

The Great Coal Strike of 1978



The Crisis of Leadership

John Blair/Liaison

Miners marching in memory of John Hull, the Patoka, Indiana striker killed by company thugs February 3.

The 1977-78 coal strike was the most explosive political event in the recent history of the American working class. Jimmy Carter tried to "cool it" for almost three months, the big business press did its best to keep it off the front pages, and the big wheels of the labor movement turned their backs on the miners until the strike threatened to close down the heartland of U.S. industry and freeze out the East-Central states. But down at the base, in the ranks of U.S. labor, millions of workers followed the miners' struggle with avid attention and sympathy. While the UAW did nothing in the face of 300,000 layoffs in the depths of the 1974-76 depression; while New York City unions threw in the towel during the bank-manipulated "fiscal crisis," and "rebel" steel union bureaucrats meekly accepted extension of the hated ENA no-strike pact, the coal diggers out in the Appalachians stood up and fought back. They stopped a concerted offensive by the operators that was supposed to "teach them a lesson."

Instead, with their unsurpassed militancy the miners rocked the U.S. ruling class and inspired all of the rest of the labor movement. The outpouring of donations to the strikers and the appearance of union-led caravans in the coalfields were actions unheard of in recent decades. Bosses and union leaders from one end of the country to the other began to worry that their people might become infected with "miners fever." If the lengthy 1969 GE strike and the 1970 postal strike—when Nixon called out the National Guard in NYC—shocked the country into realizing the class struggle was not dead, the impact soon wore off. But the coal miners' defiance of bosses, government and union leaders alike could lead to a wave of labor militancy that would be difficult to extinguish.

After the 160,000 striking members of the United Mine Workers of America

(UMWA) threw back a second take-away "tentative agreement," the hourgeoisie suddenly realized it had a tiger by the tail. In a panic Carter invoked Taft-Hartley, state cops began riding shotgun on scab coal trucks and federal agents swarmed through coal country arrogantly serving their poisonous injunctions. Yet it was not the cops, courts, coal operators and capitalist politicians who finally forced the miners back. The treachery of the UMWA leadership and the absence of a class-struggle alternative were what did in the strike, as many miners saw the hopeless prospect of endlessly voting against sellout contracts handed them by Arnold Miller & Co. What is most galling is that the miners' tenacity brought them so close to winning despite their despicable misleaders.

In the end the coal strikers went back to the pits with a contract that is universally despised as a major step backward for the UMWA. Finding no leadership among so-called "dissidents" on the Bargaining Council, the ranks finally accepted (with substantial opposition and no illusions about what they were getting) a contract which gave up to the already profit-bloated energy trusts one of the major conquests of this proud union. When it was over the miners' cradle-to-grave health care system was gone and they are now threatened with firing when they strike over such life-and-death issues as mine safety.

But the UMWA membership did not return to the mine portals with its militancy broken. Far from it. At every step they frustrated the major objective of the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA): to write into the contract provisions allowing the dismissal and penalization of strikers and strike leaders. By this means the BCOA had hoped to put an end to the massive wildcat strikes which have swept through the Appalachians since the late

1960's. The operators had been gearing up for this confrontation ever since the summer of 1975: coal stockpiles in early December were at a record high, production from non-union mines was mounting rapidly, and the companies tried to demoralize the miners by provoking a wildcat over medical care last summer.

On the eve of the contract strike BCOA head Joseph Brennan was threatening that "The UMWA is not the only game in town." The companies figured they would starve out the "strike-happy" miners, who would crawl back chastened after a debilitating strike and accept miserable terms. Yet the miners refused to knuckle under. Eighty thousand of them struck for 10 weeks in last summer's health care wildcat, and during the contract strike they used their traditional roving pickets to shut down half of all non-union coal production in the country. With no one to mobilize opposition they burned one contract proposal after another. It took 110 days to wear down the miners' resistance and still the coal bosses didn't get their no-strike clause. Even then 43 percent voted against the sellout, virtually the same proportion as rejected Miller's 1974 contract (and the bosses know well how little "labor peace" that produced in the coalfields).

The United Mine Workers is in deep trouble. Its top leaders are known and despised as outright traitors to those who elected them. Judases who might as well be getting their 30 pieces of silver

from the companies. Among the district leaders there is no one who put forward a strategy to win the strike, to protect and extend the gains the UMWA has won in the past through struggles as bitter as this one. But the settlement, while a setback, is only a ceasefire, not a rout. *Newsweek* (7 April) understood this vital fact, headlining its wrap-up story, "The Miners' Bitter Truce." So did Jimmy Carter with his plans for a government investigation of "productivity" and "labor stability" in the mines. Both the miners and the bosses realize there are hard battles ahead.

Class War in the Coalfields

The Great Coal Strike of 1978 was as harsh as the winter in which it took place. Because of this it exposed the realities of the class struggle with a clarity seldom experienced in this country of the great consensus and law and order. Marxists have always said that laws are merely the expression of the balance of class forces. But when has this been so vividly obvious as in Carter's ineffectual imposition of the Taft-Hartley Act. The vast majority of U.S. union officials claim they can't engage in militant tactics such as "hot-cargoing" (boycotting) scab products because this is outlawed under T-H. But the miners proved it can be done. They shut down non-union mines with their militant tactics while scab coal was dumped on the highways, coal barges burned on the rivers and railroad

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Frenzied ILWU Tops Attack Militants3

Racist Anti-Immigration Furor in Britain

LONDON, April 8 In an effort to rally popular support for the next parliamentary elections (expected in late 1978 or early next year) the opposition Conservative Party has sought to make exclusion of non-white immigrants its campaign hobby horse. Tory deputy House of Commons leader William Whitelaw, speaking at a party convention in Leicester, announced Friday that a future Conservative government would impose across-the-board quotas on immigration to Britain.

Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher had launched the racist uproar over the Liberal-Labour coalition government's immigration policy in a nationwide television address on January 30 Thatcher demagogically claimed that if present immigration policies continued, by the end of the century Britain would be deluged by some four million Pakistani or "New Commonwealth" immigrants: "That is an awful lot, and I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people of a different culture."

Thatcher's ploy seems to have paid off, as a National Opinion Poll showed that the Tories' popularity soared 13 percentage points following her speech. Further, the Conservative Party victory in the March bye-elections in Ilford North, where they captured a former Labour seat, was attributed by polls directly to the fact that 48 percent of the voters who switched from Labour to Tory were influenced by the immigration issue.

This latest Tory campaign occurs in a context of increasing racial polarisation and escalating violent clashes between the fascist National Front, which has repeatedly organised provocative race-hatred marches, and leftists and immigrants. By making the issue their own the Conservatives are seeking to undercut the increasingly active National Front and right-wing demagogues like Enoch Powell. Despite a series of militant strikes in the summer and autumn, the ruling Lib-Lab coalition has managed to keep the lid on wage increases—prompting the Tories to seek political advantage in the explosive area of race relations.

In fact, the Labour Party tops are just

as committed to harsh and racially discriminatory controls as are the Liberals and Tories. Labour's sole response to Thatcher's outburst has been to point to its own restrictive measures and the fact that immigration dropped some 25 percent in 1977 over the previous year as proof that the Labour Party isn't "soft" on immigration. Labour Home Secretary Merlyn Rees defended his party's record proudly, saying: "The exclusion figures speak for themselves." Responding to the charge that "What you really mean is that immigration control is a device to keep out coloured people," Rees stated: "That is what it is.... I don't think we should hide from it and that's what people are concerned about" (*Weekend World*, 4 February 1978).

The current racial unrest in Britain has a long history. Beginning in the late 1950's, a significant population inflow from the Caribbean and Indian subcontinent began, the result of the fact that Commonwealth populations continued to hold British citizenship. Although the Tories initially encouraged this immigration, widespread economic stagnation in Britain resulted in a racistist backlash, highlighted by the Notting Hill racial riot of 1958. In 1962 the first of a series of increasingly restrictive immigration acts was passed.

Today, the overall non-white population is just under three percent of the total population, and even differential birth rates combined with continued levels of immigration will not shift this dramatically by the turn of the century. Britain's continuing economic crisis has acted to "naturally" discourage immigration. In fact, the total population of Britain has actually *dropped*, as more people are leaving the economically depressed country than are entering.

The real reasons for the rise in racial tensions and violence lie in the rotting fabric of social life in Britain. In the decaying inner cities, where "New Commonwealth" immigrants are overwhelmingly concentrated, Labour's austerity policies—particularly spending cuts—are making life increasingly miserable for the population. With deteriorating health, education and housing conditions and rising unem-



Margaret Thatcher speaking at recent Tory conference.

Economist

ployment, the situation is ripe for the exacerbation of racism.

Those leftists who continue to peddle illusions in the Labour Party or simply indulge in rhetorical "fight back" verbiage cannot counter the increasingly shrill cries that the immigrants are somehow to blame. So long as the working class continues to accept the framework of capitalist irrationality and thus conceives of improving its own increasingly miserable condition at the expense of some other sector of the population, divisions within the working class are bound to grow.

Both the Labour Party leadership and reputed Labour "left" MP's have amply demonstrated their full collaboration in enforcing racistist policies. This was seen in the failure of the Labour and TUC [Trades Union Congress] officialdom to give more than grudging token gestures of support to the largely Asian women strikers at Grunwicks last year. The Tribunes' call for protectionist import quotas appeals to the same chauvinism. Only a revolutionary leadership, committed to a consistent struggle against all the myriad forms of oppression in capitalist society, has the capacity to mobilise the strength of Britain's powerful trade-union movement to smash this racism and national chauvinism which seek to set worker against worker.

ers, around the question of foreign imports, Thornett's 1977 campaign for general secretary in the Transport and General Workers Union avoided the question entirely.

But with consummate hypocrisy born of desperation, the WSL central leadership has recently decided to take up the question of immigration as a factional weapon in order to attack the departed Trotskyist Faction and the international Spartacist tendency (iSt). During the last month, WSL leaders have demagogically attacked the iSt's Marxist analysis of the immigration question at public meetings and in their press:

"This combination of ultra-left posturing with abject opportunism and rejection of any form of serious agitation for the Trotskyist program in any country in the world is the real essence of the international Spartacist tendency."

"It is reflected in their attitude to immigration laws—where 'left' denunciation of restrictions on immigration are combined with grovelling capitulation to the worst kinds of nationalism, reminiscent of Tory leader Margaret Thatcher."

"...on a sufficient scale immigration flows only exacerbate national antagonisms and in extreme cases could even wipe out the national identity of small countries." (*Workers Vanguard*, 17.3.78)

"In Defence of a Revolutionary Orientation, Against Sectarian Abstemiousness," *Socialist Press*, 29 March 1978

Workers Socialist League Attacks Leninist Immigration Policy

In the aftermath of the recent split of the Trotskyist Faction from the right-centrist Workers Socialist League (WSL) led by Alan Thornett (the Trotskyist Faction subsequently fused with the London Spartacist Group—see "Spartacist League Founded in Britain," *WV* No. 198, 24 March 1978), the WSL leadership has "discovered" the immigration question, an issue in which heretofore it has demonstrated little interest.

With its narrow economist trade-union orientation, the WSL had characteristically argued that the deep divisions in the working class exacerbated by racistist immigration policies were not a "burning question" and had consistently failed to address this issue programmatically in the unions. Like its formal position against import controls, its position on immigration has been confined to its press not carried forward as a part of its actual intervention in the working class. Despite the tangible chauvinism whipped up among trade unionists, particularly car work-

The *WV* article quoted from was entitled "Racist Furor in Australia over 'Boat People'" (from the March 1978 *Australasian Spartacist*). Readers of *Socialist Press* would not suspect that our article was an attack on the "white Australia" policies of the labour bureaucracy, nor that the sentence which so scandalises the WSL is directed against the utopian demand for doing away with all immigration laws (and consequently borders) under capitalism. Our article went on:

"While aggressively opposing all forms of racially and nationally discriminatory quotas, communists do not advise capitalist governments on their necessarily chauvinist and exploitative immigration policy, which opens and closes its portals in line with economic and political expediency. We intrinsically defend the rights of migrant workers 'legal' or not against chauvinist persecution and deportation. We demand full citizenship rights for all migrants."

