

A National Workers Organization

A POWERFUL WEAPON for OUR CLASS



**by the
Revolutionary
Communist
Party, USA**

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INTRODUCTION

A powerful force is reawakening in American society which will change the face of this country in the years to come. It is a force which, when it reaches its full potential, will shake the high and mighty even more powerfully than did the Black people's movement and the struggle against the war in Vietnam in the late '60s and early '70s. It is a giant which when it proudly struggles to its feet will dwarf the handful of rich owners who stand in direct opposition to it and rule this country. This awakening titan is the millions upon million of hard working men and women of all nationalities who are the backbone of the country.

For years the working class seemed to have become invisible. The ruling class employed an army of historians and stuffy academicians who tilted their pens to make it seem as if both the working class and its glorious history disappeared after the '30s. Whites were now "middle class," they said, and thought about nothing but cutting their suburban lawns and walking their dogs. Black people, on the other hand, whose powerful upsurge in the 1960s they couldn't ignore, were classified as "the poor" or "welfare recipients" and castigated as "too lazy to look for work." The fact that the majority of Blacks and other minorities, as well as tens of millions of whites, are members of a single, U.S. working class was never mentioned.

But today this is changing. The bankers and corporate bigshots who run the country are caught in a crisis, which despite temporary upswings is deepening. In desperation they have stepped up their attack on the working class and masses of people. And in this situation the rot and decay is spreading like a cancer in society. The working class nationwide is being roused to action as its anger and struggle mounts, gathering momentum especially over the last few years. As the crisis deepens the working class will surely rise in its millions to squash this oppressor under its boot.

The forward march of the working class will not happen automatically, nor will it deal the most powerful blows possible unless it is organized and unites with real friends to oppose the real enemy. That is why the formation of a national workers organization on Labor Day weekend, 1977 is so important. That is why hundreds of working people are out there organizing their fellow workers in factories and neighborhoods across the country. They see the tremendous potential strength of the working class and are going all out to build it, focus it and direct it squarely at the enemy.

This pamphlet explains our Party's views on this national workers organization—where it fits into the development of things today and in the future, and how it will become a vital force in developing the struggles of the working class and American people.

Why This Organization Is Needed

In the auto industry in 1976 a group of militant workers based in over 20 plants around the country formed a national organization, Auto Workers United to Fight (AWUF). Because it was a fighting force based in key plants across the country, organizing the rank and file *nationwide* around the burning issues, AWUF became a center of leadership around the four week Ford strike and in the battle against the sellout contract engineered by the auto companies and the UAW International. It helped mobilize the biggest "no" vote on a national contract in UAW history, and although that contract was finally railroaded through, rank and file anger over that sellout is still burning and will surely break out in still bigger struggles in the future.

A few months before this, on July 4th, over 3000 demonstrators gathered in Philadelphia to declare in opposition to the rulers' Bicentennial celebration "We've Carried the Rich for 200 Years—Let's Get Them Off Our Backs!" For the first time in over 20 years organized forces of the working class, with workers coming together from every major industry and every area in the country, took the political stage in a big way, putting out with unified force the working class' views on a major social question of the day. It was such a powerful display of strength that the mayor of Philadelphia, who had vowed to stop the demonstration, was forced to back off.

Ten months earlier a mass wildcat strike of 80,000 surged through the Appalachian coalfields, with a group called the Miners Committee to Defend the Right to Strike playing a big role. As a fighting group of rank and file miners, the Right to Strike Committee was able to take the original strike, which started at one mine over a local grievance, and help spread it into a strike involving miners from five states. At the same time it helped solidify the ranks of the miners by raising the right to strike as a key demand in the strike, while focussing the struggle at the mine owners, their courts and the rest of the ruling class. The strike exploded the plans of the owning class to turn the election of Arnold Miller into a way of controlling the rank and file miners movement, breaking the stranglehold of both the mine companies and the traitorous United Mine Workers' top leadership.

These and other powerful struggles give a taste of what is now coming into being with the formation of a national workers organization—a unified center of leadership, a united force of active fighters from the working class able to mobilize the strength and power of millions of workers in key battles. As a *fighting force* of workers based not just in auto and mining but in steel, electrical, rubber, garment, post office and other industries, the national workers organization is capable of waging *major fights nationwide*, as well as local fights, *in every major industry*. As an organization that brings together workers from across industry lines, it is capable of waging *big classwide campaigns* like the July 4th mobilization around the key social issues of the day.

A national workers organization has become a necessity. It is needed so the working class can really take on the vicious attacks now hitting it across the board. It is needed so workers can concentrate and focus their many battles, drawing together the power of their class into key battles in industry and society as a whole.

ATTACKS AND RESISTANCE

Today inflation rears its ugly head once again as prices tower over wages and debts pile up. Speedup and job combinations have been stepped up as companies try to squeeze every last ounce of energy they can get from their workers for that extra production. Hundreds of thousands if not millions of workers are forced to work overtime, making the eight hour day, 40 hour week a thing of the past in some industries. Yet if anybody dares to step out of line the companies threaten harassment, discipline, firings.

Off the job the attacks are no less vicious. Close to ten million workers are unemployed. And to add insult to injury the federal and state governments are cutting back on unemployment extensions, bringing untold numbers of unemployed close to starvation. The storm clouds of another war for profit, this time with the rulers of the Soviet Union, are beginning to gather on the horizon as Wall Street and the Pentagon swell their profits and weaponry with hundreds of billions of our hard earned dollars. Housing, education and health care decay and fall apart while around them the cities become more and more unlivable. Discrimination, violent police repression, superhigh unemployment, low paid jobs, the worst of a bad lot, is the daily life faced by the masses of Black people and people of other minorities.

The answer of many workers to these attacks has been to fight back, sometimes with just a small handful taking action, other times with hundreds of thousands and millions swinging into action. The four week Ford strike was followed by a wildcat strike of 30,000 Chrysler workers and a wave of local strikes in the first half of 1977. Besides the one in late 1975, other wildcat strikes



From battles in industries to battles throughout society workers have laid a solid foundation for the founding of a national workers organization. Upper: April, 1977 demonstration of steel workers in Pittsburgh against sellout contract. Lower: workers contingent in African Liberation Day march, Washington, D.C., May, 1977.

have swept the coalfields over the last few years, including one in 1976 even more massive than in 1975, inspiring workers around the country and sending the mine owners, the government, and the top leaders of the United Mine Workers up a wall. For the first time in history the rubber workers struck all four major rubber companies in 1976, staying out for four months and winning important gains. Workers have fought the recent cuts in the federal unemployment extensions, with over 1000 employed and unemployed demonstrating in March 1977 in Washington, D.C. 1600 people, many of them workers and 350 organized in the workers contingent, demonstrated also in Washington, D.C. on African Liberation Day in May, 1977 in support of the struggles of the African people against U.S. supported *apartheid*, the systematic and vicious oppression of African blacks by white minority regimes.

These kinds of struggles have surged forward, although unevenly and with some temporary setbacks, hitting the enemy powerfully. Through it all working people have won many important victories, becoming more organized and more conscious of who to fight and how to fight.

But in the advances that have been made, workers have come up against the fact that the attacks they face and the battles they must wage are still bigger than the organization they have developed. A national organization is needed to consolidate the advances and make still further ones possible.

Take a few examples. In the rubber industry in 1976 the workers faced massive attacks. Wages had fallen far behind inflation. The companies were undermining job classifications.

The response of the workers was the massive strike of 68,000 against the Big 4 tire makers. Scabs and working supervisors were dealt the justice they deserve at the beginning of the strike on many picket lines.

But the workers faced another enemy—the president of their union, Bommarito. Bommarito had sold out miserably in the 1973 contract. This time he talked more militant but still he imposed a blackout on information about the strike, refused to do anything about the scabs and didn't take out General Tire. The strike was badly undermined as rubber companies around the country were still able to get out 50% of the tire production.

