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TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

Attached is an article on the Sadlowski campaign reprinted from the December issue of New America, the newspaper of the Social Democrats USA.

Comradely,



Larry Seigle
National Office

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Media Radical Chic Against the Steelworkers

by Robert Fekety

The election of international officers for the 1.4 million member United Steelworkers of America (USWA) has been one of the most discussed, debated, and eagerly awaited union contests in recent years. Many believe that the election, next February 8, involves much more than the future direction of the union, the AFL-CIO's largest. According to Victor Reuther, a retired Auto-workers official and a vocal supporter of union presidential candidate Edward Sadlowski, the outcome may determine "a major realignment of the AFL-CIO itself." Another Sadlowski partisan, political activist Joseph Rauh, sees the election in even more grandiose terms: "First the Steelworkers; then the AFL-CIO; then the world," was his comment to a labor activist not connected to the Steelworkers.

Sadlowski, director of District 31, and his running mates are challenging a ticket headed by Lloyd McBride, director of District 34, headquartered in St. Louis. McBride has the backing of almost all the directors who serve on the union's executive board, and is preferred by retiring USWA president, I.W. Abel. Sadlowski, on the other hand, is centering his attack on the personality and policies of Abel, whom he accuses of fostering "business unionism."

Sadlowski, 38, is serving his first term as head of the huge Chicago-Gary district, where he had earlier served as a staff representative, and before that, as president of one of the largest locals.

McBride, 60, started his union work forty years ago in the Steelworkers Organizing Committee, which built the foundations of the USWA. He became president of Local 1291, and later was three times elected director of a district encompassing five Midwestern states. He has also headed the St. Louis and Missouri Labor Councils of the AFL-CIO.

In contrasting the two candidates, *Business Week's* labor reporter, John Hoerr, observes:

Sadlowski will have a tough time bucking the union establishment but he draws "outside" support from radical and left-wing groups. He is not a political radical. Rather, he is a liberal left-winger who delights the radicals with his espousal of the redistribution of income and his attacks on AFL-CIO president George Meany. McBride, in contrast, is a liberal Democrat who would continue the policies instituted by Abel, though in a more open fashion.

Sadlowski calls McBride "Abel's hand-picked

candidate." Actually, McBride had to undergo a vigorous fight among executive-board members to establish his candidacy. On the eve of the USWA convention in August, when it was clear that the leadership was split and after Abel had refused requests to endorse a candidate, vice president John S. Johns, the other major contender, pulled out, making possible a unity slate headed by McBride.

Convention Fiasco

Sadlowski's ticket is concentrated in the basic steel industry, where less than one-third of the union membership works. Three of the five members of his slate come from the union staff, and they have considerably less negotiating experience than the ticket headed by McBride, thought by steel management to be "a low-key but tough and intelligent negotiator," as *Business Week* puts it.

Sadlowski's weakness at the leadership levels was reflected in the severe setback he suffered at the USWA's 1976 convention when the delegates voted overwhelmingly to support the Experimental Negotiating Agreement (ENA) for the upcoming bargaining in basic steel. Most presidents of basic steel locals who spoke on the issue were favorable to ENA, which contains a "no strike-no lockout" provision, with unresolved issues going to arbitration. This formula was adopted to stop the boom-bust cycle endemic to steel production and employment. Steel imports had reached an all-time high of 18.3 million tons in 1971, stemming from steel users' fear of the possibility of strikes at negotiating time. This enabled foreign producers to gobble up 20 percent of the American market, representing the export of 108,000 jobs. As a result of ENA, imports were reduced to 12 million tons in 1975, and a corresponding number of jobs were saved. The agreement's other innovation is in allowing strikes over local issues, including the vital area of work rules, where such a strike would not be considered a violation of the master contract. This is a right the United Mine Workers are currently demanding after having been hit hard with court injunctions and fines in the wake of wildcat strikes over grievances.

Sadlowski, who considers basic steel his stronghold, avoided a confrontation on ENA, insisting only that the membership be allowed to vote on the basic steel arrangement. Presently the procedure is for the contract to be ratified at an industry conference by local union presidents.