Moreover, as we stated in "The Leninist Policy Toward Immigration/Emigration" (*WV* No. 36, 18 January 1974), the fact

"that we do not advocate the principle of unlimited immigration as an immedi-

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Fascist National Front rides the latest wave of racist hysteria under slogan "Britain for the British."

John Slurrock/Report

After Sabotaging Mine Solidarity Strike

Frenzied ILWU Tops Attack Militants

OAKLAND, April 8—The 33rd annual constitutional and contract convention of Local 6 (Bay Area warehouse) of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), held here today, was systematically disrupted by the union leadership itself. Feeling the heat after having sabotaged an International Executive Board (IEB) resolution for a one-day West Coast dock shutdown in solidarity with the striking coal miners, ILWU officials from International president Jimmy Herman on down spent most of the time frantically denouncing the Militant Caucus (MC). Attempting to physically intimidate the class-struggle opposition with goon squads and at one point cutting off the floor microphones, the ILWU tops managed to antagonize a good part of the Local 6 membership present with their ham-handed tactics.

The message from the worried bureaucrats was clear: they will fight tooth-and-nail against any "miners' fever" in the ILWU, especially in view of the upcoming longshore contract battle in June. But while Herman and his cronies won the votes at this rubber-stamp convention, they can no longer be sure of acquiescence from the ranks. Twice in recent months the ranks have rejected the leadership's reactionary schemes in favor of the class solidarity policies advocated by the Militant Caucus. Last fall workers at the Owens-Illinois glass plant rejected the leadership's orders to cross molders' picket lines. After the MC's denunciation of this criminal strikebreaking order given by business agent Joe Villegas, the East Bay membership voted to reverse the order and forced the scabherding Villegas' removal from office. Then last month the East Bay membership rejected Local 6 president Keith Eickman's Officers' Report, which opposed even the IEB's paper call for the one-day sympathy dock shutdown, and over 10 percent of the East Bay ranks signed an MC petition for the work stoppage.

The ILWU bureaucracy made it clear at the very beginning that this convention would have no real power whatsoever. After adoption of the agenda Eickman rammed through a series of outrageous restrictions, including: "delegates will not speak longer than five minutes on any one resolution" (a rule not applied to officers, of course); "all resolutions must be voted up or down—no amendments to be accepted" (to avoid getting "bogged down into details," Eickman explained); and "all contract resolutions be referred to the 1979 convention" (because it's "too early now to start discussing what we want in the 1979 contract"). Having thus stacked the cards in their favor, the bureaucrats proceeded to hack away at the only significant left-wing opposition—the Militant Caucus.

The take-off followed the officers' report a self-congratulatory whitewash read by Eickman, but at the same time a damning report. The Local 6 president correctly noted that "organizing is the main issue confronting the union," in the face of devastating job losses due to automation and runaway shops (especially to Nevada). Eickman estimated that since June 1976 the warehouse division alone has lost 500 jobs.

strikes in the recent period "Automatic Plastics" this strike started in April of 1976 and is continuing as of this date. The company has refused to



ILWU president Jimmy Herman

obey the order of the NLRB to negotiate with Local 6 and reinstate the strikers.... The Handyman strike [in which a picketer was killed by a scab] continued throughout 1977.... We gave them a good fight for 14 months [at which point the leadership not only abandoned the fight but refused to give the strikers union membership].... A five-day strike at Elmar Electronics, Sunnyvale in July was concluded when the company started bringing in scabs, and some of the Local 6 strikers returned to work.... In every case these strikes were stabbed in the back by the Local 6 leaders' failure to mobilize the union in their defense.

Under political activities, Eickman boasted that, "In Oakland Local 6 helped elect Mayor Lionel Wilson." He didn't mention, however, that Wilson's cops subsequently helped break the picket lines of striking Blue Cross workers! As for the proliferation of houses with substandard wages and working conditions because they are not part of the master contract, Eickman simply lied through his teeth asserting: "We do not have substandard houses in Local 6!"

Quick to grab the mike in the discussion period was business agent Joe Figueiredo, well-known supporter of the Communist Party (CP), who proclaimed his continued loyalty by praising the "excellent" officers' report. (Throughout the rest of the convention, CP supporters abandoned all pretense of opposition.) In contrast, MC member Peter Woolston ripped into Eickman's report, pointing out the traitorous ties to the strikebreaking Democrats (who imposed Taft-Hartley on the miners) and the need for a workers party to fight for a workers government.

Woolston emphasized the importance of the longshore division in organizing new houses and winning strikes through such militant tactics as hot-cargoing and called for warehousemen to prepare sympathy-strike action to defend the longshoremen in the upcoming contract battle. But he noted that such tactics would not come from the present leadership, either of the International or the Local. Eickman was a witness for the defense in the recent union trial of ex-BA Joe Villegas, who was voted out of office because of his scabherding activities in the Owens-

Illinois strike in 1977. Woolston called for voting down the officers' report.

At this point perennial witchhunter Paul Heide—a retired former president of Local 6—got up to boast about his membership in the Alameda County Democratic Party, denounced the Militant Caucus as "counterrevolutionaries" (!), "employer agents" and "government agents," and said it was time to "wipe it out." But his foam-flecked speech was simply embarrassing for the incumbent leadership, who would not permit him to make a motion.

But when Bob Mandel, a Local 6 Executive Board member and leader of the MC, began speaking, the union leadership went off the rails. Noting the treachery of inviting the mayor and the Democratic Party into the union con-

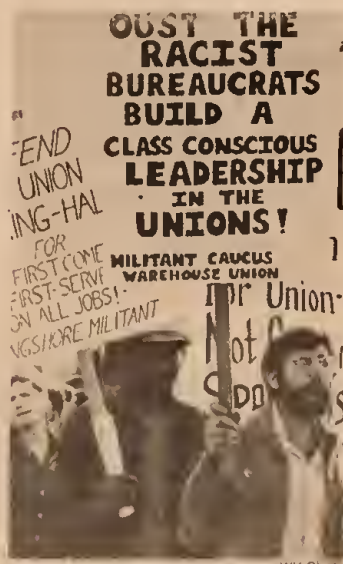
demand that the chair restore order. Numerous militants from the floor rushed to Mandel's defense, preventing a physical assault from occurring. Recognizing that sentiment was against the goon attack, International secretary-treasurer Curtis McClain hurriedly descended from the podium to direct the goons back to their seats. Mandel denounced this deliberate attempt to quash dissidents and ended by calling for rejection of the officers' report.

While Eickman paid verbal homage to "democracy," it was made clear that the leadership approved of the intimidation: the chair refused to grant Mandel extra speaking time to make up for the disruption, and Eickman later went out of his way to announce the names of the official sergeants-at-arms for the convention—the same men who comprised the original goon squad! This blatant threat led one outraged delegate to get the floor later and (while making it clear he opposed the MC) denounce the use of "physical intimidation." The officers' report was quickly adopted on a voice vote.

After praising his successor in the Local 6 presidency, Eickman launched an attack against an unnamed "member of Local 6" who gave news releases to the press "even though he didn't have a right to speak for the International or Local 6 or any other union body." This crude hatchet job was obviously directed at Mandel, who publicized the March 10 IEB motion while Herman and Co. were trying to bury it. The latest issue of "Longshore-Warehouse Militant" (6 April) published by the Militant Caucus describes how the ILWU International bureaucrats tried to suppress their own half-hearted motion:

"Herman, who fought tooth and nail at the IEB to prevent passage of the strike authorization, moved to suppress news of it leaking out. After Local 10 president Larry Wing's public announcement of the IEB action at the March 11 S.F. miners solidarity coalition meeting was carried on KPFA radio, and Local 6 general executive board member Bob Mandel and Local 19 president Dick Moork were quoted by AP on March 13 regarding the International's strike authorization call, Dan Beagle, editor of the [ILWU] Dispatcher and Herman's hand-picked flunkie, issued a lying denial to the press. He claims these statements were 'erroneous' and that the IEB simply 'gave the executive officers the authority to look into that question of a shutdown and other ways of helping the mine workers.' This bullshit was flatly contradicted by statements of president Moork of Local 19 and president Almeida and IEB rep Lovendge of Local 13 to the press confirming the IEB action. Fourteen days after the IEB motion was passed, the first official

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Bob Mandel, right.

vention, Mandel denounced the International officers for "sabotaging what could have been the most important labor action in 30 years.... We could have put Taft-Hartley in the ground once and for all."

Mandel went on to attack Carter's "human rights" campaign as an anti-Soviet and anti-labor crusade, but at this point several menacing goons began collecting around him at the mike, finally forcing him to stop his speech to

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bridges on coal spurs were hauled up. Washington put off using the "slave labor act," openly admitting they feared it would be defied; and when it was finally decreed, the government had to scour the mining towns to find a few dozen scabs who actually "obeyed the law." This lesson must not be lost on union militants elsewhere.

Socialists often refer to the venal sellout union bureaucrats as "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class." Seldom has there been a more despicable example of how "responsible labor statesmen" are agents of the class enemy within the workers movement. Every time the BCOA sneezed Arnold Miller began quivering uncontrollably. His bargaining team was hand-picked by the Labor Department (as was the UMWA International headquarters staff), then reshuffled by the government when Miller's first proposed pact was turned down by the Bargaining Council. The "dissidents" among district leaders were just as eager to do Carter's bidding and produced a second contract which was overwhelmingly rejected by the ranks. On the other side of the table sat a man who foreshadowed the future of these fakery. The BCOA's Brennan is a former UMWA official, who like many former bureaucrats from the corrupt Boyle regime went over to management after being kicked out of union office.

Here was a vivid example of what Leon Trotsky called the crisis of proletarian leadership—160,000 miners practically bringing the companies and the United States government to their knees in the greatest strike in 30 years, but with no one to lead them to victory. If the militant coal strikers were forced to accept a contract that represented a defeat after fighting off gun thugs and state cops; lasting *six months* (when you count the 1977 wildcat) without income or strike benefits; defying Taft-Hartley, Jimmy Carter and everything the capitalist state could throw at them, it was because of the treachery of the UMWA leadership—and the absence of anyone to replace them who had a program for effectively waging class war in the coalfields.

This strike made crystal clear, if it wasn't already, that it takes more than simple trade unionism to win labor's fight. Class collaboration, looking just for a "deal" with the bosses, means defeat for the miners and all workers. The coal miners must be armed with a *political* program to fight the enemy on

every battle front. They proved they had the economic muscle to put the companies against the wall and the guts to stand up to the government. But it is next to impossible to take on the entire bourgeoisie singlehandedly, even in a simple economic strike. The coal miners urgently needed the backing of industrial action by key unions elsewhere, labor protest strikes against Taft-Hartley and a working-class political offensive to win public opposition to the strike-breaking Democrats.

The complete disintegration of the UMWA leadership under the hammer blows of the miners' strikes as well as the refusal of the entire trade-union bureaucracy to undertake militant acts of solidarity in defense of the miners proves the urgency of the Spartacist League's fight to replace the present sellouts not with slicker "reform" bureaucrats but a genuine class-struggle leadership of the labor movement. However incompetent Arnold Miller may be—and there is no doubt that he is one of the least capable of U.S. union officials—it is the policies of subservience to the company dictates, the phony "friend of labor" Democratic Party and the capitalist government which must be rejected. The "progressive" reformers like Miller and Sadlowski with their ties to liberal Democrats are equally as incapable of leading the workers' struggles to victory as the reactionary Meany bureaucrats.

Yet in 1972 the vast majority of the U.S. left hailed Miller's election as a "victory," and to this day not a single one of these pseudo-revolutionary groups has repudiated its earlier support to this traitor. The SL refused to bow to the dangerous illusions in Miller's since-buried Miners for Democracy (MFD) and called for an uncompromising struggle for the independence of the unions from the capitalist state. It is this program, the *only* program that told the truth about what the MFD represented, that militants in the UMWA must grasp if they are to avoid endless strikes without victory and the eventual gutting of their union.