The workers held firm and eventually won some sizable concessions. But still they were hurt because fighters at each plant had no way to link up together, they had no way to mobilize their forces. They were forced to rely on Bommarito and other union officials who often tried to keep the workers from organizing the militant actions that were really necessary.

The 1976 rubber strike could have been even stronger had a national workers organization existed. With it workers from differ-

ent rubber plants could have had a way to get together, sum up and decide on how to build the strike stronger. On their own the strikers shut down General Tire for two days, but with a national workers organization they could have mobilized even more forces to work to put this company out for the duration of the strike. They could have done more to mobilize huge mass parades and demonstrations to further expose the rubber companies. And in addition a national workers organization would have built on the support of other workers for the strike and taken up the rubber strike as an important battle of the whole working class, taken the issues into plants across the country and mobilized thousands in support.

BREAK STRANGLEHOLD OF UNION BUREAUCRATS

Or to take another example, look at the fight around union elections. These organizations for which our parents and grandparents fought and sacrificed, many selflessly shedding their blood, are now controlled at the top by traitors and company scabs. These lazy, corrupt, rich bureaucrats are practically indistinguishable from the Boards of Directors of the major corporations. In fact many have openly joined with the Fords, Rockefellers, and Du Ponts in actually *advocating* major attacks on the rank and file.

These company stoolies need to be cleaned out and replaced with real fighters who represent the interests of the rank and file. The rank and file needs to use union elections and conventions to mobilize its forces around a fighting program, building its own struggle and organization, in the course of this running its own candidates and "jamming" other candidates into supporting this program, while isolating and moving to replace the real traitors.

But how can the rank and file fully mobilize in these battles, except on a local plant basis, unless it has national organization? How can the rank and file ever hope to carry through its struggle to major victories in union conventions and national contract negotiations without building up its struggle and organization nationwide?

A third example—the fight around unemployment. The working class is faced with nearly 10 million in its ranks unemployed, facing cuts in unemployment extensions and other attacks. Across the country unemployed workers have been struggling, demonstrating, marching and protesting, many organized by the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee (UWOC), a national organization of the unemployed.

These attacks on the unemployed are an attack on the whole working class. These are fellow workers being driven towards hunger and eviction from their homes. One "jobs bill" after another



GM Chairman Estes, UAW ex-President Woodcock, Jimmy Carter, Coleman Young (Detroit mayor), Chrysler Chairman Ricardo and Ford Chairman Henry Ford II—all chum it up. Today the ruling class tries to chain the workers' struggle through their faithful servants heading up the unions like the one above. . . .

is an attempt to drive the unemployed into low paying jobs, jobs which undermine the unions and tend to hold down the wages of all workers.

Without a national workers organization the working class cannot fully unite and move its ranks, employed as well as unemployed, into action against this attack.

These three examples stand alongside many others. The times demand that the workers begin to step out as a strong and organized force into the center of the events and questions which are sweeping all society—events which buffet the working class, but which, it often seems, the working class is powerless to influence. The working class needs to build its fight against discrimination and the general oppression of Blacks and other national minorities, against other general economic and political attacks and in support of the struggles of oppressed people in other countries, like the peoples of southern Africa. All this is impossible on a broad scale without a national workers organization.

MOVE TO A HIGHER LEVEL

These are some of the reasons we believe that the key step to make today, one which will consolidate the gains made so far and move things to a higher level, is building a national workers organization—a united center of leadership in all the battles we face.

The national workers organization will allow workers to mobilize their forces *nationwide*, bringing together thousands of fighters from local struggles, uniting and mobilizing them around common battles. In this way the working class across the country can wage big campaigns around struggles that demand national mobilization—both within each industry and in society as a whole.

The national workers organization provides a structure in the



... But by organizing into a fighting force in plants and nationwide workers are beginning to break these chains. Above: Auto Workers United to Fight "T-Shirt Day" at Detroit's Ford Rouge plant during '76 contract battle.

plants, in cities and areas and nationally where workers can come together, discuss the attacks they face and the struggles being waged, decide on key battles to focus on—ones which concentrate and raise to a higher level the fight against thousands of similar abuses—and develop them into campaigns of the working class. In this way it enables workers to unite with the people in the widespread but scattered struggles around the country, focus and hone them into a sharp dagger which will draw the enemy's blood.

A national workers organization builds on the advances made over the last few years organizationally. It provides a way to pull together as many as possible of the scores of plant, industry and area groups from around the country—groups like Auto Workers United to Fight, workers around *The Steelworker*, a rank and file steel newsletter, the Miners Right to Strike Committee, the United Workers Organizations of Milwaukee, the San Francisco Bay Area, and the Northern New Jersey-New York area, areawide groups that take up the struggles in the shops and throughout society—as well as many other fighting individuals, into this single national organization. This in itself represents a lot of muscle.

Additionally the national workers organization helps to further strengthen these organizations and lead to the formation of new organizations in industries and cities where they do not yet exist. The more powerful the struggles it leads become, the more other workers around the country are going to turn their heads and want to find out how to join it—or if a chapter doesn't exist in their plant or city, how to form one.

This does not mean that as soon as the national workers organization sets up a chapter in some plant or city that everyone is going to come running and want to join up. Some people will want

to become active right away. But for most others patient organizing over a longer period of time will be necessary.

The great majority of workers have not fully awakened yet. Although at the high tides of some struggles thousands of workers might come forward, during the ebbs only a handful stay active. Many illusions spread by the rulers for years are starting to crack, but only a relatively small number of workers have been able to develop a consistent understanding of the nature of the enemy and recognize the struggle as one between two opposing classes. The character of the struggle today is that sometimes the organizers for the workers organizations seem to be leading an army, other times they seem to be leading only a few soldiers.

SMALL FORCES CAN LEAD BIG BATTLES

But the situation today is also such that the relatively small number of active workers can lead big battles. Although they might not be fully awakened, the *majority* of the American people are beginning to stir. By building the struggles that do break out and moving the general level of organization and understanding forward, the fighters of today can help create the conditions for the greatest advances in the future when millions upon millions of workers will be drawn into the struggle.

How will the national workers organization, although numbering only a few thousand for a period, be able to wage these big battles? In the course of putting out what it stands for and building struggle, it will draw around it the most active forces in the country. Naturally this will include many of the more permanent plant and area organizations that have been formed. But it will also include many individual fighters who will come to see this organization as their own.

Who are these fighters? They are workers who are active in major struggles that break out on the job and off. They are ordinary workers who in some respects are more advanced in their commitment and understanding than their fellow workers. They are those who are learning that the myths about how labor and management have a basic unity, how the way to advance is by relying on Congress and legal maneuvers, are nothing but hollow lies. They are seeing that the future of the working class lies in struggle, through organizing and uniting its ranks in battle against the owning class.

Uniting these fighters into one national group will be an important function of the national workers organization. In this respect it will act as a giant magnet, attracting around it, through the struggles it leads, thousands of militants from every corner of the country.

But uniting these fighters is only part of the national workers organization's role. Besides waging battles against the attacks



Over 3000 workers, veterans, students and others declared in Philadelphia on July 4, 1976, "We've Carried the Rich for 200 Years—Let's Get Them Off Our Backs!" Mobilizing nationwide, across industry lines, around the burning issues in society, the working class began to rally tens of thousands from all sections of the population.

that come down in the plants and industries, the overall role of the national workers organization is to *concentrate* the energy of workers around key campaigns, *focussing* their struggle around the burning issues of the day which arouse the anger of the masses of people and bring them into motion too.

In this way the relative handful of militants can influence and lead big struggles of the working class and the masses of the American people. To use a comparison, the working class is like a big boulder on the top of a hill. The rock is too heavy for one person or a very few people to push forward to get rolling. What is needed is a lever to pry it loose. The thousands of fighters organized together into a national workers organization can act as such a lever. And once the rock starts gathering momentum there isn't anything that's going to stop it!