Another pet Sadlowski proposal—for a shorter work week to generate employment—was undercut by Abel's recommendation of a "lifetime job security" program. It may be that emphasis on job security has greater appeal to steelworkers, who

fear that a shorter work week will only lead to greater automation rather than to the creation of more jobs. The convention delegates unanimously endorsed Abel's proposal that provisions toward a guaranteed-jobs program be a major union aim in the next round of negotiations.

A symbolic high point at the convention was the swearing-in ceremony for Leon Lynch in the newly created post of Vice President for Human Affairs. Lynch, 41, was the first black to win election to the central labor council in Memphis, Tennessee, where he ultimately won election as vice president. He is also a leader of the A. Philip Randolph Institute. Sadlowski, unhappy with the choice, claimed credit for the establishment of the office, maintaining that it had been created purely in response to his candidacy. However, those close to Abel asserted that Abel had himself deplored the absence of a black in the top leadership. Early in his administration, Abel had backed Leander G. Simms, a black staff man, for district director in the Maryland area where there was a large black membership. Simms lost a close vote because a number of black leaders who also wanted the post didn't support him. Thus, Abel had no alternative but to go the appointive route.

Perhaps a fair appraisal might be that Sadlowski's candidacy gave the matter a new urgency. From the delegates' favorable response, the move was obviously a popular one, at least at the leadership levels. Blacks are estimated to comprise over 25 percent of the USWA membership, and close to that ratio appeared to be reflected in the proportion of black convention delegates.

It was expected that the Consent Decree would be a point of contention. The decree is a joint union, management, and government program instituting plant-wide seniority to foster equal opportunity for blacks and other minorities stuck in deadend jobs and to compensate them financially for past discrimination. While the program has received general acceptance, some blacks did protest that the compensation was not adequate, and some whites criticized the program for giving blacks "preferential treatment." Sadlowski had criticized the plan in vague terms, soaking up the discontent from both ends of the spectrum. But it was a non-issue at the convention, and the press reported that Sadlowski is ducking the Consent Decree issue in this campaign although it has important civil rights ramifications.

In general terms, the convention made it clear that the overwhelming majority of those responsible for the day-to-day operations at the local and international levels—from top officers and local presidents to rank-and-file activists and staff men—are opposed to Sadlowski.

Sadlowski's Target

Sadlowski's target, however, is not those generally considered the union's activists or militants. His campaign is aimed at those of the rank and file who do not attend union meetings or participate in union activities. This group includes many younger members who have had little or no union experience. It is estimated that one-third of the USWA membership is under 30. Those whose major union activity is to pay their dues traditionally offer a reservoir of potential protest and anti-leadership votes in Steelworker elections.

In the 1969 election, for example, a relatively unknown staff lawyer, Emil Narick, garnered 181,122 votes to Abel's 257,651. Narick ran almost solely on a dues-protest issue, a burning controversy at the time. Sadlowski, on the other hand, is opposing all the basic union policies. Thus the situations may not be comparable, for those steelworkers who may want to protest a specific union policy may not favor a total transformation of policies and leadership. Many of the silent majority to whom Sadlowski is trying to appeal may in fact vote against him. This group includes many highly paid senior workers who are intensely protective of the gains they have made. If they perceive Sadlowski as a threat to union stability, they will turn out to vote against him. McBride backers believe a big vote will ensure his victory. But with the steel industry in a tailspin, high unemployment will work to McBride's disadvantage. There is also a large bloc of votes, mainly outside basic steel and including many of the smaller locals, which traditionally go for the administration.

One straw in the wind is the number of nominations a candidate receives from Steelworker locals, which are determined by membership votes. With the bulk of the nominations completed, the McBride ticket has been running ahead of Sadlowski's by a 10-1 margin. However, Sadlowski has taken the nominations in some large basic steel locals (though not as many as Narick did) and has demonstrated strong organization in steel centers in Pennsylvania, Ohio and some other areas. McBride has beaten Sadlowski 3-1 in nominations in Sadlowski's home district and has shown strong support outside basic steel and in the smaller locals. Sadlowski's supporters are reportedly disappointed by the outcome, but the campaign still has a long way to go.