The Challenge of the Miners' Militancy

The miners' explosive confrontation with the coal operators, the government and their own misleaders was the product of an anger and fighting spirit that has been steadily growing in the coalfields. For over a decade, coal production has been increasing sharply, tens of thousands of new, young miners have entered the industry. Massive wildcats shut down the majority of the unionized mines in every year of the last contract. The strikes of 1975 and 1976

fought for the right to strike against the companies, the arbitrators and the courts. The ten-week wildcat of 1977, although sparked by drastic health benefit cutbacks, was in fact integrally tied to the upcoming contract battle that both sides knew centered on the issue of "labor discipline."

This strike was deliberately provoked by the BCOA, which wanted to use the health card as a bargaining chip to get a no-strike clause in the national negotiations. As he had in every previous wildcat, Miller did the bosses' bidding and forced the strikers back to work. When the contract fight began in December, the most militant section of the union, centered in West Virginia, had gone for weeks without paychecks. It is significant that in the vote on the final contract offer, West Virginia's Districts 17 and 29, which had borne the brunt of the Miller-knifed wildcats, voted heavily in favor of ending the strike, reflecting the weariness of these miners.

As the contract deadline approached, the Spartacist League pointed to the miners' most urgent needs: the unlimited right to strike, no restrictions on roving pickets, an end to the pro-company arbitration system; guaranteed health benefits without deductions and higher, equalized pensions; total UMWA control over safety; a shorter workweek with a big pay boost and full cost-of-living protection; an end to racial and sexual discrimination and the victimization of union militants—union control over hiring. We also raised the demands necessary to take the coal industry out of the hands of the parasitic energy conglomerates: for the nationalization of the mines and the construction of a workers party to replace the Republican/Democratic big business government with a government of the workers.

While the bosses correctly gauged the cowardice of the Miller bureaucracy, what they totally underestimated was the militancy, determination and solidarity of the miners themselves. The miners dug in and fought back with everything they had. Wave after wave of roving pickets swept through the coalfields shutting down scab mines. Even in areas not particularly noted for their militancy, mass miners pickets were commonplace. Thus in northwestern Alabama in early February it took some 200 state troopers assisted by helicopters to rescue a handful of scabs from the wrath of 1,000 union miners. Huge stockpiles sat unused, the bosses afraid to try to move them. Despite two martyred dead and hundreds of arrests, the miners were not intimidated by the operators' gun thugs or vicious state

troopers. They continued to choke off the supply of coal and by early February the once cocky coal business consumers began to scream for help.

Just as the miners' grip tightened on the bosses' throats, Miller caved in to virtually every one of the operators' demands. However, as soon as news of the horrendous February 6 contract proposal got out, furious miners rose up and threw it back in his face. They were not about to accept terms which called for firings and fines for "strike instigators" and miners who respected picket lines; which dissolved their health and retirement funds and allowed Sunday work and hated incentive schemes. Mass demonstrations were held throughout the coalfields denouncing Miller's contract and demanding his resignation. Thousands signed recall petitions and hundreds stormed into Washington on February 10, occupying the UMWA headquarters and forcing an overwhelming no-vote by the union's Bargaining Council.

With Miller completely discredited and the coalfields in an outraged uproar, the Spartacist League pointed the way to dump the traitorous negotiators and place the strike in the hands of the ranks: electing district-wide strike committees and demanding a special convention to elect a new negotiating team.

While the federal government had monitored the coal talks with little faith in Arnold Miller, it was clearly shocked by the depth and force of the miners' outrage. With Miller in semi-seclusion, Labor Department agents scurried around in search of someone in the union hierarchy willing to deal who still had enough credibility to make it stick with the ranks. The government courted "dissident" members of the Bargaining Council, and three of them—Jack Perry, Ken Dawes and Tom Gaston—were added to the UMWA negotiating team.

Within a few days the so-called "dissidents" proved as pliable as Miller. The Bargaining Council knuckled under to a pattern-setter agreement worked out behind the scenes with the independent P&M coal company. Yesterday's critics went out to try to sell the new pact, whose terms were only marginally better than the earlier February 6 sellout. Miller blew \$40,000 on a pro-ratification media campaign and Carter threatened to bring down Taft-Hartley should the miners resist sellout No. 2. But the ranks weren't buying. Copies of the contract were consumed in coalfield bonfires and district leaders were booed down. Miners went to the polls and spurned their leaders with a lopsided 70-to-30 percent rejection.

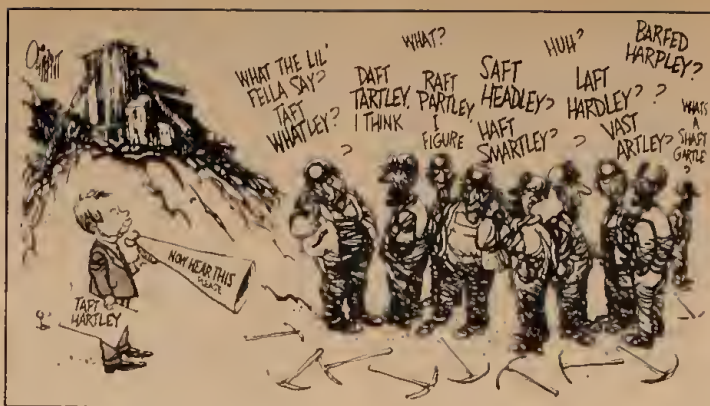
His more subtle efforts reduced to ashes, a frantic Jimmy Carter turned to bigger guns. Within hours of the final vote tally, the U.S. president was on national TV invoking the Taft-Hartley Act and ordering the miners back to work. Administration officials had considered seizing the mines but held that tactic in abeyance, partly due to opposition from the mine owners. They were also fearful that negotiating directly with the combative mine workers would embroil it in the same morass that had destroyed Arnold Miller politically and reduced the BCOA to squabbling disarray. The problem with Taft-Hartley was that nobody really expected it to work. Carter tried to put teeth in his injunction by the unprecedented move of naming over a thousand UMWA regional and local union officials, branding them as criminals with threatened jail and fines should they so much as encourage another miner not to return under the slave-labor law. Miners were outraged at the sight of hundreds of trenchcoat-clad federal marshals chasing up the hills and hollows to serve the strikebreaking injunctions.

When Carter slapped a Taft-Hartley injunction on the strike, singling out over a thousand UMWA officials for jail and fines, the Spartacist League

The miners were squared off in a virtual war with the coal operators, the cops and the strikebreaking federal government. They needed a leadership with a program to win the war, capable of waging a political fight against the government's threats. Instead they were saddled with men whose faith and illusions in the enemy camp led to paralysis. Below, District 17, Cedar Grove, West Virginia miners prepare to vote down sellout contract No. 2.



Michael D. Sullivan



After the second sellout contract was burned in the coalfields the bourgeoisie went into a panic. For everyone knew that the Taft-Hartley Act would not get the strikers back to work. "Taft can mine it, Hartley can haul it," miners by the thousands replied to Carter.

solidarized with the miners' solid defiance. We called for the rest of the labor movement to rise and stop the government's strikebreaking ploys with protest strikes and mass rallies.

The miners proved perfectly capable of repulsing Taft-Hartley. But with their defiance of the government, refusal to cross picket lines and powerful commitment to their "no contract, no work" tradition, the miners had reached the limit of trade-union militancy. When Miller quickly agreed to yet another sellout contract and the majority of the Bargaining Council approved it, it became even clearer that what stood between the miners and clear-cut victory was the vacuum of leadership at the top of the UMWA. In spite of their heroic efforts, many miners decided that with their current misleadership they simply could not do any better.

The miners were squared off in a virtual war with the coal operators, the cops and the strikebreaking federal government. They needed a leadership with a program to win the war, capable of waging a political fight against the government's threats; leaders who would aggressively mobilize the ranks and reach out to the rest of the labor movement for militant support. Instead they were saddled with men whose faith and illusions in the enemy camp led to paralysis. Even the minority of the Bargaining Council members who consistently voted no on the BCOA/Miller/Carter terms had no conception or program for leading the miners on an offensive against Carter and the Democratic Party. Continued defensive battles, even by the most courageous but leaderless army, can never win a victory.

When miners narrowly voted for the last deal, although they had beat back the BCOA's anti-strike provisions, they still did not have the right to strike and will still have to face down the arbitrators and courts. They lost their free medical benefits and the UMWA health care program, 30-year-old landmarks of the labor movement. Pensions remained inadequate and unequal, with 93 percent of the retirees collecting a paltry \$275 a month. The miners knew that with such a contract it would be difficult to organize the growing number of non-

union mines which threaten the bargaining power and very existence of the UMWA.

Though the terms of their contract are a setback for the UMWA, the miners know that they were not conquered by their avowed enemies; they were betrayed by their own leaders. The miners returned to work bitter and disgusted but not broken. To prepare for the inevitable new battles, the miners need now to regroup and draw the crucial lessons of their strike. First and foremost is the need to forge a leadership committed to fighting the control and dictates of the capitalists and their political parties. For it was the ties between the quislings in union office and the bosses' government and politicians that blocked the miners victory.

The Collapse of the UMWA Leadership

Although one could hardly guess it today, Arnold Miller was brought to office by a reform movement which promised to return the UMWA to its membership. It is only a little over five years ago that Miller's Miners for Democracy swept the gangster Tony Boyle out of office. Liberals and most so-called radicals alike enthused over a "new day" for the labor movement. The Spartacist League foretold that Miller would prove a disaster for the miners and a willing tool of the federal government. For he was fundamentally the candidate of Nixon's Labor Department and a section of Democratic Party liberals. A broad section of the capitalist class backed the MFD against Boyle precisely because the latter had lost effective control over the UMWA membership.

The MFD from its inception kowtowed to the desires and dictates of capitalist politicians in Washington and their emissaries in the coalfields. Jock Yablonski, a longtime member of the Lewis-Boyle machine, ran against Boyle only on the urging and under the supervision of the Ralph Naders and Joe Rauh who provided the crucial links to the Democratic Party liberals. Rauh masterminded Yablonski's campaign and based his entire strategy on appealing to the courts and Nixon's Labor Department to virtually take over the UMWA. After Yablonski was murdered, this same strategy dominated the Miller/Trhovich/Patrick lash-up, with lawyers Ken and Chip Yablonski along with Rauh calling most of the shots.

The SL's warnings have been fully confirmed by Miller's unbroken record of treachery since coming to office. But now, in a soon-to-be published book based on a 1974 Ph.D. thesis capping three years of work with Miners for Democracy, former University of Pittsburgh professor Paul Nyden provides, perhaps massive evidence of the MFD's

role as a conduit for government influence in the union. Nyden is frequently quoted in the pages of the Communist Party's *Daily World*, which slavishly tailed Miller, and he does not want to draw the obvious conclusions. But the facts he presents are damning.

In commenting on the government's attitude toward MFD, Nyden cites an article, "Anarchy Threatens the Kingdom of Coal," from *Fortune* (January 1971), a magazine which reflects the thinking of some of the biggest bankers and industrialists in the U.S. Shaken by the 1969 Black Lung strike and the 1970 wildcat spearheaded by the Disabled Miners and Widows, big business decided that Boyle had to go:

"The problem of dealing with a work force that is no longer under union discipline would be difficult enough for the companies. But they are now faced with the prospects of signing a new contract on October 1 with a union president whose mandate to hold office is questionable, to say the least."

Nyden goes on to record the attitude of the operators and the Nixon administration:

"The operators would normally shudder at the possibility of having a militant rank-and-file slate elected to office. But dissatisfaction with Boyle's regime was generating so much conflict and touching off so many wildcat strikes everywhere in Appalachia in the late 1960's, that the operators and the pro-business Nixon administration realized there would never be any chance for steady production in the nation's coal mines until an honest election was conducted in the UMWA."

—Paul Nyden, *Miners for Democracy: Struggle in the Coal Fields*

The Nixon Administration, which was busy covering up its wiretapping/burglary of Watergate and its secret Cambodia bombings, was hardly interested in honesty; it wanted a more "responsible," trustworthy leadership to tame the UMWA. And the MFD tried to oblige. Nyden records one revealing confrontation between miners who, angered over a rigged election in District 5, wanted to strike and/or seize the District headquarters, versus Ken Yablonski's wretched legalism at an MFD rally in Cokesburg, Pennsylvania in April 1971:

"Yablonski: ...if you don't act responsibly and if you don't act within the law that you claim you want the protection of, then you disgrace the movement that you belong to."