DEEPENING CRISIS

All this will be happening in the context of a deepening of the current crisis of the economy—and this too will be influencing how people look at things and how readily they get involved in struggle. Already the depth and severity of the crisis can be seen by the features the rulers themselves are forced to comment on, like

the combination of inflation and massive unemployment. And this has brought on widespread outrage from the American people.

But unlike what the government says, this stagnation is not a temporary recession from which things will rebound into healthy growth. Despite some temporary upswings the general direction is down, into ever-deepening crisis. Driven by the laws of profit the capitalists are unable to resolve the contradictions of their system.

We are witnessing the beginning of a general worldwide crisis, one which is likely to end in another Great Depression, another world war or some combination of both. And these developments will surely bring with them still fiercer attacks on the working class.

Sometimes it is easy to forget exactly how fast a situation can change. As a means of comparison look at the difference between the 1920s and the 1930s. In the 1920s things seemed to be relatively stable, the economy was generally expanding in a big boom, and the working class struggle was in an ebb period. Then practically overnight the situation drastically changed. During the early part of the '30s wages were slashed on the average 45%, up to a quarter of the workforce was thrown out on the streets and speedup became so intense it literally drove thousands of workers to an early grave. It took a little while for the working class to fully respond, but when it did it waged the biggest offensive of strikes, factory takeovers, and demonstrations in the history of the U.S.

It is not clear at this time the exact form the contradictions the working class will face in the future. Surely things will come down somewhat differently than they did in the 1930s. But it is clear that the attacks the working class faces will greatly intensify and that these will arouse new struggles on an even bigger scale than today.

Today the active fighters are a small minority of the working class. But tomorrow the numbers who are active will multiply a thousandfold, growing from a minority to the majority, while many of those who make up the active minority today will continue to advance and march at the front ranks of the masses of workers.

That is why the formation of the national workers organization now is so important. By pulling together the relatively small number of active forces—numbering in the thousands as compared to the millions in the whole working class—it will strengthen the ability of the working class to wage big battles today and win some important victories. Then as its organization grows and it becomes steeled in battle, the national workers organization will be in the best position to help lead and build to their fullest potential the great struggles that will rock the country in the future.

Some Lessons From History

This is not the first time in history that the working class of a particular country has been faced with a situation like the one now facing workers in the U.S. In fact, although the parallel isn't perfect, there is a lot of similarity between today's situation and the situation facing British workers in the beginning part of this century, both in terms of a working class struggle beginning to pick up steam after being in an ebb for many years, and in terms of the role that an organization of active workers similar in some respects to the national workers organization played in assisting this. And the lessons of that experience in England have a lot to teach us in the U.S. today.

Like the U.S. since WW2, Britain in the last half of the 1800s to the early 1900s, sat atop a vast world empire. Her colonial possessions were so extensive that it was once said that "the sun never sets on the British empire." In world markets British corporations and merchants aggressively expanded their operations, raking in huge profits while crushing opposition.

Bloated by superprofits flowing into their coffers from every corner of the globe, the British capitalists were able to strengthen their hold over the working class. In their struggles the workers won concessions more easily and the living standards of many improved. On this basis the rulers carried out an ideological offensive, summing up that the class struggle had ended and Britain had entered a period of permanent prosperity for all. Like in this country the unions were seized at the top by traitors who themselves grew fat with the bloodsoaked profits of the bosses and preached to the workers that the well-being and the future of the working class lay with the British capitalists and the defense of their empire.

For years most of the British working class fell under the political influence of the British capitalists and British nationalism. Although it still waged struggles, they were tame by comparison with earlier struggles and even these battles were few and far between. Of course not all was calm in Great Britain as the Irish people continued their courageous struggle against British colonialism.

But, as is crystal clear by the state of the British economy today, this era of "permanent prosperity" proved very illusory in-

deed. In the late 1800s and early 1900s great contradictions began to put cracks in the British empire. As time passed industries in the mother country herself began to fall into decay as the bankers and corporate millionaires found it more profitable to invest overseas. At the same time Britain's undisputed hold on the world empire began to come under increasing attack as her rivals in other capitalist countries, especially Germany, hungrily began to grab world markets and colonies for themselves. As a result two great running sores appeared and began to grow—massive unemployment and the growing threat of world war.

In this way the Britain of "class peace" at the turn of the century began to be transformed into the Britain of "class struggle" leading up to the First World War. Massive unemployment demonstrations shook the country from one end to the other. In the strikes that broke out the working class began to show a new vigor and determination. The struggle for home rule in Ireland won widespread popular support and workers, along with other sections of the population, staged mass mobilizations in support.

World War 1 greatly intensified these contradictions. Although Britain eventually came out on the winners side, victory was hollow indeed. Untold billions were thrown into the war, and although Britain gained some colonies from Germany, her overall grip on her empire was weakened. The ruling class grew increasingly exposed in the eyes of the workers. On top of this the Russian workers and peasants took advantage of the war to rise up in revolution, overthrow the Czar and then the capitalists and establish a workers state, which immediately gained widespread sympathy and support from workers around the world.

In the same period, following a short postwar boom, Britain's economy fell into a shambles with unemployment skyrocketing to over 15% in 1921.

It was in this context that the British workers built the National Minority Movement (NMM), an organization that bears some similarities to the national workers organization now being built in this country. This group used the word "Minority" in its name to refer to the fact that its members consisted of the active fighters among the working class, which, given Britain's long history as top dog capitalist-imperialist power, were only a minority of the whole working class at that time.

The National Minority Movement became the starter motor that helped bring to life and kick into gear the struggle of all the workers. It brought together the scattered, fighting individuals and groups of workers from around the country into one organization. Its members worked mainly within the existing unions, helping to build struggles, spread them and aim them squarely at the enemy. By basing themselves on the struggles that were breaking out, exposing the policies of "social peace" and class collaboration of

the top union officials, while uniting with lower level officials who helped build the struggle, the NMM gained tens of thousands of members, and had several million close sympathizers and followers. Led by the NMM, by 1926 the working class had succeeded in seizing control of several major unions and union districts representing nearly one million workers, including the Miners Federation, the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Tailors and Garment Workers Union.

By May 1926, the NMM had grown in influence to the degree that it was able to play a leading role in the General Strike, a strike in which workers of almost every industry went out, paralyzing all of Britain for nine days. The strike started when the coal mine owners proposed a wage cut of between 13% and 47%, the beginning foray in a employers' new offensive against the entire working class. Within the Miners Federation the NMM mobilized for what was to become a seven month battle, while building strong support among workers of other industries. By setting up Action Committees in every area across the country before the strike, mobilizing broader and broader ranks of workers in militant support of the miners, and "jamming" the British equivalent of the AFL-CIO General Council to support the struggle, the NMM moved virtually the entire organized British working class into action.

Although the struggle was eventually betrayed by the top union hacks, the 1926 General Strike showed two things about the struggle: 1) that as the British empire began to fall into disarray, the ebb period in the workers struggle was followed by a new era of growing militant class struggle, and 2) that within this context a relatively small number of the most active fighters, organized into the NMM, could mobilize millions of British workers.

TUEL

The National Minority Movement had a parallel in the United States in the Trade Union Education League (TUEL), which was formed in 1920 and was active from 1922 to 1929. The situation facing the U.S. working class at that time was different in some respects than the situation today. For one thing only three million workers (or about 6% of the total workforce) were organized into the AFL (compared to 22% in labor unions today) and most workers in basic industries like auto, steel and electrical were unorganized.

Another difference was the TUEL was active in a period when there was a temporary "stabilization" and big expansion of the economy and the class struggle was in relative ebb, coming off a period in which the struggle had peaked immediately following WW1. Today the national workers organization is being set up

The TUEL worked constantly to broaden the scope of the struggle. While they helped build struggle in the plants against the bosses, they took up and mobilized thousands of workers around key battles raging in society as a whole.

