guarantee—either furnishing work or pay for 40 hours per week, for all registered men."

6—A reduction in shift length from 8 to 7 hours with no extended shifts—in the second year of the contract.

Even assuming for a split-second that this program was acceptable, it is clear that the Bridges leadership has no intention of waging a hard fight. At the 19th biennial convention of the ILWU in April, the union's officials reported, "Demands are substantial and some of the issues extremely sticky. Whether a contract can be secured without strike action remains to be seen..." The convention then went on to pass traditional paper resolutions on such issues as defending Angela Davis and opposing the Indochina war. As far as defending the union's existence, they could only offer stronger contract language, union "conferences" and "possible" joint action with the East Coast International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), which claims a membership of 115,000. Bridges even cautioned in the May 7 *Dispatcher*, "I told Teddy (Gleason of the ILA) that we would not ask for their help unless we were really on the ropes." Thus, instead of publicizing the PMA attack on the ILWU, instead of attempting to mobilize the rest of the working class in common defense against general capitalist attack on the unions, Bridges sits back and hopes for the best!

Empty Victory

Worse yet, the Bridges program will lead at best to an empty victory. To begin with, it already accepts major defeats which the union has suffered, e.g., point #3 at best proposes to prevent further manning cutbacks rather than regain lost jobs; point #4 accepts Section 9, 43 and merely adds exceptions to it. Clearly, a basic program must demand abolition of 9, 43 and a return to the hiring hall for all jobs and restoration of the basic gang of six men.

The wage guarantee idea is offered by Bridges as a sort of incentive to employers to bring work back to the docks. In April the Local 10 oppositionists printed a leaflet "Is the Wage Guarantee a Trap?" which pointed out the many ways the employers could chisel on the wage guarantee (firings, deregistration, etc.) More important, the leaflet pointed out: "The employers plan years ahead. It would be to their advantage in the long run to even pay out a good guarantee for 2 years if they could reduce us to such impotency that they would have clear sailing from 1973 on." In the long run the only real defense of longshoremen's living standards is building the strength of working-class organizations for common struggle. No monetary penalty clause written in contracts can protect workers if the employers can undermine their organizations.

For Labor Unity

The most conscious longshore militants understand that only united working-class action can achieve real gains. Unity is, however, easy to call for but difficult to attain; it is necessary to propose a tactical way forward to a position of greater strength. Especially for the ILWU, whose strength has been declining for years, any effort to struggle alone, or against other unions, could mean disaster.

It is in this light that one must approach the central contract problem—containerization—which could determine the future of the union. The

Bridges "solution" is a classical narrow trade union approach; the union demands all the work (except for the "shippers' loads" loophole) be brought under the Longshore jurisdiction. There is no doubt that the union must wage a bloody fight for jobs—but concurrently with other workers, especially those in the transportation industry. For several years much of the container work has been done by the Teamsters, ILWU Warehousemen, and also non-union workers. The narrow demand to put all container work under Longshore jurisdiction immediately pits worker against worker, union against union, even one section of the ILWU (Warehouse) against another (Longshore). Even if jurisdiction is won, the deep resentment created would undermine future struggles.

What is needed instead is a joint struggle of the ILWU, Teamsters and other CFS workers against the PMA to protect everyone's job security and conditions. The typically narrow-minded Teamster bureaucracy could be forced into such a joint struggle by their membership, or be exposed as saboteurs of unity in the eyes of the Teamster ranks, if the ILWU showed it was fighting for all the workers' interests. The ILWU should demand that all container work not done by Longshoremen be performed at Longshore pay rates, benefits, manning scales, etc. Such a demand would arouse the active support of all CFS workers. Available work should be divided up between the CFS workers through a shortened work shift (at no loss in weekly or daily pay). In effect the ILWU would be sharing jurisdiction with other affected workers while guaranteeing jobs (and therefore union membership) for the Longshoremen.

Political Struggle Intrudes

Unions are never separate from the political sphere, but in times of relative economic stability it was possible for the bureaucratized union movement to confine itself to "bread-and-butter" issues and to muffle the political questions. But in the present social crisis, with the strategic position of the ILWU, fundamental political questions will intrude into any serious dock strike in spite of the bureaucrats. To avoid defeat, the membership must deal with political questions correctly, and they cannot do so as long as the bureaucrats remain in power.

One central question the union must face is the nature of the state as an instrument of capitalist oppression. The government will be prepared with Taft-Hartley injunctions, arrests and even troops. Very quickly, what begins as an economic struggle must turn into a political struggle against the government or else retreat in defeat. Faced by a militant strike, the government will strip off its "neutral" facade to reveal its repressive apparatus; appeals to the bourgeois organs of "justice" bring no help; appeals to "friends of labor" in Congress bring only repression, as the postal workers discovered. The union must mobilize the working class for common defense against the government. Particularly those workers who have recently suffered the heavy hand of government—the railroad workers, postal workers, airline workers, etc.—could be called upon to enter into joint struggle with sympathy strikes against government interference in workers' struggles. Those workers now facing contract deadlines must also be brought into the struggle and would add tremendous strength, e.g., the Communications Workers, the Steelworkers and especially the East Coast ILA. Such a massive common fight could put real power behind the demand to repeal all anti-labor laws, such as Taft-Hartley, and to release all political prisoners, such as Angela Davis and Jimmy Hoffa. The class nature of the two capitalist parties would be revealed in such a conflict, and the road opened to the development of a labor party based on the rank-and-file which could fight for working-class interests.

Most important, the union would be in a position to make real its traditional paper resolutions against the war in Indochina, bringing the power of the working class to bear for the first time in demanding the immediate unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Indochina. The union would announce the strike as part of its struggle against the war, appealing to the memberships of the Teamsters, railroad and airline workers to halt the flow of all war goods. Political action on the docks would not really be new; for years the ILA has been boycotting ships which trade with Cuba—a reactionary but certainly political act!

As long as labor bureaucrats like Harry Bridges remain in power, however, the working class can only move backwards. Rank-and-file caucuses with a militant class program must fight to restore power to the membership. Once the bureaucracy is cast off by the class-conscious workers, there will be no stopping us.

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