"Voice from the crowd: What is the law?"

"Yablonski: The law says that you must resort to the courts if your union officials violate your union Constitution. And that is what we're going to do."

"Voice: The courts don't control me. They don't control me. How long will it take? How long... [continued shouting]"

"Yablonski: I don't want no damn rabble rouser running this thing. Act responsibly once in your life. We cannot resort to mob rule. We cannot resort to irresponsible and illegal activity.... I

saw rebel strikes in the 50s and the early 60s and it never got you a thing. This rebel movement...never had any chance of success until we got some real responsible leadership.... Believe me, men, believe me, if this thing isn't done legally, if it isn't done within the framework of the law, then you're not going to get it."

Many miners were not happy with the MFD's reliance on the agencies of the bosses' government. Though Boyle was thoroughly discredited by his notorious disregard for the miners' safety and the widely held conviction that the corrupt UMWA chief had played a hand in Yablonski's assassination (for which he was later jailed), Miller won with only 55 percent of the vote. Mike Trhovich later conceded that the MFD's court suits against the union had cost them a lot of votes.

Nyden quotes one retired black miner, Rufus Clark, who had been president of the Clyde No. 3 mine in western Pennsylvania where both Yablonski and Trhovich were later president: "How can you trust a movement that brings in people who have always been against the laboring man. Who appoints the Secretary of Labor? Nixon does! Nixon's going to supervise this election. And who backs Nixon? Big Business. No, I've never cared a damn for Big Capital!"

If Arnold Miller failed to impose the "labor peace" the government hoped for, it was not because he didn't try. After taking office, he and the other MFD leaders opposed the mushrooming wildcats, enforcing Boyle's hated contract. They rammed through the 1974 contract, trading off the miners' demand for the right to strike in exchange for an unwieldy grievance procedure capped by binding pro-company arbitration. In the years since, the bureaucrats freely resorted to red-baiting union militants and even invoked disciplinary penalties against leaders of wildcats. Nor was this the policy of Miller alone—on these issues, he was supported unanimously by his running mates, Harry Patrick and Mike

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FORUM

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Speaker.

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Great Coal Strike...

(continued from page 5)

Trhovich, as well as by the pro-Boyle clot on the union's International Executive Board grouped around Lee Roy Patterson.

The groveling of the Miller-led bureaucracy became downright scandalous in the just concluded strike. Wayne Horowitz and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service literally selected the key UMWA negotiators (including Harry Hoge, who only shortly before had outraged miners when he voted as the union's representative to cut health benefits), advised Miller on his selection of a publicity firm (since he had fired virtually his entire staff), then wrote the first two contract proposals. As the strike wore on, Miller & Co. were more and more exposed as mere rubber stamps for Carter, Marshall and the Labor Department.

Miller's opponents in last summer's election provided no alternative in the strike. Harry Patrick—having recently accepted a high-paying job with the federal anti-poverty agency ACTION—chimed in his endorsement of the last two sellout pacts. Lee Roy Patterson popped his head up to be quoted each time as saying "sellout," then disappeared again, biding his time for a comeback. Miners should remember that at no time in their long and crucial struggle with the operators and the government did Patterson seek to provide any leadership. How could he? Like Miller, Patterson calls on the government to "straighten out" the

union (he brought five separate law suits against the UMWA during last year's election campaign). He is simply tied into a more conservative clique in the UMWA hierarchy.

It has become quite the fashion in recent years for dissidents and office-seekers in the bureaucratized unions to call in the courts and/or Labor Department to fight their battles with the entrenched officialdom. But the bitter experience of Arnold Miller should serve as a sharp warning not just to miners but to all workers not to trust this strategy or those who push it. It is the government's control of the union movement that is the greatest threat to both union democracy and to the fight against the employers.

The government's drive to foist the Miller/MFD clique on the UMWA in 1972 and its invoking of Taft-Hartley today were merely two sides of the same coin. In both instances it was motivated by the same desire to break the militancy and solidarity of the rank and file. The past five years of the UMWA underscores the central lesson that the first condition for a real class-struggle labor movement is complete independence from the government, its agencies and courts.

Oust the Bureaucrats! Build a Workers Party!

In recent years, the miners have been unique in their determination to defend themselves through militant struggle. The entire labor bureaucracy hates and fears this militancy, above all terrified that it could spill over to their own membership. Thus on the eve of the strike, a top aide to Steelworkers president Lloyd McBride commented,

"The thing most likely to keep our experiment [the no-strike Experimental Negotiating Agreement] alive is the probability that the coal miners will have a long, bitter strike. That will remind our members once again how little sense there is to such a pattern... unless you have a suicide complex." After the strike was over, Fred Kroll, president of the railroad union BRAC denounced the miners for being "out of control." And UAW president Doug Fraser, who served as a key adviser to Labor Secretary Ray Marshall, declared that "at critical moments in the coal talks the President, Secretary of Labor and Director of the Federal Mediation Service acted decisively, sensibly and most importantly, fairly...." This was after Carter tried to smash the strike with Taft-Hartley!

Throughout the strike the leaders in maritime, rail, Teamsters and steel unions permitted the shipment and use of seab coal. Thus the bosses were enabled to avoid an acute economic crisis that would have quickly brought them to their knees. The betrayal of the steel and rail union bureaucrats, both in closely related industries, was particularly notable. Thus the railroad workers hauling seab coal were in fact working without a contract under provisions of the anti-strike Railway Labor Act; now that the coal strike is over, the bosses and the government will go after them. And steel workers, with thousands of their numbers laid off by the same steel barons who were among the most hard-line anti-union mine operators, were told by their leaders to just keep on working stockpiled and seab coal as their brothers in the Mine Workers fought alone.

The highly publicized donations from the Steelworkers, Auto Workers and Communications Workers to the UMWA sums which in fact amounted only to about \$1 for every member of these giant unions—were a response to the rank and file's mushrooming support for the miners, expressed in many plant gate collections and caravans carrying food and money to the miners, and an attempt to head off any more militant or direct defense of the miners strike. Even in the face of Taft-Hartley, not a single major union leader demanded protest strikes to stop this strikebreaking attack. Only in the west coast Longshore union did the membership force their International Executive Board to adopt such a resolution, which the top officials then suppressed and refused to act on.

On the left the Spartacist League was virtually alone in unceasingly struggling for genuine acts of solidarity with the miners—publicizing the efforts of steel worker militants to fight for a joint coal/steel strike, as well as the fight of steel and maritime workers to demand that their unions hot-cargo seab coal. In response to Taft-Hartley, the SL demanded protest work stoppages and publicized resolutions to this effect that were passed by UAW Local 6 in Chicago, as well as the Bay Area's Amalgamated Transit local and the ILWU.

Carter's invoking of Taft-Hartley was a powerful reminder that the Democratic Party, as well as the Republican, stands for union busting, for strike-breaking and for the repression of the working class. Congressmen of both parties united behind Carter's moves against the miners and, throughout the strike, Democratic governors like Kentucky's Julian Carroll as well as their Republican counterparts like Indiana's Otis Bowen mobilized their cops and state troopers against the miners.

This strike should be a lesson to all workers that every major struggle must lead ultimately to a confrontation with the capitalist government, which, far from being "neutral"—as the labor bureaucrats claim—is the armed fist of capital. Through the Democratic and Republican parties which they finance and control, the bosses mete out their "justice" to all who rebel militantly against their oppression under capitalism—to striking coal miners, Vietnamese peasants and the residents of the black ghettos. The capitalist parties prefer to maintain their rule peaceably; but when the exploited get "out of hand," bloody force is used.

Workers must demand that their unions cease support for the Democrats and Republicans and fight instead for the unions to build a workers party to fight for a workers government. Millions of workers' dollars and their votes are wasted in every election supporting the same politicians who slash the budgets, break the strikes and start the wars. A workers party would fight not only to mobilize the labor movement in united struggle against the capitalists and their parties but to form a workers government that would expropriate the privately owned mines, mills, banks and big industries, allowing them to be run for the interests of society not the fantastic profits of a few.

The obstacle to such a policy is the same trade-union bureaucracy that does its best to stifle every manifestation of working class independence. While the miners were locked in combat with the coal operators and the government, George Meany was busy trying to ingratiate himself with Carter and the Democrats on Capitol Hill. If the president feels Taft-Hartley is "his only alternative," said Meany, "then we won't criticize him."

The fight for labor's political independence necessarily requires the fight to oust the treacherous, class-collaborationist union bureaucrats who prop up the Democrats and Republicans. Both tasks are at the top of the

Remember the Traitors!



Weissblat/Charleston Daily Mail

Arnold Miller (on anti-strike penalties in first contract): "I'm not totally convinced that what we've done will stop them (wildcats), but it goes a long way toward it." (AP, 10 February 1978)



WV Photo

Harry Patrick: "The contract will not be re-opened. The right to strike people can strike until Hell freezes over" (Louisville Courier-Journal, 31 August 1975).



WV Photo

Jack Perry District 17 president backed the contract repudiated by miners 70/30 "...the best of two evils." (Charleston Gazette 3 March 1978)



WV Photo

Lou Antal: "...best contract we could get. Everybody's greedy and wants more. How can you get more if there isn't any more" (UPI, 27 February 1978).



John Blair Photoreporters

Lee Roy Patterson: "I don't know why the miners in West Virginia are down and I can't seem to find out" (Sunday Gazette Mail, 8 August 1976).

Space does not permit us to give proper acknowledgment to all the UMWA bureaucrats who helped Arnold Miller betray the miners. But special mention must go to those who served the operators in their own way, especially the so-called "dissidents." District 23 (western Kentucky) president Tommy Gaston pushed the agreement that miners voted down 70/30 as "something you can live with." Another "dissident," Illinois District 12 head Ken Dawes, led the push in the Bargaining Council for the same deal while his "mines" roughed up miners opposed to the pact. John Gizek, head of District 6 in Ohio (ironed for both Miller and Carter, warning that voting no "would virtually destroy" the union if Taft-Hartley was invoked.



Vicious cop assaults against the miners exposed the fake "neutrality" of the government. Two miners were murdered and hundreds arrested defending their picket lines. Above, state troopers arrest a UMWA local president in Norton, Virginia. Both Democratic politicians like Kentucky Governor Julian Carroll and Republican Governor Bowen of Indiana ordered their strikebreaking thugs into action against the miners.

UPI

agenda necessary to forge a fighting labor movement.

The Coal Miners and the Left

When the combination of massive struggles and bureaucratic sabotage has confronted the miners in the past, many have looked to the left for new leadership. Socialists, many of whom learned their trade unionism in the more politicized labor movements of Britain and southeastern Europe before immigrating to the U.S., played a leading role in the union's fierce early organizing battles. Later, after the longest strike in the union's history, four and a half months in 1922, the employers launched a unionbusting offensive which reduced the union to a shadow of its former self with no resistance from John L. Lewis. Thousands of miners flocked to the new Communist Party (CP) in response. A relatively unknown CPer got one-third of the total in the 1924 UMWA presidential election.

The "Save the Union Committee," an alliance between the CP and John Brophy, a longtime socialist leader in Pennsylvania, won mass support in the UMWA with its program of stopping the wage-cuts, organizing the unorganized, nationalizing the mines and building a labor party. It is almost certain that Lewis' victory over Brophy in the 1926 election was due to massive vote fraud. Even in the depth of the depression years, socialists, Stalinists and Trotskyists led bitter miners strikes in Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania and "Bloody Harlan" county in Kentucky.