When Sacco and Vanzetti, two foreign-born activists, a shoemaker and a fish peddler, were sentenced to death in a farcical trial marked by vicious propaganda against all immigrant workers, the TUEL joined with other groups in building a massive struggle which eventually spread worldwide, exposing the true nature of the U.S. system of "justice." In opposition to the narrow, reactionary stand of the AFL leaders, the TUEL mounted a campaign for amalgamating (combining) craft unions in the same industry into industrial unions which won the endorsement of over 7,000 local unions. While the capitalists around the world tried to brutally isolate and strangle the newly emerged workers government in the Soviet Union, the TUEL helped build the widespread sympathy of workers into a campaign to recognize the Soviet Union.

One of the most successful struggles led by the TUEL was in the Fur Workers Union. Earlier, in 1920, a hard fought strike had wracked the fur industry, but due to the sabotage of the top bureaucrats of the Fur Workers Union, headed by arch-reactionary Morris Kaufman, it ended in disaster. As the TUEL began to organize in the industry, conditions were deteriorating rapidly, with the top Fur Union officials up to their necks in pushing the employers' speedup campaign. Fairly quickly the TUEL was able to jell the anger of the rank and file into an opposition movement within the union, pulling together over a thousand of the most active fighters and uniting with many of the lower level union officials.

Time was soon to prove that there was no limit to how low the Kaufman machine was willing to stoop to crush the TUEL-led rebellion within the union. When the TUEL mobilized thousands of fur workers around a fighting program leading up to the 1923 contract, Kaufman, who openly put gangsters on the union payroll, saw to it that some TUEL leaders were physically attacked with knives and beaten with chairs right in a union meeting. But the effect of this attack was exactly opposite what Kaufman expected as the TUEL organized powerful defense committees in each of the locals whose courage and spirit soon put an end to the gangsters' attacks.

After a bitter fight the TUEL-led forces won solid control of the New York Joint Board, which constituted 80% of the whole union. In February 1926, some 12,000 New York furriers went out on strike with the 40 hour week as their central demand (although it was a very popular demand of the workers, the 40 hour week had never been won in American industry up to this point and most workers slaved away 48 or more hours a week). The en-

suing 17 week strike was one of the hardest fought in the history of New York City, inspiring workers across the country and influencing the course of the working class struggle for years to come.

The Kaufman leadership, still entrenched at the head of the national union through its control outside New York and political gerrymandering, sabotaged the strike from the outset. Finally they brought in William Green, AFL president, who went over the head of the New York Joint Board and arranged a sellout with the bosses on the basis of the 42 hour week. They called a meeting at New York's Carnegie Hall in the hopes that most strikers would be disgusted and not show up.

What happened shows how a minority of the most active workers, organized into the Furriers section of the TUEL, was able to lead the majority of the strikers in smashing this vicious scheme and achieving victory. Rather than boycotting the Carnegie Hall meeting, which would have allowed Kaufman's machine to declare rank and file "ratification" of the AFL negotiated settlement, the TUEL called on all workers to attend. In a leaflet the General Strike Committee urged the workers to tell the betrayers at Carnegie Hall "Hands off our strike! Get out of our way! We alone have borne the brunt of the battle up to now, and we will lead it to a victorious end!"

In response the strikers packed Carnegie Hall to the rafters and, despite an army of gangsters posted at the doors weeding out and slugging hundreds of active fighters, the workers shouted down every attempt by the International to speak. The TUEL rallied the strikers so solidly that it was impossible for the betrayal agreement to be put through!

Several weeks later, the workers won the 40 hour week, breaking the employers' long opposition to this demand. It was a resounding victory for the workers and the TUEL, and a direct smash in the face to the strikebreaking top leadership of the AFL.

The TUEL played a key role in building the workers struggle during the 1920s. It became a rallying point for thousands of active workers throughout the country and led some of the biggest battles of the day. But the TUEL proved unable to answer the crying need of the working class for organizing auto, steel, electrical and other workers into industrial unions. It was an ebb period in the class struggle and the TUEL, organizing almost exclusively within the existing AFL unions, continually ran up against the reactionary opposition of the AFL leadership, who not only called workers in basic industry an "ignorant mob" but threw out whole locals where the rank and file had won control under TUEL leadership.

In 1929 the TUEL was dissolved into the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL). The TUUL was a federation of "revolutionary



A picketing parade of Fur and Leather workers. The TUEL unleashed the initiative of the workers in this 1926 strike which successfully won the first 40 hour week in American industry.

unions" organized on an industrial basis in basic industries. It was built in response to the massive economic crisis that hit the country in 1929, and to the continuing treachery and refusal of the AFL leaders to build industrial unions. For instance, despite the massive attacks on the working class (as said before, wages were slashed 45% on the average), AFL President William Green and Co. made a written pledge to President Hoover not to strike for the duration of the crisis. In the face of the employers' offensive many unions were smashed or greatly weakened and AFL membership plummeted. The United Mine Workers, for instance, became practically nonexistent in major areas of the minefields during the early '30s.

The TUUL never became a powerful force among the masses of workers, although it did help spread the idea of industrial unionism and develop hundreds of organizers in key industries. In the face of some hard conditions it made the very error the TUEL had fought so hard against—dual unionism—rather than staying with the AFL and *combining this* with independent work to organize industrial workers. Not only did this pull the advanced workers out of the AFL, where they had considerable strength, leaving the AFL firmly under the control of traitors, but it also made "revolution" the basis of unity of the TUUL unions at a time when the majority of the working class was not revolutionary, although many were starting to become active in struggle and question the capitalist system. This "leftism" was an error which further isolated the TUUL unions from the masses of workers.

But in combatting these errors the TUUL entirely dissolved it-

self in 1933-34, its members going back into the AFL unions on an individual basis, though they did manage to pry loose some leadership positions from the AFL bureaucrats. While they were soon to play a heroic role in the union drives of the Congress of Industrial Unions (CIO), the lack of an organization like the TUEL as a rallying center within either the AFL or the CIO hurt the ability of the most active workers to build the strongest fight possible against the enemy.

BLACK-WHITE UNITY IN SCOTTSBORO DEFENSE

In 1929 the stability of the "Roaring '20s" came to a shattering end. The Great Depression struck with the force of a hurricane, only it didn't blow itself out. Stripping millions of their jobs and homes, it continued year after year, spreading also throughout Latin America and Europe. World production fell by 42% while world trade decreased by 65%. Worldwide unemployment rose to some 50 million; in the U.S. 17 million, or one out of every four workers.

During this time conditions in the South, where the vicious sharecropper system prevailed, were shocking: huge unemployment, sharecropper farmers on the verge of starvation, thousands riding the rails from one city to another looking for work. The most sinister violence was directed at Black people, a systematic campaign of terror designed to enforce their servitude to the rich landowners. The country was amuck with a plague of terrorist organizations—the KKK, Blue Shirts, Silver Shirts, Black Shirts, Crusaders, White Shirts, and others. Mob lynchings were frequent.

It was out of these conditions that the working class helped build one of the most remarkable and famous struggles of the time—in support of the Scottsboro Boys.

On March 25, 1931, nine Black youths, aged 13-20, were jailed in Scottsboro, Alabama, accused of having raped two white girls on a freight train. Actually the rape never occurred, as Ruby Bates, one of the two girls, later testified. Nevertheless, as part of the general terror directed against Blacks, a lynch atmosphere was stirred up. The local officials even had a brass band on hand to play "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight," as the Scottsboro Boys were being convicted in their first trial and eight of them sentenced to the electric chair.

The trial and execution were to serve as a springboard to attack the emerging struggle of Black people and the growing unity of Black and white workers around the country. The prosecutors did everything possible to stir up the basest racial antagonisms, posing as defenders of "white womanhood" and raving about "Jew money from New York" helping to defend the Scottsboro Boys. But

they failed to reckon with the strength and indignation of the mass movement of progressive forces in which the mass mobilizations of the working class played a big part.

