

# METRO C.A.R.

## LESSONS OF THE STRIKE

The Metro strike has ended without winning any of our demands. But if we allow the experience to make us cynical about the possibility of winning through strikes, we are playing right into the bosses' hands. There were many positive aspects to the strike, and if we learn from our mistakes, we can make the next strike successful.

The strike showed tremendous solidarity among most workers and proved that we can shut the system down without the help of the union leadership. But it was a lack of our own coordinated leadership that contributed significantly to the collapse of the strike under pressure from the Authority, the courts, the media and the police. Because we did not have our own strong and accepted leadership to determine when the strike would end, many workers believed what the media said about people going back to work and felt they would be vulnerable to disciplinary action if they stayed out too long. In fact, it was a measure of the high level of solidarity among Metro workers that we were able to stay out as long as we did. Clearly the current union leadership is not going to provide us with the leadership we need. We need a strong Committee Against Racism chapter at Metro that can lead these fights.

To understand why Metro bosses took such an intransigent position during the strike, it is important to understand what their overall outlook is. We are a mostly black work force with a union that is in the company's pocket. At the same time, our wages and benefits are higher than those of other D.C. workers in comparable jobs. The Authority sees no reason why they should pay us relatively high wages when the opportunity for reducing them is wide open. There is pressure from the city government to reduce our wages, basically because there is a financial squeeze all around and they see our wages as being too high for black workers. They would love to break our union, smash our strike efforts and see our wages eroded through inflation, justifying these actions by racism. You can already see the beginnings of a campaign by the media to create the impression that "bus drivers are overpaid." There is a similar effort in many areas to take out the costs of the current U.S. economic decline on black workers. Cutbacks in education, hospitals, financial aid in colleges, etc., all hit black workers hardest. "Divide and conquer" is the bosses' general strategy as they attack the standard of living of black workers and justify their actions with racist theories resuscitated from the past. At the same time, they attempt to blame blacks for the

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COMMITTEE AGAINST RACISM

worsening conditions and to whip up whites into a racist frenzy (the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan are increasingly built by the media) thus diverting them from attacking their real enemy, the bosses. The Committee Against Racism is building a nationwide movement to go on the offensive against racism--to say NO to pay cuts and cutbacks, and to physically smash neo-racists such as the Nazis and the KKK. We say Metro's attempt to deny the cost-of-living increase is just another racist attack and we need to make sure of effective strike action to prevent such attacks.

What can we do now that the strike is over? Some lasting gains can be made from the strike. First of all, we should oust sellout George Davis who once again showed his true colors (yellow) during the strike. Charges have been brought against him and the vote on whether to try him will be Tuesday, August 1, at the 8 pm union meeting. Secondly, we should stand ready to walk out again if anyone is fired because of the strike. We can't get anywhere if we allow the Authority to pick off those who worked hardest to make the strike succeed. Thirdly, we should have the outlook of getting rid of the no-strike clause in our contract. The strike is the only source of power we have in dealing with the bosses. Finally, everyone at Metro should join the Committee Against Racism to build an organization that can lead our fight against the racism that is at the root of our problems--both on the job and in the community.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMMITTEE AGAINST RACISM, CALL 483-3359  
797-9608

## D. C. - C. A. R. EVENTS:

FORUM - The Terrance Johnson Case  
& Youth Unemployment  
Wed., August 2, 7:30 pm  
All Souls Church, 16<sup>th</sup> & Harvard NW

PARTY - Sat. August 5, 8:30 pm  
3159 18<sup>th</sup> St NW  
(near Kilbourne)  
NO CHARGE - ALL WELCOME

PICNIC - Sun. August 15, 1:30 pm  
Langdon Pool  
20<sup>th</sup> & Franklin Sts NE