Sadlowski is not advocating specific programmatic alternatives to the Abel policies. Observed a *Pittsburgh Press* reporter: "Ask him what he proposes if elected and he replies with one word—'change.' Press him further and he talks about workers' rights in the mills." Thus Sadlowski's opposition to the Abel policies is not directed mainly, if at all, at their substance, but at how they are adopted.

What Sadlowski is creating and selling is an image—of his opposition and himself. He presents himself as an insurgent and militant close to the rank and file, and his opponents as "business unionists" who are "sitting with corporate executives in plush clubs sipping martinis, and He charges the present leadership with being "paternalistic."

What truth is there in this negative picture of the state of the United Steelworkers?

In the July 27 issue of *Business Week* there is a balanced but highly critical (too critical, I would say) portrait of the United Steelworkers by John Hoerr which is worth quoting at length:

Democracy is an issue in all unions, but it explodes with unusual frequency in the Steelworkers, because the union's referendum method of electing officers virtually guarantees that there will be heated election fights. Most unions, including some that have a more "liberal" image than the USW—United Auto Workers, for example—elect

officers in tightly controlled conventions. The USW's critics often ignore this fact....

Abel has made large structural changes to give local union officers much more voice in steel negotiations than they had under McDonald. This broader participation must be made more meaningful. But whereas no more than a few handfuls of local unionists participated in steel bargaining at the local and company level in 1965, close to 1,000 were involved in 1971 and 1974 steel talks.

These changes are largely overlooked by critics who charge that Abel "sold out" rank and filers by negotiating a no-strike agreement in steel. Sadlowski and his supporters say that rank and filers must be given "the controlling say in what the union does and how it works," though their program for doing this so far stresses only the new element: contract ratification by the rank and file.

Some things should be added to round out Hoerr's picture of the union's political and negotiating process.

Under the reforms of the Abel administration, union staffers and technicians are free to run for election or to support, or not support, those who do. Close to half of the union's executive board were elected as insurgents.

"Democracy from below" characterizes local union elections. In last April's local union elections, according to the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, "43.5 percent of the incumbent presidents were turned out of office by rank and file voters." While some interpret this to reflect a revolt from below, the union traditionally has a high turnover of local officers, particularly in the large locals.

The Strike Issue

Sadlowski's attempt to pin a conservative image on the USWA by charging that its leaders "think like businessmen" and that Abel has become a "tuxedo unionist like McDonald" should not be taken at face value. Such accusations so outraged Abel that in his opening address to the Steelworkers' convention, he declared that in the last two years he had "personally authorized members of this union to engage in 688 separate strikes" and that more than \$27,400,000 had been paid out in strike benefits.

The only area that Sadlowski can point to where the union is foregoing the use of strikes is in basic steel. Here defenders of Abel and the McBride ticket argue that the U.S. steel-producing companies' desire to halt the mounting inroads of foreign-produced steel has given the union a greater instrument of leverage than the strike for attaining greater benefits for steelworkers. They approach the strike question as a tactical one while Sadlowski approaches it as if it were a matter of principle. McBride points to the money and benefits package achieved and the regaining of the cost of living clause (COLA) in the contract negotiated under ENA.

In a roundabout way, Sadlowski acknowledges that strikes cannot solve the problem of unemployment due to imports and national recession. In an article in the left-wing publication *Mother Jones*, he went so far as to declare that collective bargaining is passé; he advocated in its place the transforma-

tion of the entire social system, although he is rather vague about what it should be transformed into. McBride, in response, hammers away at Sadlowski's proposed jettisoning of collective bargaining: "If we waited for politics to satisfy our demands, steelworkers today would be making two dollars an hour, the federal minimum wage."