Left-wing influence in the UMWA was suppressed by the virulent anti-communism of Lewis, who expelled his opponents in droves, and the Stalinism which thoroughly corrupted the Communist Party. The CP's attempts to build a new union in the coalfields from 1928 to 1933, when the UMWA had virtually ceased to exist outside of Illinois and the Pennsylvania anthracite fields, was aborted by its sectarian refusal to work with anyone who did not accept its control. Later the CP zig-zagged so far to the right that it embraced Roosevelt's attacks on the famous 1933 miners strikes and labeled Lewis a fascist for striking against the wartime government. The Trotskyists of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), however, continued to stand by the miners.

By the time the federal government decided that Tony Boyle had to go and

boosted Arnold Miller to power, most of the American left had foresworn the struggle against government manipulation of the labor movement. With the exception of the Spartacist League, they either cheered Miller or made a few perfunctory criticisms of the MFD's reliance on the courts and Labor Department. Now, after five years of betrayal by the MFD leaders, which have rendered Arnold Miller perhaps the most thoroughly despised trade-union bureaucrat in the U.S., not one of the groups that supported him in 1972 has repudiated that position. Unwilling and unable to learn the lessons of history, these fake leftists have served notice that they will back the next twobit "progressive" faker that comes down the pike.

The two largest groups on the left, the Stalinist Communist Party and the now ex-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party, have long since abandoned any struggle against the policies of the reformist union bureaucracy. When the SWP and CP demand that the federal government clean up the unions, when they back union-husting affirmative action suits against the unions, when they call on the federal government to send troops to Boston to "protect" blacks—they demonstrate the same touching faith in the

good will of the capitalist state as the Millers and Sadlowskis.

From the beginning of the strike, the policy of these groups was indistinguishable from that of the labor bureaucracy. Both spent their energies on organizing platforms for reformist bureaucrats to hallyhoo their phony "solidarity" with the miners, while their own trade-union supporters consistently refused to support resolutions raised by militants for class-struggle defense of the strike. In the Bay Area, for example, the SWP took the lead in opposing a motion presented to a meeting of some 200 trade unionists to implement the ILWU's call for a one-day strike against Taft-Hartley, while the CP abstained. The SWP's *Militant* even had the gall to write an article during the strike about why militants should *not* demand solidarity strikes with the miners and hot-cargoing of coal!

In the aftermath of the strike, the CP published a statement in the 30 March *Daily World* which hailed the settlement as a "real victory for rank and file miners, as it is a victory for all of organized labor." The statement, which amounted to a thorough whitewash of the traitorous UMWA bureaucracy, contained not one word of criticism of the contract provisions, even claiming that the right to strike was "strengthened!" An article in the 7 April *Militant*, entitled "Outcome of the Strike," while more critical of Miller, nowhere admitted that the SWP had supported Miller for years!

Like the SWP and CP reformists, the Maoists of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) had no program for the crisis of leadership that was blocking a victory to the strike. In fact, the RCP came out in the March issue of *Revolution* against the effort to dump Miller! (The RCP's forerunner, the Revolutionary Union, had given "critical support" to Miller in 1972). Denouncing it as a "diversion" that had won the support of "some" rank-and-file miners (like maybe 90 percent!), the RCP writes off the justified hatred of 160,000 miners for Arnold Miller as the work of a group of "opportunistic union hacks." It is of course true that many UMWA officials who endorsed the "recall Miller" campaign are no better than he. But to refuse to come out for removing Miller on these grounds is to serve as his last-ditch defense!

The small Miners Right to Strike Committee (MRSC), which is politically supported by the RCP, was equally incapable of providing any direction for the militant miners, offering only more "militant" rhetoric: "Vote no and hang tough." But the mine workers were plenty militant already. What they lacked was leadership and the MRSC had no idea of how to provide it. The MRSC did not call for strike committees, did not call for replacing Miller,

did not call for a special convention. Behind the MRSC's refusal to struggle for a new leadership during the strike lay the fact that it simply had no program for victory. Despite its militant posturing, the MRSC has always tailored its demands to the existing norms of reformist trade unionism, consciously avoiding mention of the need to fight racial oppression, to build a workers party or to expropriate the capitalists. In this strike, it rejected even the fight to organize delegations of miners to demand that other unions hot-cargo seah coal. Instead, it accepted Miller's policy that labor solidarity would be limited to appeals for funds, clothes and food, and merely wanted to channel relief aid through its own small "support committees" as an alternative to the various District and International relief funds.

Most of the remaining American left groups put in equally dismal performances. The Progressive Labor Party, which has degenerated into a crazed semi-syndicalist cult, featured endless idiotic ravings in *Challenge* which made the miners instead of the gun-toting scabs and cops look like provocateurs. "Hail Miners Violence!" was one typical headline. The Workers League's *Bulletin* stridently denounced Miller's ties to the Labor Department. But these political bandits were absolutely silent about why they had enthusiastically backed Miller in 1972 or, even more outrageously, called last summer for support to Lee Roy Patterson—distinguishing themselves as the *only* left group to back this red-baiting, right-wing former ally of Tony Boyle!

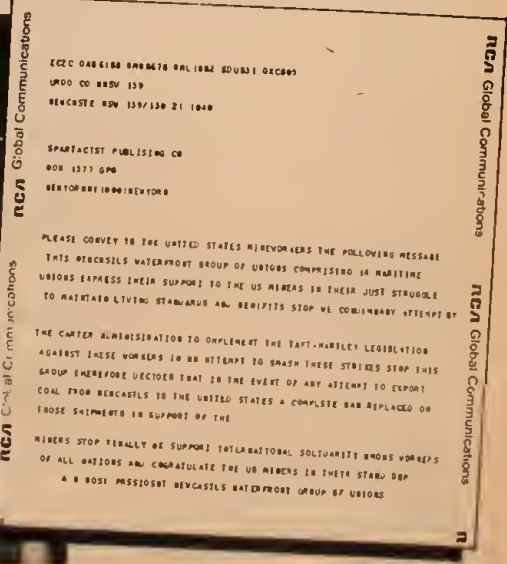
These pseudo-revolutionaries are far from being the furious "reds" who have been blamed for the UMWA's problems by bureaucrats from Patterson to Miller. In fact the real problem with the CP, SWP and the rest of the reformist gangs is that their program doesn't go beyond the simple trade unionism of Miners for Democracy. That is why they supported the MFD in 1972 and why they covered up for Miller's strikebreaking until literally thousands of miners were clamoring for his head. In the recent strike the determined militancy of the miners pushed to the limits of trade unionism, to the point where it became brutally clear that what was needed was a program and a strategy that could overcome the attacks of the bosses and the capitalist parties. But the reformists have no such strategy and program any more than Arnold Miller does. So it is not surprising that many of them called the final settlement a "victory."

The miners will surely be confronted now with a host of aspiring leaders seeking to dump discredited UMWA leaders. Many of these will be District officials who played no better role and would have done the same had they held

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The outpouring of donations to the strikers and the appearance of union-led caravans in the coalfields were actions unheard of in recent decades. Below, striking U.S. farmers donate food while, right, Newcastle, Australia dockworkers telegraph vow to hot-cargo coal exports to U.S.

Corn/New York Times



Great Coal Strike...

(continued from page 7)

Miller's office. There will also be among those coming forward miners who played honorable and militant roles in the strike. But unless these new leaders absorb the political lessons of the UMWA's experience over the last five years, unless they are committed to a complete break with the politics of class collaboration, they too will necessarily succumb to the powerful pressures that the capitalists and their politicians apply to keep the unions in line.

The militancy and courage which the miners have repeatedly displayed have not yielded a leadership to match these qualities. Nor will simply more militant struggles produce such a leadership. Seventy-six years ago V. I. Lenin, who led the Russian workers in their successful revolution, wrote that "The history of all countries shows that the working class exclusively by its own effort is able to develop only trade-union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labor legislation, etc." (*What Is To Be Done?*). The miners today are among the most, if not the most trade-union conscious workers in the U.S. But what Lenin wrote remains true today. Miners must be won to a Trotskyist leadership and a class-struggle program for their struggles to break through the limits imposed by pro-capitalist leaders, the employers and the state. Otherwise their magnificent combativeness will go to naught, as tragically occurred in the coal strike of 1977-78.

tradition of revolutionary leaders of the working-class movement like Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, who unceasingly fought the opportunist peddlers of illusions, not least when these opportunists falsely called themselves "socialists" or "communists." In refusing to capitulate to "progressive" fakers like Miller and Sadlowski, we counterpose the building of a militant opposition in the unions based on a class-struggle program. As Leon Trotsky wrote in 1938 in the *Transitional Program*, the founding document of the Fourth International:

"It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of



Gun thug violence did not stop the miners. UMWA march honors John Hull.

transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion, the conquest of power by the proletariat."

Over the last several years the pages of *Workers Vanguard* have covered the struggle of militants in auto, steel, longshore, maritime, phone and other unions to forge such a programatically based opposition as the nucleus of a new leadership. A program for the UMWA, incorporating the lessons of the working-class movement generally as well as of the miners' own struggles, would include such demands as:

- 1) For the unlimited right to strike and picket—down with compulsory arbitration and court injunctions! For total UMWA control over safety: no faith in the government's inspectors!
- 2) Restore the health fund, controlled by the union, with guaranteed full medical coverage! Equalize and raise all pensions—retirement after 20 years in the union!
- 3) For a shorter workweek with no loss in pay and a full cost-of-living escalator clause! Eliminate overtime and create jobs through fewer hours underground!
- 4) For a militant organizing drive, including UMWA strike action, to bring the non-union mines under UMWA contract. Down with company unions like the SLU!
- 5) Keep the government, its agencies and courts out of the unions—no support to those who bring the Labor Department and courts into union affairs!

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6) For real union democracy: one-year terms, annual conventions, one-year contracts! No union official to be paid more than the highest-paid working miner!

7) Smash all anti-union laws, like Taft-Hartley, with united, militant labor action!

8) End racial and sexual oppression! For union control of hiring—promotion by seniority to eliminate all forms of company discrimination! Smash the Klan, the Nazis and all other fascist groups!

9) End the parasitic monopolies' domination of basic natural resources: expropriate the mines and the entire energy industry without compensation!

10) No support to the strikebreaking Democrats and Republicans, the parties of big business! Oust the bureaucrats and build a workers party, based on the unions, to fight for a workers government that will expropriate industry and the banks and run society in the interests of working people!

The vital importance of working-class leadership has been demonstrated with renewed intensity by the heroic miners strike. The aspiring careerists in the UMWA will spurn the hard struggle to cohere a programatically based class-struggle opposition. They will use the anti-communism which has been fueled by capitalist propaganda and the real betrayals of the fake lefts, mainly the shamelessly reformist, pro-Miller Communist Party, to whip up opposition to the militant miners who fight for it. They have no real alternative to Miller—their policies are only an alternative way to lose. It is the Trotskyists of the Spartacist League who have consistently put forward a program for victory. ■

LETTER

Jerusalem, Israel
4 April 1978

Dear friends of the "Workers Vanguard":

I have read with great attention your report about the Israeli seamen in California and the attempt of "Zim" Company to expell them from the striking ships, and also your accurate description of the background.

I want to add one point about the present and one about the past. In one country the attempt of "Zim" Company was completely successful and at once, of course I speak about South Africa. "Zim" together with the Israeli authorities applied for help to South African authorities against two "Zim" ships and the seamen were taken from them by force and flown to Israel. Scabs were introduced into the ships.

And about the past. The famous seamen's strike in 1951 was mainly broken by a mobilization of scabs, from the kibbutzim movement, who could easily "serve" for a few months as "temporary seamen" and then return to their kibbutz when the strike was completely broken.

Generally speaking, I can only advise you to deal once, when you have time and opportunity with this piece of deception called the "kibbutz"!

Sincerely and with friendship,
Yours,
Israel Shahak

Anti-Immigration Furor...

(continued from page 2)

ate demand certainly does *not* mean that we support the immigration policies of bourgeois states.... It would be impermissible, for example, for a communist parliamentary fraction to vote for any immigration quotas, even "liberal" ones, in a bourgeois parliament."