A few hours after the sentences, the International Labor Defense Committee, an organization established in 1925 to take up the defense of political prisoners and assist the mass struggle, wired Alabama Governor Miller, demanding a stay of execution and sent its top-notch lawyers South to defend the Black youths. Meanwhile workers and other people around the country, led by the then revolutionary Communist Party (CP) moved quickly to make the case known all over the country. Barely two weeks after the conviction, a mass Scottsboro protest parade was held in Harlem. At the same time Governor Miller received the first of a coming flood of protest messages from Europe, Local 10 of the Transport Workers Union in Berlin demanding freedom for the Scottsboro Boys. On May 1, three weeks after the conviction, 300,000 Black and white workers in May Day celebrations in 110 American cities demanded the release of the Scottsboro Boys. This mobilization of masses of people provided the basis for a legal defense to save the youths, their July 10th execution date being postponed.

Then began a great mass struggle, in the courts and in the streets, lasting for many years. The case went back and forth in the courts, going through four separate trials and being heard before the Supreme Court twice.

The campaign continued to grow on a national scale. In the plants hundreds of thousands of workers eagerly took up the strug-



A "Free the Scottsboro Boys" contingent in the 1934 May Day parade of 50,000 in NYC. Across the country hundreds of thousands of workers actively fought to free these nine Black youth, putting the lie to the owners' propaganda that Blacks and whites can never unite.

gle. Mass meetings and demonstrations were held all over the country. Resolutions to free the Scottsboro Boys were passed. local unions and the wave of support among workers became so great that the AFL convention in 1935 was forced to consider a resolution of support, deciding however to "table" it for a later discussion that never took place.

Scientists, writers, artists, and church groups joined in the roar of protest. On November 7, 1932 the Supreme Court reversed the original conviction, called for a retrial, while simultaneously demonstrations took place in Washington, D.C. and Birmingham, Ala. On May 5, 1933 a mass Scottsboro march, Black and white together, backed up by 200,000 signatures on a petition demanding freedom for the youths, shook Washington, D.C. On the strength of this the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the AFL—all of whom displayed no interest in the case at first—started to join the struggle. In December 1935 the Scottsboro Defense Committee was formed, composed of representatives of the International Labor Defense, the NAACP, the ACLU, the Methodist Federation for Social Service, the League for Industrial Democracy, and the Church League for Industrial Democracy.

Millions joined the struggle nationwide. A speaking tour was organized to 26 European countries, featuring Mrs. Ada Wright, one of the Scottsboro mothers, and J. Louis Engdahl, chairman of the International Labor Defense. On July 3, 1932 in Berlin, 150,000 German workers overflowed the streets to support Mrs. Wright in her campaign to free her two sons and the other Scottsboro defendants. In Riga, Latvia, a protest rocked the United States Legation. In France, a large demonstration hit the U.S. embassy in Paris and thirty-six French organizations presented a petition demanding release of the nine.

None of the Scottsboro Boys was executed. Four of the youths were freed in 1937 under condition of exile from the state of Alabama. But it wasn't until 1950 that the last of the Scottsboro Boys was out of jail, and Haywood Patterson got out only by escaping in 1948, with charges against him only recently being dropped after he was almost extradited from New York City to Alabama.

Although the capitalist rulers were almost ravenous in their desire to stomp out nine innocent lives in an attempt to intimidate those who would dare to resist them, the effect of the case was exactly the opposite. Inspired by the steadfast courage of the Scottsboro Boys themselves, who maintained their fighting spirit despite prison beatings and the constant threat of impending execution, millions of people awoke in the course of the struggle to the harsh realities of the capitalists' court system. As the intense str

gle unfolded and it became clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that the youths were innocent, many people also began to sum up still more—that “justice” under this system was “justice” reserved for the rich, and that to change this setup the working class would have to rise up in revolution and establish its own rule.

It has been said by its enemies, that the working class is only concerned about the most narrow bread and butter issues and that “history shows that white and Black workers can’t unite.” There are divisions, but more than that there is a basis for unity. The Scottsboro struggle and the following CIO union drives—highlighted by the high level of unity built between Blacks, whites, Mexicans, including between workers who spoke dozens of different languages—demonstrated that unity can be forged in struggle.

The fight to free the Scottsboro Boys was only part of a gathering storm of struggle waged by the working class during the Depression years. With millions losing their jobs and facing starvation and eviction, a powerful movement of the unemployed swept the land. This was organized mainly by the Unemployed Councils, a mass organization of jobless workers with members of the Communist Party playing an active role. Its activities prevented evictions, with street battles if necessary, demanded jobs and immediate relief in massive demonstrations involving hundreds of thousands, and won unemployment insurance, welfare, social security, etc.

By 1933, unemployment, though still massive, dropped to about 10 million, and the center of struggle began to shift from unemployed demonstrations to organizing drives and strikes in the shops. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which split from the AFL over the question of organizing the unorganized into industrial unions, especially in basic industry, became a storm center of the struggle.

Starting particularly with the victory of the famous Flint sit-down strike of 1936-37, which forced General Motors to recognize the United Auto Workers, the working class waged the biggest strike wave in U.S. history. Workers in big industries like electrical sat down. Sales clerks in department stores sat down. The UAW continued to grow as Chrysler and Ford were unionized. The United Electrical Workers, the United Steelworkers, the National Maritime Union and many others soon won contracts from the major companies in their industries.

In this great upsurge of the 1930s the working class won some great victories. For years the employing class had stood adamantly against unions, unemployment insurance, social security, etc. Now the struggle of millions forced them into these concessions, while many workers were starting to look to revolution and socialism as the way to resolve the contradictions of the system.

All this raises the question, what the hell happened? The situa-

tion today is different. The winning of the industrial unions, which was such a tremendous victory, has been undermined, with company men controlling the top positions today. Unemployment insurance and social security are both being restricted and cut back today, with the rulers raising a hue and a cry about how much this is costing them, trying to lay the basis for further cuts in the future. The working class is less active and politically awakened now than then, although that is beginning to change.

The lessons as to why and how things got turned around are very important for advancing today's struggles and are something all workers should study and learn about.

The capitalist rulers were never reconciled to the concessions they had granted the working class, and they were especially anxious to bolster their rule while undercutting the revolutionary ferment growing among the workers. Their politicians and newspapermen did all they could to put over a twisted summation of the struggle.

WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR VICTORIES?

At the same time the ruling class fought the workers with police, court injunctions and the National Guard, much of their press and speeches were full of praise for President Roosevelt, who "looked out for the working man," and John L. Lewis, the head of the CIO, who was described as "a tower of strength." All this stood reality on its head, making it seem like the politicians and the top leaders of the CIO were responsible for the working class victories, and not the rank and file itself, which had actually won the battles and carried them through to their victories.

Roosevelt was a far cry from the friend of the working man that was said to have been. During an earlier effort to organize the auto industry in 1934, he guaranteed its failure by forcing a settlement that endorsed the company unions the bosses had set up to oppose organizing drives. During the Flint sitdown and immediately afterwards, fear of the workers' strength prevented him from unleashing troops on the workers. But when things had died down a little and the UAW struck North American Aviation in California in 1941, Roosevelt, huffing about "national security," jumped in to bust the strike, sending in 2500 federal troops who went door-to-door with submachine guns to force the workers back into the shops.

To some degree the owners were able to put over this kind of summation of Roosevelt as the "friend of the working man," even because of the errors of the Communist Party which, in later years, gained and pointed the road forward.

The CP had played a leading role in struggles like the union drives and the Scottsboro Boys. For example members of the CP were the front-line troops who spearheaded almost all the orga-



The industrial unions were won through the powerful upsurge of workers in the '30s and early '40s but later seized at the top by traitors. This was accomplished in part by the spread of the illusion that politicians like Roosevelt were friends. Above, North American strikers mount the largest picket line in California history in 1941 UAW organizing drive. Strike was betrayed when UAW leader Frankenstein ordered the men back to work and when this failed Roosevelt called in the National Guard. Hacks like Frankenstein went on to consolidate control in UAW and other unions in late '40s.

ing drives among the workers. Their members were respected and looked to for leadership by millions.