While Sadlowski has criticized Arnold Miller, president of the Mineworkers, for not backing rank and filers in their wildcat strikes, he himself has never led workers in his district off the job. And while he declares work should stop under unsafe conditions, no stoppages have occurred in plants under his jurisdiction. In short, in his dealings with the steel companies and in his relations with his members, Sadlowski has acted no better nor much differently than the union's twenty-four other district directors.

Even Sadlowski's advocacy of direct membership ratification of contracts is not so simple a question as it might at first appear. For, as McBride points out, the joint steel industry bargaining committee of the "Big Ten" steel producers is held together by the thinnest of threads, in which no company can achieve an advantage through cheaper labor costs. Without joint bargaining, it would be easy for the whole thing to fall apart into company-by-company settlements, as in the auto industry where companies try to outdo each other by negotiating lower labor costs as fissures develop between skilled and unskilled workers and among workers in different companies.

In the Steelworkers' wage and policy conferences, the local union presidents both participate in the negotiating process and ratify the agreement, insuring for management that agreements once made at the table will not be reversed by the membership. Direct membership ratification could easily set off a process of renegeing by various company negotiators in search of separate contracts with the advantage of lower wage rates. Moreover, some steel unionists who support the present system of bargaining believe that if the companies knew the contract would be presented to the membership, they would offer just enough to get fifty-one percent approval, while now they face a united front on the other side of the bargaining table. This raises a reasonable question: Is it worth changing from representative democracy to direct democracy in bargaining if there could be a substantial decrease in the tangible benefits the workers win? By ignoring such a problem, McBride supporters say, Sadlowski is wrongly telling workers that they can have their cake and eat it, when in all likelihood the entire cake will shrink.

A related problem with direct participation is that such new forms of bargaining as ENA require restraint on public rhetoric that would be difficult to ensure in open negotiations. Thus, USWA statements at bargaining time are generally moderate, sometimes shading into an overdone posture of "labor statesmanship" and civic-mindedness.

Abel, of Spartan temperament himself, dislikes bombastic rhetoric and posturing before the media or the membership. Such behavior readily provides a field day for left-wing and just-plain-opportunistic demagogues inside and outside the union, and it may also undercut intelligent militancy and thoughtful criticism of the experiment

The day may not be far off when Abel's labor statesmanship sees a co-operative atmosphere replacing a solely adversary relationship. But a corollary of such a change could conceivably be that union negotiators might tend to use the velvet glove when they should be using the mailed fist. Preventing this sort of situation would require not a free-for-all but instead a prodding and criticism from below that is based on a true understanding of the problems involved, of the power of the adversary, and of the specifics of what the traffic can bear. Here, another factor magnifies the problem and exposes the demagoguery of the "sellout" charge. The majority of the Steelworker members, unlike the leadership, have never participated in a long strike and thus have not experienced for themselves the hardships of a long and bitter strike. This inexperience was reflected in the attitude of those who were eager to unleash the strike weapon, all the while they were applauding the exhortations for a sharp cut in dues, the revenue for the strike fund. Such unrealistic expectations may stem from the fact that many of today's steelworkers have never felt the full force of corporate power. Thus they are able to buy the argument that if at any time the union does not succeed in its objectives, it can only be because the leadership has "sold out," "gone soft," or other versions of the crude theme that Sadlowski's supporters have been harping on.

Importance of Style

It is important to note in this context that when Hoerr criticizes the USWA because "it projects an aura of authoritarianism," he is not charging that the union denies, or that its officers violate, the democratic rights of the membership. He notes that this aura "stems from a style of leadership" developing from its history and traditions. Although there is a measure of truth to Hoerr's assertion that initiatives come almost exclusively from the top and that the leadership continues to be "ever sensitive to criticism," it must in fairness be pointed out that this situation is changing and that the McBride team, in a number of respects, represents a new generation of leadership.