In an attempt to make stick some of the slanders which it is slinging, the WSL leadership has to ignore the principled and consistent fight against anti-immigration hysteria and other forms of national chauvinism led by Spartacist-supported groupings in the trade unions. When in early 1975 U.S. authorities whipped up hysteria against "illegal aliens," threatening to step up mass deportations, not only did the Spartacist League/U.S. actively participate in and initiate demonstrations against the racist frenzy, but caucuses politically supported by the SL, such as the Militant Solidarity Committee of UAW (car workers) Local 906 (New Jersey), campaigned for full citizenship rights for foreign workers. And in early 1977, responding to U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service raids in San Francisco-area warehouses, the Militant Caucus of ILWU (dockers and warehouse union) Local 6 called for union "flying squads" and strike action to stop the raids. Where has the WSL made the question of defence of immigrants a fighting issue in the unions?

Nor can the WSL leaders deal with the very real examples of the problems created by asserting the unconditional mass "right to unlimited immigration" under capitalism (e.g., Jews in Palestine, Americans in northern Mexico, Turks in Cyprus). If pushed on this question an honest WSL loyalist might reply that there *are* problems raised by these examples, but that nations like Holland and Belgium—cited in the *WV* article—

are different, as they are imperialist oppressors. But this is not the Leninist position. Leninists uphold the right of *all* nations to self-determination, though this right is generally simply not in question for the imperialist and presently oppressing nations. On a general programmatic level the denial of the right to self-determination to oppressor peoples flows from the Pabliste/New Left conception that there are "good" and "bad" peoples and that the "bad" peoples have forfeited their democratic rights.

Writing shortly before the outbreak of World War II, Trotsky noted that despite the shameful "white Australia" immigration policy, Australians did not forfeit their right to self-determination: "Naturally no Australian worker or farmer wishes to be conquered and subjected to Japan. For a revolutionary party it would be suicidal to say simply we are 'indifferent' to this question. But we cannot give to a bourgeois, an essentially imperialist government the task of defending the independence of Australia" ("Letter to Australians," December 1937, *Writings*, 1937-38).

National oppression and race hatred will not be rooted out with utopian fantasies of dissolving national boundaries under capitalism. Such pipe-dreams appeal only to those who are unwilling to undertake the tasks of proletarian internationalism—winning workers to the program of international class solidarity, intransigent defence of all victims of racialist oppression, and above all the unrelenting struggle to construct a truly international vanguard party.

It is no accident that those WSL members who actively sought answers to the central questions of international proletarian policy were drawn to the banner of the ISL. In sharp contrast to the petty parochial workermism of the WSL, the Spartacist League/Britain will be in the forefront of the battle against the racialist poison spewed by the Thatcher, Powells & Callaghans worshipping the corpse of their long-dead Empire. ■

4,000 Protest Apartheid at Davis Cup Matches



Over 4,000 protesters besieged the International Davis Cup tennis competition between the U.S. and South African teams at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee with the object of driving South Africa out of Davis Cup play and, more generally, to protest the apartheid system of white supremacy. On March 17, the opening day of the competition, hundreds of armed police wearing flak jackets and riot helmets escorted participants and spectators through the crowd of angry demonstrators.

The following day an even larger police mobilization confronted the protesters, while inside the university gymnasium bomb squads searched the grandstands and cops patrolled the courts during play. Despite this massive mobilization of the armed thugs of the state, however, the demonstrations have been quite successful. Less than 20 percent of the seats for what is one of the premier events of international tennis were occupied.

The Vanderbilt demonstrations are the culmination of a months-long campaign spearheaded by the left-liberal American Coordinating Committee for Equality in Sport and Society (ACCESS) and supported by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The demonstrators come largely from nearby black colleges.

The organizing for this anti-South Africa protest, which has been pursued mainly in the South, has provoked violent racist reaction. Last February Richard Lapchick, a professor at Virginia Wesleyan and leader of ACCESS, was beaten senseless in his office by a gang of racist hoodlums who carved "niger" [sic] on his chest. The state authorities did nothing to apprehend them. In fact, the official medical examiner declared the wound "self-inflicted"!

South Africa's Davis Cup team is all white, except for a last-minute, token coloured (mixed race) Vanderbilt student named Peter Lamb. The composition of this team is a flagrant display of South Africa's policy of harring blacks

from international athletic competition, and it is a legitimate target of militant protest against the murderous apartheid regime. Moreover, this tennis tournament—which is an occasion for national glorification, much like the Olympics—particularly in the context of South Africa's attempt to achieve international respectability via the merest step of token desegregation in sports, is an appropriate focus for protests of revulsion against the apartheid regime.

Many of the participants, however, see the protest as part of a broader campaign to boycott all things South African, from sardines to Krugerrands. As revolutionary socialists and internationalists, we do not support the demand for a total economic and cultural boycott of South Africa. In general such boycotts are nothing but ineffectual utopian moralizing.

Moreover, the liberal-moralist desire to destroy the South African economy would, if realized, actually increase the oppression of the black masses and strengthen the apartheid system. Unemployed blacks would be sent back to the desperately impoverished Bantustans where they have far less economic and social power than they have as urban workers. It is through their potential power as organized labor that South Africa's black masses can attack and eventually overthrow the apartheid system.

The real political danger of the liberal anti-South Africa boycott activity lies not in the impact on its intended target—which is nil—but in the illusions it fosters in the righteousness of American imperialism. By criticizing violations of "human rights" in South Africa, the Carter administration is deliberately seeking to restore the moral authority of U.S. foreign policy, which was seriously weakened through the decade-long massacre of millions of Indochinese workers and peasants. We do not call upon the bloodstained American ruling class to end the oppression of the black masses perpetrated by its South African ally.

We call on organized labor to boycott all arms shipments to the murderers of Soweto and to mobilize militant international labor protests to force multinationals with South African holdings to recognize black unions and eliminate all apartheid practices in their operations. It is not the moralistic "boycott South Africa" campaign but international labor solidarity which will strike a blow for the oppressed black masses against apartheid terror. ■



Pyotr Grigorenko, left, with Mstislav Rostropovich in New York.

Protest Kremlin Banishment of Grigorenko!

On March 10 the Soviet government made public a decree signed last month by Leonid Brezhnev depriving 70-year-old political dissident and former Red Army major general Pyotr Grigorenko of his citizenship and barring his return to the USSR. Grigorenko is currently in the United States for medical treatment and demands to be allowed to return home.

Grigorenko, who is accused of having "inflicted damage to Soviet prestige," was a war hero, decorated with the Order of Lenin during World War II. He was later head of the department of cybernetics at Frunze Military Academy. After Grigorenko began his career as a dissident in the early 1960's, however, he was reduced to the rank of private, expelled from the Communist Party and incarcerated for more than five years in prisons and psychiatric hospitals.

"We vehemently protest this bureaucratic outrage, a procedure which has also been used against several other Soviet dissidents in recent years. Valery Chalidze, Zhores Medvedev, Vladimir Maksimov and Mstislav Rostropovich were all stripped of their citizenship while abroad. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was deprived of his Soviet citizenship when he was expelled from the USSR in 1974. As Trotskyists we struggle to oust the Kremlin bureaucracy and reestablish workers democracy in the USSR, including the right of free political expression extending even to such thorough anti-Communists as the demoralized Grigorenko has become provided they do not actively work for the overthrow of the Soviet degenerated workers state.

Grigorenko was long a representative of the left wing of the amorphous dissident movement. In 1963 he founded the "Union of Struggle for the Revival of Leninism," which studied *State and Revolution* and distributed leaflets critical of the Khrushchev regime. He also carried on a long struggle for the rights of the Crimean Tatars. In the late 1960's he, together with Old Bolshevik Alexis Kosterin and a loose grouping of younger dissidents, joined in hailing the "Prague Spring" of 1968. Grigorenko wrote that Dubcek's path in Czechoslo-

vakia was "the one we should be following—in other words, democratization and socialism, for there can be no socialism without democracy."

While some Soviet dissidents such as Solzhenitsyn now profess to have been motivated by religious convictions all along, the tone of the post-1968 dissident movement was set by those like Grigorenko and Kosterin who advocated Dubcek-style self-reform of the bureaucracy. In recent years almost all of them have moved sharply to the right, and like Sakharov embrace the cold warriors of imperialism in the name of "human rights." Nowhere has this shift been more pronounced than in the case of Grigorenko.

At a recent speech at Harvard University the depth of his disillusionment and political degeneration was clearly revealed. "I oppose all ideology," he stated. "Hopefully we learn from our mistakes. When I began communist activities I believed that communism was the future light of man. I want to know nothing more about communism." He also stated that he supports Solzhenitsyn's attacks on Western liberals for being too "soft" on the USSR.

The theme of Grigorenko's talk was "peace," and like all such "universal" and "apolitical" themes this comes down to support of the capitalist class. Grigorenko not only praised Jimmy Carter for raising "moral" considerations in foreign policy, but went on to laud such "peacemakers" as Ian Smith of Rhodesia and King Juan Carlos of Spain:

"Some wars are inevitable and some, such as the American Revolution, are both just and necessary. Wars of national liberation are just if liberation cannot be achieved otherwise, but today I think other avenues are available. Ian Smith has provided this answer unless his advisers mess it up. His solution is through peaceful means. Juan Carlos also is trying through peaceful means to solve the Catalan and Basque problems."

Finally, the Red Army war hero-turned-pacifist, whose will has been broken by a decade and a half of Stalinist persecution, left no doubt that his diatribe against war was really directed against

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Frenzied ILWU Tops...

(continued from page 3)

acknowledgement that the officers had in fact been authorized to hold a one-day work stoppage appeared in a March 24 *Dispatcher*, adding cautiously, "if and when they see fit." They never did "see fit," and that same day the miners reluctantly voted for a contract that was worse than the 1974 agreement they had wildcatted against for three years.... However, the East Bay Division Local 6 membership at their March meeting, by voting to concur in the IEB call, repudiated the disgusting position of Local 6 president Eickman who was the only member of the IEB to vote against the 24-hour strike."

The subsequent presentation by International president Jimmy Herman, who spent no less than half an hour in a frenzied denunciation of the Militant Caucus, made it clear how much the International had been stung by this issue. After paying lip service to union democracy, Herman blustered that those who tell us to "engage in revolution" should make a revolution by going "into hiding." Frantically defensive about the charge that the International officers sabotaged the mine solidarity strike call, Herman listed five motions passed by the IEB on March 9-10, the final one being: "Authorize officers to call a stoppage of work if in our judgement it would be helpful." The actual IEB motion left only the date of a dock walkout up to the International, and the 24 March *Dispatcher* describes the motion as authorizing the officers "to ask the longshore division to hold a one-day work stoppage in a demonstration of support for the Mineworkers." Period.

Herman complained about newspaper headlines announcing the ILWU strike call, all because somebody called the press to "announce for us"! Still trying to pass the buck for his own inaction, Herman baldly asserted, "That phone call sabotaged the union's ability to get our membership in gear." This flimsy excuse was never explained, and in any case the International's earlier lying attempts to deny that a motion mandating a dock walkout was ever passed shows how much it wanted to "get the membership in gear." After Herman finished his slanderous diatribe an MC member rose to ask time to answer. Eickman snapped back that there would be no discussion on Herman's "report!"

Perhaps the only business discussed in any detail by the convention delegates was the issue of Spanish translation of union materials and readings—an important question since approximately one third of the warehouse membership is Spanish-speaking. The Militant Caucus led the way at the last three Local 6 conventions in raising this issue when the union leaders opposed any translations. This year the officers came in with a token proposal to translate the union constitution, but not the master contract! Translation of the contract, they argued, should be made a bargaining demand in 1979! In effect, the officers were joined with the employers in keeping the Spanish-speaking members ignorant of the contract provisions for at least another year.

Against this there were three other proposals, including a Militant Caucus proposal to translate "all important official union literature" such as the contract and constitution, as well as the union bulletins and "major discussion at union meetings and conventions." In the discussion, MC member Pete Farruggio sarcastically suggested that one of the many items needing translation into Spanish is Eickman's assertion that "we do not have substandard housing in Local 6." This would enrage many Spanish-speaking members who are concentrated in substandard houses. He also noted that Spanish translations are

vital for any serious organizing drive.