But after a time the CP tended to tail after the summation being put out by the ruling class. In the early '30s they had exposed the myth that Roosevelt "looked out for the working man." But by the later '30s, even as millions in struggle began to look to the CP for leadership and its membership grew towards 100,000, they began promoting Roosevelt as a representative of the "progressive" wing of the capitalists fighting the "reactionary" wing represented by the Republican Party. This analysis completely contradicted a class analysis, showing how the struggles of the day were part of a broader conflict between the working class on the one side and the capitalist class, represented by the Democrats, including Roosevelt, and the Republicans, on the other.

In addition the CP treated the winning of the industrial unions and other concessions as the sole aim of the workers struggle, and didn't show how the struggle for these reforms was part of the broader struggle of the working class to overthrow the capitalist rulers and establish the rule of the working class, socialism.

As part of this they seriously hurt the ability of the workers to take on the union bureaucrats who were consolidating their positions in union leadership. The CP called for the dissolution of all

caucuses and other forms of organization which united the more active and politically aware fighters.

The consequences of these errors, though serious at the time, did not develop fully until later.

The ruling class was able to climb out of the Depression through World War 2. Letting other countries do the main bulk of the fighting, the U.S. moved in a big way near the end of the war to clean up on the spoils, extending their economic and military domination.

Emerging at the top of a vast worldwide empire they were able to stabilize the U.S. economy—*temporarily*. With this they set out with a new vigor to try to beat back the strength the working class had built up during the 1930s, launching a two-pronged attack against the organized strength and the struggle of the workers.

On the one hand, through laws like the Taft-Hartley Act, they outlawed such things as mass picketing and secondary boycotts, encouraging states to pass "right to work" laws.

On the other hand, they promoted "leaders" within the unions who would serve their interests—people like Walter Reuther and George Meany. These bureaucrats held that workers should moderate their struggle and rely on the union's slick negotiators, lobbying efforts in Congress and elect Democrat politicians.

The traitorous line pushed by these misleaders was strengthened by the position held by U.S. imperialism. As profits poured in to the pockets of the bankers and corporate billionaires, they, like their predecessors in Britain in the late 18th century, were able to concede a few more crumbs to the workers in order to cool off their militancy. These concessions were then credited to the negotiating skills of the hacks and the "reasonableness" of the owners, giving credence to the lie that the workers and the capitalists have a common interest in the capitalist system, and building of "labor-management cooperation."

These concessions made by the ruling class at the time paid off. Not only did the militant class conscious workers' movement decline, but the bosses were able to solidify the positions of their labor lieutenants at the head of the union Internationals, use these officials as a main arm in its attack on the working class, and use the union apparatus to quell workers struggles and enforce labor discipline.

The *Programme of the Revolutionary Communist Party* sums this up. "This has been a serious setback for the working class, but also the source of a great lesson. While it is crucial to fight for every possible concession from the capitalists, the working class cannot limit itself to the fight for concessions under capitalism, nor can it win its emancipation 'piece by piece,' through a series of reforms.

"So long as the bourgeoisie [the capitalist class] has state power it will continue to attack and attempt to corrupt every gain won

by the working class—and it will sooner or later succeed in setting back the workers' movement, so long as the fight for the concessions is not conducted as a by-product of the fight to overthrow capitalism." (p. 104)

It can be no different under their system. They can increase their profits only by pushing the working class down, only through more speedup, more wage cuts, more job combinations, more violations of seniority, more layoffs, only by vicious attacks on the historic victories the working class has won.

Workers must never forget that their interests and the interests of this small number of bankers and corporate billionaires can never be reconciled. That is why they need to set their aim high and build for the day when they can overthrow these profit-monsters for good, establishing a working class state, socialism. Under socialism the working class will control the economy and take ownership of the factories, machines, farmlands, etc. No parasites will grow fat off the labor of others and the working class will be able to advance towards a bright future when all class distinctions in society will be eliminated.

THRESHOLD OF A NEW PERIOD

Today the working class stands at the threshold of a new period. For an entire generation its struggle has been dominated by the politics of the bosses. During this time many strikes and other struggles occurred, but mainly they fell under the leadership of the union bureaucrats or politicians trying to make a name for themselves, getting restricted and channeled into the legal cobwebs of the system.

Powerful struggles of the American people shook the powers-that-be in the '60s and early '70s—the Black liberation struggle together with the struggle of other minority nationalities and the struggle against the war in Vietnam. These struggles struck powerful blows at the rulers, mobilizing millions and serving as a great inspiration to people around the world. Out of them developed many people who summed up the need for revolution in the U.S., including quite a few who have taken up the stand of the working class and have joined its Party, the Revolutionary Communist Party. But these struggles of the 1960s and early '70s were not based in the working class. Consequently they ran up against their own limitations—they lacked the strength, discipline, organization and outlook which characterizes the working class. Without this they could not and did not continue in the same way.

But today the relative stability of the economy, on which the system bases so many of its lies, is breaking down, similar in some respects to the growing crisis and radicalization of the working class in Britain in the early part of the century. Bound by the



1974 memorial rally for 4 students killed in Kent State University anti-war demonstration. Had there been an organized working class force within it, the movement against the Vietnam war, which struck a powerful blow to the rulers, would have been even stronger.

laws of its profit system, the very measures the owners had to take to get out of the Great Depression—extending their robbery and exploitation around the world, spending huge sums to maintain their military to enforce and protect this plunder, etc.—have only laid the basis for the even bigger crisis they are now entering. Now they face wars of national liberation, huge government deficits, inflation and massive unemployment.

A big contradiction for the U.S. capitalists is the reemergence of sharp rivalry with their counterparts in other countries, especially with the capitalists who seized power in the Soviet Union, overthrowing socialism, the rule of the working class in that country, in the mid '50s. These New Tsars are aggressively trying to expand their share of the robbery of the world's people, just as surely as the U.S. rulers are trying to defend their empire and eventually expand it. This growing conflict is leading step-by-step towards a new world war.

With the deepening of these contradictions the working class is starting to reawaken. The hold the hacks have over the unions is starting to crack. The majority of the American people, and the most powerful force in society, the working class, are beginning to stir.

This is not happening all at once, but just as surely it is a growing trend as the crisis deepens. Nor are all the workers awakening at the same time. There is uneven development with some workers more advanced in their understanding and struggle than the great majority. At this time the number of workers awakening to political life is only a relative handful, and even their numbers ebb and flow given the level of the struggle.

A Lever That Can Move Millions

The formation of the national workers organization in this situation raises the question, how will it become a real force in the working class and among the American people?

The key, as said before, is to realize that in the present situation a relatively small number of active fighters in the national workers organization *can* lead big battles. In the course of this they *can* build the national workers organization larger, develop it in industries and areas where it doesn't exist, and move forward the general level of struggle and understanding of workers. In this way they can help create the conditions for the greatest advances in the future when millions upon millions of workers will be drawn into struggle.

The method for leading these powerful struggles with a small number of forces is called the *single spark method*, based on the understanding that "a single spark can start a prairie fire." It is an extremely important method for the working class to master in its struggles.

To practice the single spark method it is important to recognize the *unevenness* of the struggles that break out. The entire working class army is not advancing against the enemy's fortress in one straight line, frontal assault. Instead, one battalion surges forward to do battle, then falls back to regroup as another battalion surges forward. But within this uneven ebb and flow battle, the entire working class army is moving forward on the battlefield today.

In this war the method for the leading forces of the working class army must be to *concentrate* the power of all its troops behind the battalion that is surging forward, aiming it squarely at the enemy. In this way the power of the attack is multiplied, while the enemy's strength is weakened, much as if the army came at the enemy's fortress with a battering ram.