Thus, while the union is not authoritarian in any basic sense, the "aura" and the "vestiges" of the old style still linger. This may well have political significance in the election. Sadlowski is quick to sally with charges of "paternalism" which are designed to appeal to the union's younger members. Hoerr raises the sixty-four dollar question: "Has the USW changed rapidly enough over the decades to satisfy the yearnings of the union's better educated, younger steelworker to have more of a voice in decision-making?" McBride is aware of the problem and has proposed the creation of a special union department for new members, who come in at the rate of 15,000 per year.

Style takes on special importance in the Steelworkers' fight. "Style is very much a part of his [Sادلowski's] appeal," observes *New York Times* reporter Edward Cowan. Sadlowski's strength lies in his ability to brand the current leadership with a negative image and to present an appealing alternative style to and through the media. A *Pittsburgh Press* reporter who has covered the "union rebel" ever since he first began to rise to prominence wrote that the "bulwark" of his

candidacy is "manipulation of the news media who find him 'good copy.'"

In the television age, the ability to manipulate the media is a very important skill. For while Sadlowski has a following led by energized activists inside the union, it is still not large enough to vault him to the presidency. His major strength still lies outside the union—in the media, which provides him with a not insignificant weapon.

Media Distortions

A reporter on the *Houston Post* (along with others around the country) accept as given Sadlowski's assertion that "McBride is Abel's hand-picked candidate." The nationwide prime time TV news show, "Sixty Minutes" presents a flattering feature on Sadlowski but offers no exposure to his opponents. In short, not only is Sadlowski getting the great bulk of the coverage, it is molded in the image he desires to project.

How and why does this happen? "Rank and file movements in many large unions, as well as in left movements generally, have learned that attacking monolithic 'establishments' through charges based on individual rights gets them plenty of ink in newspapers," observes Ira Fine of the *Pittsburgh Press*. This analysis contains substantial truth, as well as irony: the reporter by inference accepts Sadlowski's contention that he is the leader of a "rank and file movement."

There are two other important factors that go into shaping the media image of the campaign. Sadlowski aides and supporters, including veteran activists and propagandists who learned their skills in the Popular Front movements of the 1930's or in the New Left and the New Politics movements of the '60's and '70s—learned that more important than the political event itself is the significance that the media gives to it. Thus Sadlowski's staff and publicists have worked more assiduously and skillfully on a campaign to influence the media's view of the election than on building an organization inside the union.

The initial stage of this media effort was the placement by writers in his entourage of highly sympathetic articles in small but influential liberal and left-wing publications, including the *Nation*, the *Progressive*, the *Village Voice*, and *Rolling Stone* magazine. Other supporters, including Studs Terkel, made a pilot film about Sadlowski for educational TV. This film, entitled "Message to Pittsburgh," was set in a Chicago bar where "typical" workers had "interviews" with Sadlowski—all of them completely staged by Terkel, in the style of the vintage Popular Front labor sagas, with Pete Seeger providing the musical background. It was, of course, presented on educational TV as a documentary.

Most Steelworkers do not read the *Nation*, nor are they likely to switch on educational TV. Nevertheless, these outlets have provided indirect benefits to the Sadlowski campaign. Journalists and other public-opinion molders pay attention to these publications, and their messages managed to stir up interest in Sadlowski and to stamp his camp's desired image on the minds of the media people. Educational TV's feature, in reality little more than a commercial, found its way to major networks at prime time, and no doubt was viewed by many steelworkers. This program probably

inspired the "Sixty Minutes" feature on Sadlowski, which presented a negative picture of the Steelworkers and its leadership, without an attempt at balance. Sadlowski was also boosted in the *Washington Post* column of John Herling, the syndicated column of Ralph Nader, and the article by *New York Times* labor editor Abe Raskin, who while always quick to enthuse over what he interprets as "youthful union militancy" against "aging conservative labor leaders," has never in print supported a strike.