Eickman bureaucratically ruled that a vote to approve the officers' proposal would automatically end the voting on the other resolutions. However, he had to surmount a challenge to the chair, and this required three votes before he received his backing by 150 to 70 (with the help of CP supporters like Figueiredo).

As the convention drew to a close in the late afternoon the itchy bureaucracy again mobilized its goon squad against the Militant Caucus to emphasize the ILWU tops' determination to prevent any militant action. Retired International secretary-treasurer Lou Goldblatt gave a major filibustering speech in which he warned the delegates against "self-appointed saviours" (his long-time title for the Militant Caucus) and assured the membership that while tough times lay ahead, the present "excellent" leadership team would see the union through them. His speech was carefully timed to precede an MC resolution calling for solidarity with the longshore division in the upcoming longshore contract battle—including hot-cargoing struck cargo, reinforcing picket lines, and sympathy-strike action. The motion brought an immediate denunciation from McClain and was duly voted down. But when Mandel rose a little later to expose a perfunctory CP-sponsored resolution supporting the ILWU/Teamster warehouse alliance, a goon squad began to collect around him as he criticized the treacherous behavior of the ILWU/Teamster bureaucrats in the last warehouse strike in 1976. Abandoning all democratic pretense, Eickman ordered the floor mike shut off and refused to allow Mandel to continue.

This disgusting spectacle of the union leadership disrupting and sabotaging the Local 6 convention should make it clear that the "progressive" ILWU leadership is not fundamentally different from the strikebreakers like Arnold Miller and George Meany in its fierce opposition to any militant union action. If the ILWU is to move forward, these traitors must be dumped by a new leadership committed to class struggle—and the Militant Caucus has demonstrated its determination to lead that fight. ■

Grigorenko...

(continued from page 9)

class war, i.e., against revolution. In discussing World War I, he said:

"There is another reason for war—the left. The Serbian terrorists also helped start World War I. The Bolsheviks also wanted war. Lenin spoke on this. The program for turning an imperialist war into a civil war is a program for war."

While the Kremlin bureaucrats prevent many Soviet citizens from traveling abroad and/or emigrating, they have proved quite willing to exile the most right-wing of the dissidents. They know that the ravings of a Solzhenitsyn—an extreme reactionary even by Western standards, who wishes to return to tsarist times with the knout and the Black Hundreds—will not attract Soviet youth. Compared to the Trotskyists of the Left Opposition—who had to be physically exterminated down to the last man and woman before Stalin could sleep easily in the Kremlin—the pro-imperialist dissidents pose far less of a threat to the bureaucrats.

The voices which the Stalinists most wish to silence are those which expose how the bureaucracy has betrayed the cause of the October Revolution, who call for a return to the path of Lenin. Only a Trotskyist party, struggling to oust the parasitic bureaucratic caste through political revolution, while defending and extending the conquests of October, can achieve real democracy for the working people of the Soviet Union. ■

French Popular Front...

(continued from page 12)

it is too soon to predict their exact composition.

Union of the Left on Its Death Bed

In the aftermath of the electoral fiasco, the Union of the Left will no doubt finally be put to rest. The PS will pursue its options independent of the PCF and in negotiations with the Giscard government. The PS has already announced its intentions to publish its "own" version of the Common Program, and one of its national leaders, Claude Estier, has ventured that:

"By the force of things the Union of the Left is becoming much more a de facto unity in action... than the organic union based on a contract which has enabled the left to make gains for the past five years."

—quoted in *Rouge*, 25-26 March

While the departure of the MRG marks the end of the Union of the Left of old, the future remains an open question. What remains is the projected formation of new popular-front alliances in the form of "national unity" (Giscard's pet project) or the "union of the people of France" (to use the PCF's favored term from the past).

Over the past six months the ostensible pre-election break-up of the popular front has been the subject of media sensationalism featuring an unholy alliance of the "far left" and the bourgeois press. While in the U.S. the *New York Times* was orchestrating an anti-Communist barrage demanding "proof" of the PCF's independence from the Kremlin, the French "far left" piped in to bemoan the lack of "unity" within the popular front. For the French would-be Trotskyist groups the claim that the Union of the Left no longer existed served as a convenient pretext to preserve a veneer of "orthodoxy"; with the popular front "finished" they claimed to be voting for the now "independent" PCF and PS.

In contrast, the Ligue Trotskyiste de France (LTF, the French sympathizing section of the international Spartacist tendency) maintained throughout the protracted parliamentary maneuvers that breaking from the bourgeoisie and the class independence of the proletariat were the decisive questions facing the French proletariat.

In fact every indication was that the "rift" was simply a grand maneuver to determine who would get what in the event of the anticipated Union of the Left victory. To take but one example, at the "height" of the "discords" a single issue of *Le Monde* (23 February) quoted parallel statements from the PCF and PS. According to Marchais:

"We communists, our intentions are clear. We want unity: we want to defeat the right, we want a new left majority which will enable us to form a Union of the Left government with communist ministers."

And according to Mitterrand:

"The strength of the Socialist Party cannot be dissociated from the Union of the Left. The new Socialist Party was built and developed around the Union of the Left strategy... The goal of the Union of the Left is to attain a common government."

Despite all the internal quarrels the Union of the Left existed throughout the past period since all parties agreed that they would form a common government were they to win a parliamentary majority. Today this is no longer the case and the Union of the Left lies all dutifully parading to the scene. But new popular front lash-ups are still on the agenda and the "far left" is already begun its new "unity" push, while the various components of the popular front might well clamor: "The Union of the Left is dead. Long live the Union of the Left," perhaps the late-Trotskyists will chime in "For the

reconstruction of the Union of the Left!"

What Next?

Prior to the elections, the reformist parties have actively attempted to reduce the level of strikes and other working-class struggles in order to reassure the bourgeoisie prior to an electoral victory of the Union of the Left. By the same token, the government had attempted to piece off the working class with minor crumbs here and there in order to gain the marginal votes needed for victory. Now, however, the PCF in particular, and to a lesser extent the PS, will be forced at least verbally to take stronger anti-government positions, while the government can be expected to significantly reinforce its austerity plan (as indicated by the reappointment of economist Raymond Barre, author of the present austerity plan, as prime minister).

The focus of French political life will probably be transferred from the patent maneuvering of the political parties to the trade unions. Prior to the elections, the obscure polemics within the Union of the Left had a real social importance: the question of which gang of reformists would have the whip hand in a Union of the Left government (while preparing to administer some variant of the governmental austerity plan, perhaps even worse, after the elections). But now the polemics have been reduced to verbal gymnastics preparatory to some kind of realignment and a new, probably enlarged, "national unity" formation.

The government will certainly try to take advantage of the left's defeat by turning the screws of Prime Minister Barre's austerity plan. Typical in this respect was a report in *Le Monde* the week following the election, that previous predictions of some 16,000 layoffs in the French steel industry over the next year and a half had been deliberately miscalculated by the government and steel industry, and that the real number of layoffs projected would be closer to 30,000 or even 40,000. However, despite initial demoralization over the defeat of "their" organizations, faced with renewed attacks on their standard of living the volatile French workers will be forced to react to demand a halt to the erosion of their real wages.

While both PCF leader Georges Marchais and Mitterrand have obediently shown up at the presidential palace to confer with President Giscard d'Estaing, the real news after the election has been the series of meetings at the request of the unions, for the first time in many years. Giscard's meetings with the political parties have the stated aim of moving toward some form of "national unity" center-left coalition. This "historic compromise" à la française is problematic in the extreme and the actual aim is most likely to split off the right wing of the PS to serve in a center coalition with Giscard's heterogeneous UDF. In contrast, the meetings with the CFTD and the CGT (as well as all other unions and the employers' association) have a more immediate purpose—namely working out parameters within which the unions can appear to uphold the workers' interests while not making any demands which cost the government more than it wants to pay.

Role of the "Far Left"

The electoral campaign of the "far left" was a major debacle. Although the percentage of the total vote received (3.3 percent) was about the same as in 1973, this total percentage (which includes the left-reformist social-democratic PSU) was maintained only by the fact that both the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) and Lutte Ouvrière (LO) ran in vastly more areas this year than in 1973. Whereas the LCR had received an average of 1.8 percent of the votes in areas where it ran candidates in 1973, this year it received only 0.9

percent on the average. And Lutte Ouvrière, which virtually dissolved its organization into a vast electoral machine in order to run candidates in every district (with 470 candidates, LO ran more candidates than even the PCF!), received an average of only 1.7 percent of the votes, as opposed to 2.33 percent in 1973.

By its own account, LO, the smallest of the three main ostensibly Trotskyist organizations in France, spent over half a million dollars to run a grotesque imitation of the Union of the Left campaign. LO's slogans made blatant populist appeals to the "little man," assuring all and sundry that LO "will never hesitate in supporting small employers against big ones." But the two central appeals of the LO campaign were: "Vote for a woman, vote Arlette" (Laguiller, LO's "star" and its candidate in the 1974 presidential elections) and that LO deputies in parliament would be "real" left deputies. Thus one of LO's electoral statements says that an LO deputy would be a "left deputy on the side of the workers, in the event (!) that the left government reneges on its commitments" (our emphasis).

Can there be any question that the election promises, the "commitments" of a Marchais or Mitterrand aren't worth the paper they are written on? In fact, the thrust of the LO campaign, in addition to its rampant populism, was that it was simply a "more left" version of the policies of the popular front. LO deputies were to be "left deputies that would not toe the line" for the PCF and the PS. A token LO deputy would supposedly keep the Union of the Left honest. Given its total electoral cretinism, it is not surprising that one LO candidate publicly stated that LO would even enter a popular front government the better to denounce its secret deals!

OCI: Errand Boys for Mitterrand

The disarray exhibited by the rest of the "far left" in the wake of its electoral setback reflects the popular-front illusions shared in and spread by its campaigns. In differing fashions all of the major groups sought to place the Union of the Left in power so that they could expand their influence in its periphery. Thus the statement by the OCI's Stéphane Just to its Central Committee meeting after the elections that "Today the working class no longer has any short-term perspectives. That fact is fundamental." (*Informations Ouvrières*, 30 March). In reality what Just was expressing is the OCI's own lack of any short-term perspective following the defeat of the popular front, on whose victory it had centered its program for the last four years at least.

Of all the French groups, the OCI most openly played the role of supporters of the popular front and—as the PCF was quick to point out—as errand boys for François Mitterrand. Thus the issue of the OCI's paper, *Informations Ouvrières*, which came out between the election rounds was headlined, "12 March: PS-PCF Majority. 19 March: Victory!"—the "victory" of the popular front, that is.

As the elections approached, the OCI centered all its efforts on the slogan: "Enough Splits! Unity for a PCF-PS Majority!" (The mythical PCF-PS majority was simply a fig leaf for support to the popular front, since the MRG hardly counted for anything in terms of votes.) To the PCF's slogan "Life must be changed" ("Il faut changer la vie") the OCI replied, via its youth press, "Life must be changed totally" ("Pour un changement total de la vie"). OCI leader Charles Berg took up this theme in a major public OCI meeting by stating that "Change is a PCF-PS majority in the National Assembly" (quoted in *Rouge*, 30 January). To top it all off, the OCI proudly proclaimed the fact that it organized a joint election

rally with the PS in Nice (*Informations Ouvrières*, 22 February)!

To justify its capitulation, the OCI was forced to cook up the theory that its parliamentarist approach was justified by the honapartist regime installed by de Gaulle in 1958. Devoting an entire book to the question of the popular front, the OCI authors spend 350 pages demonstrating that the popular fronts in France and Spain in the 1930's and more recently in Chile disarmed the proletariat politically and militarily and opened the way for the defeats which followed. But in the last chapter there is an about-face. France today is not the same at all, you see. On the contrary, rather than opening the door to defeat, the victory of the popular front would, say the OCI fortune tellers, necessarily touch off a revolutionary crisis that would be a mortal danger to the bourgeoisie:

"The framework of the Fifth Republic will not allow for a left parliamentary majority. . . . The Fifth Republic is not a bourgeois parliamentary regime. Simply changing the relations within the tributary parties of the Fifth Republic, which direct and occupy the state, will open up a deadly crisis."