This is what the single spark method does. It is a method whereby the national workers organization focuses in on key sparks of struggle—those which have the potential to become major battles of the class, exemplifying particularly clearly the fight against a thousand other similar abuses. Then by fanning and spreading these sparks as broadly as possible throughout the



The Sept., 1975 wildcat strike of miners began in one mine at a time miners were steaming about firings, court injunctions, jailings and other attempts to break their strike movement. The Miners' Right to Strike Committee helped build this into a strike of 80,000 across 5 states focused on the demand for the right to strike, a powerful demonstration of the single spark method.

working class, identifying and isolating the enemy in the course of struggle, it concentrates the greatest strength of the workers—their strength in numbers, discipline, unity and their outlook of uniting all who can be united against the real enemy to end all oppression—against the greatest weakness of the enemy—its smallness in numbers, its parasitical and oppressive nature which isolates it from the masses of people, and its divisions even among itself.

The single spark method is a powerful weapon in the hands of the national workers organization. It allows the most active forces to concentrate on key struggles and develop them into big battles which draw in thousands, and potentially millions, of others.

In order to fully utilize this method and build the kinds of struggles that need to be waged, the national workers organization has an organizational structure. While being based in the plants and other workplaces the national workers organization walks on two legs—one leg the organization by industry, the other leg the organization by area.

ORGANIZATION BY INDUSTRY

In each area of the country the national workers organization is establishing chapters in the plants and other workplaces and linking them up nationwide into industrywide formations. For example, an auto section of the national workers organization, a steel section, an electrical section, etc.

With this kind of structure the national workers organization will be able to become a real fighting force in each plant as well as nationally around a number of key battlefronts.

For example there is a sharp struggle in most plants around wages, speedup, job combinations and overloads, violations of job classifications, bringing in outside contractors, forced overtime, etc. In opposition to the companies and the top union officials who say high wages and better working conditions depend on the companies increasing their profits, the national workers organization exposes this as a formula for driving the workers down. Using the single spark method it can build struggles around these issues, both around contract expirations and at other times, by mobilizing the rank and file and isolating the enemy.

In a number of industries the companies and union officials are trying to restrict the right to strike, waving the contract to say workers cannot walk out, calling in the courts and police to break any strikes that do break out. The national workers organization can lead the rank and file in breaking through this bull, learning from militant fighters like the miners who have waged massive wild-cat strikes to defend their right to strike and around other demands. The national workers organization should prepare the rank and file to strike whenever necessary and possible, in a serious and disciplined way, to kick the companies and their lackeys running the unions in the teeth.

A key task of the national workers organization will also be to build the unity of the working class in the course of struggle, uniting Black, white, Latin and other nationalities, as well as men and women. Part of this is to wage struggle against discrimination and other oppression faced by Blacks, other minority nationalities and women. By waging the fight against the common enemy on every front the working class as a whole can unite its diverse ranks and rally broad forces to its cause.

Another very important battlefront for the national workers organization is to make the unions a weapon in the hands of the rank and file to fight the companies and not a weapon of the companies and company men to put down the rank and file. They do this by mobilizing the rank and file around a program representing its interests and in the course of struggle "jam" the union officials—exposing the traitors at the top, rolling over them, breaking the bureaucracy's hold and uniting with those in the lower levels of the unions who can be won to stand with the working class.

One important part of this struggle is to kick the hacks out of office and replace them with true fighters for the working class in union office. For this reason an important arena of struggle for the national workers organization is in local and national union elections.

But even more important than opposing individual opportunists the national workers organization refutes the politics raised by them: that the future for the workers lies in electing "better" officials to union office. It draws workers into union activity in order to assure that no clique shall be able to retain control of the union, in order to guarantee that the leadership of the union shall come from the rank and file itself. The future for workers is not to *restrict* their struggle to fighting for a few good leaders, but to *expand* their struggle, building their initiative and organization as part of the growing movement of the entire working class.

The national workers organization also makes clear that, like the TUEL, it is not some "more pure" union, a dual union, set up for the purpose of competing with and trying to destroy or replace the existing unions. The national workers organization is not a union at all. It is a fighting force in the plants, an organization of the most active fighters. The unions, on the other hand, are organizations of all the workers, the most active, the intermediate and the more backward, in one industry or trade.

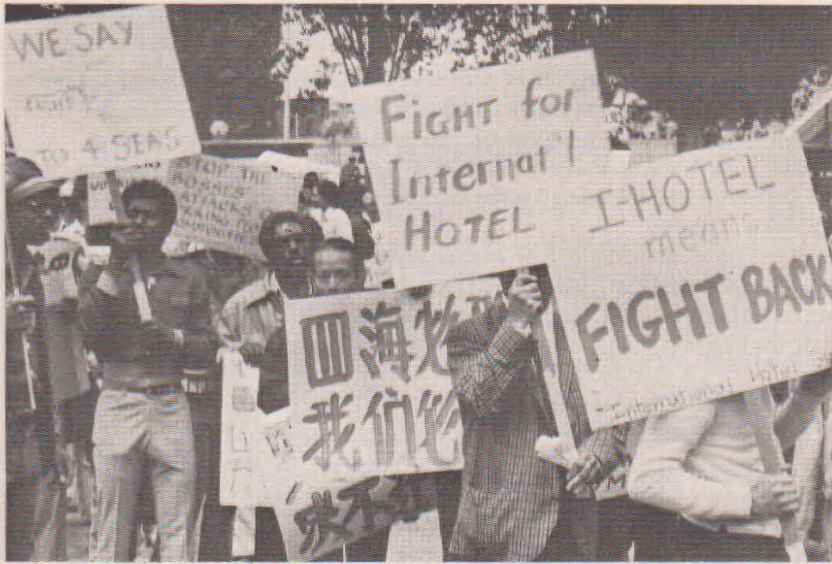
The general problem with the unions today is not that the unions are no good and the working class needs new ones in their place. The problem with the unions is that the top leadership is hopelessly reactionary and wedded to the owning class. These jackanapes need to be cleared out and replaced by officials who are going to lead the workers in fighting the companies. The national workers organization sets this as one of its tasks and not the destruction of the existing unions.

ORGANIZATION BY AREA

Combined with the industrywide organization, the national workers organization is establishing a national leadership and areawide committees in major metropolitan areas, bringing together auto workers, steel workers, electrical workers—workers from across industry lines. In this way the national workers organization is able to build a much broader struggle than within just one company or industry. It is able to take on common attacks facing all workers, regardless of what industry they are from, and, by building key campaigns *classwide*, concentrate the power of millions.

Just as historically the working class helped build struggles like the Scottsboro Boys, today it cannot confine its fight to job issues only. Workers in industries and plants all over the country face the same attacks—speedup, sinking standard of living, the threat of unemployment. Together with other sections of the population, they are under attack in their neighborhoods, in their schools, in the political arena, in society as a whole.

It is impossible for the working class only to be concerned about wages on the job, when inflation is shooting up again; only



Tens of thousands of people in the S.F. Bay Area have taken part in the fight against the eviction of 80 retired Chinese and Filipino workers living in I-Hotel. The movement has been greatly strengthened with workers fighting as an organized force, organized in part by the United Workers Organization, an area-wide workers organization in the Bay Area.

to be concerned about the butcher they call the company doctor, when cities around the country are closing down hospitals; only to be concerned about discrimination against minorities by the company, when the U.S. owning class oppresses whole nations in southern Africa and around the world; or to be concerned only about problems in the U.S. when workers and other allies of the U.S. working class in other countries are waging the same fight against a handful of capitalist pirates who are dragging the world towards war in their fight to protect and expand their worldwide looting.

The areawide structure of the national workers organization allows workers of different industries to use the single spark method to build the fight around key battlefronts affecting all workers. Important areas of focus for these campaigns will be the following:

—Key economic battles of the working class as a whole, helping to build them stronger, pointing them at the enemy and spreading their lessons. For instance, as said before, had it existed the national workers organization could have helped to build the 1976 rubber strike even more broadly and powerfully.

—The fight against unemployment, in support of the demand

"Jobs or Income!" and other key demands such as "Union Jobs at Union Wages."

—The struggle to organize the unorganized, especially in the South, and the fight against union busting.

—Supporting the struggle of the people of southern Africa against U.S.-backed colonialism and *apartheid*. This would be part of a broader fight against wars of aggression and plunder by the capitalist rulers.

—The fight around other outrages and abuses of this society, for example the struggle against police terror, the fight for decent and equal education, against segregation and discrimination at work and throughout society, and against deportation of immigrants.

In taking up key campaigns around these issues which affect all workers the national workers organization is able to carry out *classwide* mobilizations—mobilizing workers in all parts of the country and at times bringing them from all over the country to rally in one site all together, like the July 4th Bicentennial struggle in Philadelphia. In doing this it is able to greatly increase the strength of these battles.

The working class is the most powerful force in society. Not only does it create the vast bulk of society's wealth, but it is welded together in the process of production and its daily battles. Standing in direct opposition to the owners, it is the most consistent opponent of oppression in all its forms.

When it enters these battles as a force fighting under its own banner, the working class brings with it and instills in others its strength, unity, discipline and outlook. Around this banner it can rally the great majority of American people and strengthen all the struggles they too are waging against the common enemy.

As these kinds of classwide campaigns get built, the movement of the working class will begin to take a qualitative leap to a higher level. The situation in which each struggle is more isolated and confined to workers of one industry against the bosses of that industry will start to be overcome and gradually the true political struggle of the working class fighting for its own interests will gather momentum.

Of course these classwide campaigns of the national workers organization need to be coordinated with the struggles within the plants. The bulk of the national workers organization's activities under present conditions will continue to be organizing struggles around the conditions within the shops and industries. But the national workers organization will make it more possible to wage these fights as part of the overall movement of the working class. And as indicated its overall role will be to take up major struggles of the working class and other sections of the American people, mobilize masses of workers, and develop these into campaigns of

the whole working class. If the relationship between battles around conditions in the shops and broader, classwide fights is handled correctly, both can complement each other and build the national workers organization stronger in each section

TODAY'S BATTLES AND THE FUTURE GOAL

As this machine begins to swing into action around the country and as the growing crisis drives broader and deeper sections of the working class into motion, the national workers organization will grow and become a more powerful force driving things forward.

As the struggle advances, as it must, into a more overall onslaught of the working class against the capitalist class, the questions will sharpen for large numbers of workers of what the ultimate aims of the working class struggle are and what will be necessary for the working class to achieve its freedom.

The national workers organization will be one center where workers will debate and struggle over these questions as they come up in the course of struggle. This is very important because ultimately the understanding of the most active workers about the realities of the capitalist enemy they face determines whether or not the overall struggle of the working class advances or is dealt a setback. As we have seen earlier in this pamphlet, great harm came from the tendency of the old Communist Party to make the winning of the unions the sole aim of the struggle and not showing how this struggle was part of a broader conflict between two opposing classes which must end eventually in the working class rising up in socialist revolution. It made it easier for the capitalist class and their agents to seize the unions at the top and deal the working class a serious, but temporary, setback.

The Revolutionary Communist Party believes that summing up these errors and learning the lessons of the past, both heroic advances and bitter setbacks, can help strengthen the present movement of the working class so it can make the greatest strides forward. As the political party of the working class, the RCP helps to build the actual struggles of the working class, and helps advance them by grasping the underlying forces governing their actual development.

On this basis the Party brings to workers the understanding of the ultimate aim of the working class struggle—rising in revolution, overthrowing the rule of the capitalists and establishing the rule of the working class, socialism. Under socialism the working class will be able to set out to transform all of society and overcome all the ulcers left over from capitalist society. Working class rule will be a great leap forward, unleashing the tremendous productive power of the working class, eliminating the theft of the wealth produced by the workers and the crises and recessions that mark capi-

talism, ending discrimination, building decent schools, housing, providing decent social services and health for its citizens. Then, by gradually eliminating class differences, the bright future of communism will eventually come into being, a society where each works according to his ability and receives according to his need. With this the working class will have carried the struggle through, emancipated all of mankind and brought human society to a whole new stage of history.

To build the struggle of the working class and lead it toward this aim the Party participates in and helps build many forms of organization of the working class and other sections of the people—trade unions, rank and file caucuses and other organizations in the workplaces, organizations formed to fight particular abuses (like police repression or deportations), etc. Precisely because the national workers organization will be such an important weapon in the hands of the working class, the RCP has taken an active part, along with many other workers, in helping to build it and will continue to work to develop it as a mighty force in the struggles of the working class.

Of course, especially as this force develops in strength, the enemy will intensify its efforts to cripple it. One of their favorite tactics will be to red-bait, saying the national workers organization is a communist organization or a "communist front organization," while of course portraying communism and communists in the most ridiculous and horrible light. But as far as we're concerned this bunch of billionaires has no right to speak about what's good for the working class and where its future lies. The only future they offer is more oppression while they get richer.

Of course the national workers organization will have communists in it. The RCP is proud to participate in helping to build this important organization. What kind of communists would the RCP be if we said we stood for the interests of the working class and then didn't do all we could to help advance the struggles of the workers?

However, the national workers organization will not be a communist organization. Most of the workers in the U.S. today who see the need for a systematic and organized struggle against the enemy do not yet see the need for socialist revolution. It will be an organization of all those who want to fight the enemy, on the job and off the job, an organization that includes communists and non-communists. It enthusiastically welcomes into its ranks any worker who wants to fight in a systematic way around wages, speedup, forced overtime, supporting strikes of other workers, building the fight against unemployment and many other abuses—in other words, the burning issues facing the working class today.

A LARGE CALIBER WEAPON

The owning class is caught in a growing crisis today, a crisis which, despite temporary upswings, is deepening and becoming more serious. Flailing around like some wounded animal it is raining blows down on the working class, hoping to give itself a transfusion back to health.

But this is only an idle dream of a class that has become historically obsolete. Rising in opposition to this handful of bankers and corporate billionaires are the millions upon millions of hard-working people of all nationalities who make this country run. Although not fully awakened, the working class is becoming steeled, gaining courage and understanding and consolidating itself in struggle.

The formation of a national workers organization adds a large calibre weapon to the workers' arsenal. As a united force of active fighters it is able to mobilize the strength and power of millions of workers in key battles. With a national industrial structure it is capable of waging major fights nationwide in every major industry, as well as local fights in the plants. As an organization also structured to bring together workers from across industry lines in each area and nationally, it is capable of waging big classwide campaigns around the key social issues of the day.

There are sure to be ups and downs in the struggle and the national workers organization itself will not become a huge organization right away. But by concentrating the power of a relatively small number of workers around key sparks of struggle it will be an organization which leads big battles today. Then by doing this it will be a rallying center as millions of people become active in the struggle with the deepening crisis.

The future for the owning class is bleak. Although they go to great lengths to make it seem otherwise, they are a dying class which has outlived its usefulness, growing weaker, increasingly isolated, in crisis and divided even among itself. Their situation grows more and more desperate.

But the future for the working class is bright with hope. It is growing stronger, educating itself, becoming better organized. Not only is the working class fighting and standing on the threshold of a great new era of struggle, but through this struggle workers are bound to eventually rise up and go on to win their freedom from all oppression.

A POWERFUL WEAPON for OUR CLASS
RCP, USA

CORRECTION: Next to last paragraph onp. 24 should read:

To some degree the owners were able to put over this kind of summation of Roosevelt as the "friend of the working man," etc. because of the errors of the Communist Party which, in later years, failed to correctly sum up the experience the working class had gained and point the road forward.