Fronts populaires d'hier et d'aujourd'hui

For all its disclaimers that revolution cannot be made by parliamentary means, the OCI has stated and restated



French premier Raymond Barre

for at least 4 years an unambiguous stagist position: bringing the popular front to power represents the first step on the path to socialist revolution. This position goes hand in hand with the OCI's overtures to the United Secretariat during the same period: the OCI now has no substantial differences with the Pablist methodology of pressuring the reformist apparatuses "to the left." For the OCI, "if only" the treacherous reformist leaderships would unite, a revolutionary process would be automatically set off.

Proving that it has hardened into its popular-frontist line and can now learn nothing even from a total collapse of its political perspective, the OCI's reaction to the post-election demise of the Union of the Left was the revealing front-page headline in the 5-12 April *Informations Ouvrières*: "Encore et toujours, front unique ouvrier" (roughly, "Now and forever, workers united front.") The "workers united front," in OCI jargon is the famous PS-PCF government—which in turn is a code for the Union of the Left. But, unfortunately for the OCI, the Union of the Left is no longer "now and forever," and so the OCI has "no short-term perspectives."

The LCR Bloc

As the election progressed, the slogans of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire increasingly came to resemble those of the OCI although the LCR's rhetoric is more that of a "fighting popular front" so dear to Marceau Pivert in the 1930's, while the OCI simply wants to put the popular front in power "without preconditions." Thus the LCR stressed slogans such as "workers' unity" (i.e., the unity of the reformist PCF-PS bureaucracies), "down with the divisions between the PCF and PS," "defeat the right," "for a

PCF-PS government, for reciprocal withdrawal of PCF and PS candidates on the second round," for "action committees" à la OCI, and so on. The central difference between the two is that while the OCI capitulates primarily toward the social democrats, the LCR directs its affections toward the Stalinists. Alain Krivine, *lider máximo* of the LCR, stressed at a number of public meetings that the LCR agreed with many of the PCF's demands and did not seek to "differentiate itself on every point" from the Stalinists.

Whereas the OCI held joint electoral meetings with the PS, the LCR participated in joint meetings with the Left Radicals and dissident Gaullists courted by the PCF. A leaflet announcing an election meeting for the PCF candidate in one Paris district, presided over by a Protestant minister, called "For Victory to the Candidates of the Union of the Whole Left" (our emphasis), with speakers from both the Left Radicals and the LCR (as well as other groups). *Rouge*, the LCR paper, reported on a meeting for a Union of the Left candidate, running against publisher Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber (leader of the pro-Giscard Radicals) in the following terms:

"Thursday's meeting was a success. . . . For the first time in Nancy, representa-

working class, by claiming that the workers have "no short-term political perspectives," the LCR claims as its own the popular frontist illusions of the working class. In an assessment of the second round, LCR honcho Krivine exclaims:

"At one blow, all the hopes built up over so many years have collapsed like a house of cards. Defeat is hard to bear, but it is even more unbearable because victory was within grasp. . . . The division of the workers movement broke any unitary dynamic and explains the defeat. . . ."

Krivine concludes by saying:

"But the hour is not for lamentations, now we must lay the basis for a real workers' unity, one which will be built on demands, one which will be developed in the battles which must be led against austerity and the state which applies it."

For the LCR, as for the OCI, "unity" is sacrosanct. The unity of the bureaucratic tops, the unity of the workers' illusions—but not the only "real workers' unity" that can culminate in the seizure of state power by the working class led by the vanguard party—unity around the Marxist program. In effect, the "unity" preached by the LCR and the OCI is the unity of the popular front—or at best a "fighting popular front." Nowhere do the LCR or the OCI talk about fighting to build a revolutionary party on the ruins of the popular front.

While the centrists dabble anew in the "unity" of class betrayal, the Ligue Trotskyiste de France firmly defended the Trotskyist program of revolutionary proletarian opposition to the popular front. The LTF stated, "The minimum condition that workers must set in order to give electoral support to the PCF and PS is that they break with their bourgeois electoral partners and with the Common Program which provides the framework for this class-collaborationist alliance."

In a special pre-election leaflet, the LTF declared:

"Caught up in their worship of the accomplished fact, the 'far left' centrists cannot even imagine that revolutionary program can possibly split the reformist parties. The pseudo-Trotskyists of the LCR and OCI, hard on the heels of the popular front since 1972, have attempted to sanctify their sweeping right turn by putting on a spectacular and hysterical campaign for 'unity' before the elections. . . ."

"Today it is the Ligue Trotskyiste de France which has taken up Trotsky's revolutionary imperatives; its program stands in contrast to all variants of centrist accommodation to the popular front, and will provide the means by which the working class can break with its traitorous leaderships. The LTF is building the revolutionary party which will be the French section of a reformed Fourth International!"

—"No to New Popular Front in France!" reprinted in *WV* No. 196, 10 March 1978

As the class struggle picks up in the factories, the pseudo-Trotskyists will adapt their perennial program of tailing the reformist bureaucracies to the new conditions, offering themselves up in effect as the handmaidens of a "new" Union of the Left. The LTF, in contrast, will continue its intransigent opposition to popular frontism in every guise. ■

tives of the PC, the PS, the MRG, the LCR, the FA [Front Autogestionnaire—a formation dominated by the PSU] and the left Gaullists were together on the same stage."

—*Rouge*, 18 March

And in Nanterre, J-F Godchau, one of the national leaders of the LCR, signed a call (whose signatories included the Gaullists for Progress) entitled: "For the victory of the union of the left next Sunday."

Both the LCR and the OCI face a basic problem today: having hitched their cart to the Union of the Left, they now have nowhere to go. It can be expected that the crises which wracked the centrist organizations even before the elections will only deepen now. The LCR is already in deep disarray. And while the OCI claims to have recruited large numbers of people on the basis of the slogan "automatic withdrawal by the workers parties on the second round of the elections," they will no doubt lose most of these people at the first signs of difficulty or the first turn by the OCI leadership.

While the OCI puts the blame on the

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WORKERS VANGUARD

After Electoral Flop

French Popular Front Breaks Up

The recent French parliamentary elections dealt a mortal blow to the popular-front Union of the Left and inflicted a severe defeat on its "far-left" supporters. Although the right-wing parliamentary majority of the two major bourgeois parties, President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's UDF (Union for French Democracy) and Jacques Chirac's neo-Gaullist RPR (Assembly for the Republic)—won only a bare majority of the popular votes on the second round (and received over a million votes less than the Union of the Left and "far left" candidates on the first round), the majority came out with a comfortable margin in parliament, winning 291 seats (a loss of 10) against 200 seats for the left (a gain of 17). The closeness of the election was illustrated by the fact that 57 deputies were elected by margins of less than one percent of the votes on the second round.

Since polls taken prior to the first round of voting had widely predicted that the left would win up to 53 percent of the popular vote and possibly even a parliamentary majority (a prediction shared by the conservative British *Economist*), the results of the first and second rounds sent massive shock waves through the French left. The evening of the elections, Robert Fabre, president of the Movement of Left Radicals (MRG), the small bourgeois component of the Union of the Left, announced that he considered himself "released from the commitments made in 1972" when the MRG joined the Union of the Left.

In the week following the elections, it became increasingly clear that the Union of the Left, as it was formed in 1972 based on the Common Program drawn up between the Socialists and the Communists (and later signed by the MRG) was in its death throes. The MRG polled slightly fewer votes than the "far left" candidates (who totaled about 950,000 votes), and as in the 1936 popular-front elections, the only reason the MRG got as many votes as it did was that it was actively supported by the Communist Party (PCF) and the Socialist Party (PS), its popular-front bedfellows. The MRG is deeply divided between those who want to continue some kind of popular-front alliance, or possibly even enter the PS, and those (led by Fabre) who are hostile to such an alliance and seek rather to return to the bourgeois majority.

But the highest loser of the elections was clearly François Mitterrand's Socialist Party. While gaining more votes than the PCF on the first round (23 percent as against the PCF's 21.25 percent), the PS fell far short of poll predictions. More important, it gained

fewer additional seats in parliament (9) than did the PCF (12). Whereas the PS had expected to come out of the elections as the clearly dominant party of the left, it is now essentially in a stand-off with the PCF. Mitterrand's presidential ambitions, as well as the unity of the Socialist Party, which was based on support of those ambitions, have been dealt a severe blow, and deep fissures have already appeared on the PS facade.

Mitterrand: Bourgeois Politician Turned "Socialist"

For months prior to the elections rumors abounded concerning the fate of the Union of the Left coalition. Was it dead? Would the PCF step down for the PS on the second round? These were the questions which dominated French political life. The bourgeois press and the "far left" joined forces to pinpoint PCF "intransigence" as the source of the Union of the Left's potential electoral demise. But when the buzzing subsided, the PCF faithfully delivered its electorate to the popular front, while masses of Socialist voters opted for the government coalition on the second round rather than vote for the Communist Party.

The immediate sources of the loss of Union of the Left votes between the two rounds is readily apparent: in the pre-election period the PS had swelled to nearly 30 percent of the expected votes in the public opinion polls. This new-found support came from middle-class voters dissatisfied with the Giscard government but nonetheless staunchly anti-Communist. To lead this electoral apparatus no one was more suited than François Mitterrand, eminently *ministériel* (eligible to be a minister) having served in the cabinet eleven times in the pre-1958 Fourth Republic. And while he combined all the requisite talents of parliamentary cunning and treachery appropriate for this calling, he also had another: at the time Mitterrand led a bourgeois party.

Mitterrand's political career was marked by fervid anti-communism and pro-colonialism from its origins in the post-war period. In 1946, the first time Mitterrand ran for election to parliament, his electoral platform stated that he intended:

"...to wage a struggle against Communism on all fronts, to unceasingly unmask its lies, to use existing laws against it, adding to them if necessary, and in particular to institute the incompatibility between belonging to the Communist Party and exercising authoritative administrative functions or those concerning security."

quoted in *Lutte Ouvrière*, 10 March 1978

Mitterrand recently caused a stir in the



Union of the Left leaders make amends before second round voting. Morel

German social democracy by protesting the West German anti-radical *Berufsverbot*, which prevents radicals from holding government jobs (such as teachers). But the content of this statement (which predates the beginning of the cold war), issued at a time when the PCF was still part of the French government, is but a call for a French version of the *Berufsverbot*.

Later, in 1954 Mitterrand was Minister of the Interior when the Algerian war began. It was Mitterrand who authored the now infamous phrases "the only negotiation [with the Algerians] is war," and "a single France, from Flanders to the Congo." As *garde des sceaux* (attorney general) he signed death warrants for members of the Algerian Communist Party during the war.

Mitterrand's political career "on the left" began when he refused to support de Gaulle in 1958. In 1965, as the head of a small bourgeois party in alliance with the SFIO (the French section of the Second International), Mitterrand became the "candidate of the left" for the presidential elections that year. In 1971, a fusion between the old SFIO and several smaller groupings, including Mitterrand's, transformed it into the Socialist Party, with Mitterrand at its head, based on a clear mandate to seek a popular-front alliance with the PCF. In

1972 the Union of the Left, based on the Common Program, was formed.

Behind Mitterrand stand groupings in the PS with widely divergent interests and appetites. The main "official" minority, the CERES, is Stalinophilic and has consistently attacked the PS leadership for not making more concessions to the PCF. Other elements of the PS want to break openly with the popular front, even if the alternative is the unappetizing prospect of returning to the parliamentary combinationism characteristic of the Fourth Republic.

The Socialist Party is currently in a bind. It was rebuilt from the isolated remnants of the SFIO after 1968 (in the 1969 presidential elections, the SFIO received a mere 5 percent of the votes) to a powerful electoral apparatus. The PS has gained considerable influence in the CFDT and rebuilt a working-class base to the point of challenging the PCF in some areas. However, the PS as it exists today owes its existence to the Union of the Left: its dilemma is that Mitterrand can neither continue the alliance with the PCF on the same terms as previously, nor break clearly with the PCF and enter into a government coalition without losing much of the credit the PS has built up. Therefore, while it is likely that there will be some reshuffling in the PS and MRG, possibly including splits,

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