Those characteristics that would be considered weaknesses by sophisticated trade unionists are Sadlowski's very strengths with intellectuals. Sadlowski does not talk in the programmatic and concrete "bread and butter" terms of traditional labor leaders, but instead of the vagaries of



Sadlowski is a big hit on the wine-and-cheese liberal circuit.

process—indicating an absence of program with a working class thrust: "We want change ... the transformation of the system ... an end to bureaucracy," and so on. In this classless analysis he is closer in rhetoric, emphasis, and priorities to the New Poles of affluent middle-class liberalism. That he puts these political concepts in a rough-and-ready vocabulary is endearing to those intellectuals affected with a touch of parlor radicalism. "A barroom militant and an Actor's Studio refugee from *Streetcar Named Desire*" was the caustic description of Sadlowski voiced by a top labor leader—hyperbole with a strong grain of truth. The Sadlowski "image," when examined closely, appears to be a mix of two parts Eugene Debs, one part Marlon Brando, one part Wobbly, one part Anarcho-Syndicalist, one part George McGovern, two parts brave working-class hero as portrayed by Communist fiction, and two parts tough "doity talkin'" natural, rank-and-file union leader as extolled in the psychedelic ruminations of the labor reporters of the *Village Voice* and *Rolling Stone*.

At a Sadlowski fund-raiser for the posh, hosted by former McGovern speechwriter Richard

Goodwin, and held in an affluent suburb of Boston, a local publication reported: "Most of the guests had been financial angels of the McCarthy and McGovern movements and are now frustrated and confused. An impressive new cause would revitalize them." They cooed over Sadlowski; apparently he's it.

This doesn't prove that Sadlowski has no commitment to the working class. It just means it's impossible to tell what he is. But his alliance with the affluent New Politics movement makes his commitment to the working class open to question. Sadlowski's appeal is attuned to the biases of the liberal and radical intelligentsia and their camp followers who hate the average plumber, let alone the unaverage ones like George Meany. It is enough for them that Sadlowski derides Meany and talks about moving the Democratic Party to the left (which in these circles means toward them). This enables the liberals to relive the Humphrey-McGovern contest in the Democratic Party when "enlightened and crusading" liberal sentiment was on one side and the "shoddy legions" of the AFL-CIO were on the other. Sadlowski not only revives the heroic images of their past, but gives them hope for the future—their political future.

The Union Stereotype

The cumulative effect of the publicist-created Sadlowski image on an intellectual community where there are strong pressures for conformity, particularly in a case where a strong alternative view is not being advanced by other intellectuals, has been to reinforce the view of the United Steelworkers as conservative and anti-democratic. This image has hardened into a stereotype with currency in the national media, and has in turn filtered down to local labor journalists.

Therefore it is not surprising that trade unionists whose whole lives have been spent in union politics and collective bargaining, and who have neither the ideological nor public-relations training that radical liberal political movements provide, don't have the weapons to counter such a campaign. They either throw up their hands in exasperation or stoically conclude that the media is unalterably opposed to labor. McBride once told a reporter: "I'm no showboat. It hasn't been my custom to seek out the news media. I settle union problems in union halls. This fellow [Sadlowski] has become the darling of the press."

The media has been important in the Steelworkers' election in another respect. While the USWA is a far cry from Boyle's UMW, Sadlowski strategist Joseph Rauh, who played a key role in Boyle's defeat, is following the same script. Months before Sadlowski announced his candidacy, Rauh, his attorney, announced to the press that the election would be stolen unless the government intervened to insure an honest vote count. The Sadlowski camp played up two incidents of USWA-related violence—one serious, the other minor—as if they had been officially inspired by asking, how could they have happened otherwise? Sadlowski's tactic, McBride aides say, is to raise a hue and cry in the media to arouse pressure for federal intervention and to bolster his claim that the USWA is crooked. This would demoralize McBride supporters and give the impression to the rank and file that a plot was afoot to steal their votes.

This scenario is being cleverly orchestrated in the New Left publication *Rolling Stone* magazine. The publisher, Anne Wexler, who is close to the Sadlowski camp, recently ran an article predicting Sadlowski will win "if he lives," which is calculated to raise the spectre of the Yablonski killing. Rauh's whole case—that the Abel administration is a carbon copy of Boyle's—hinges on the irregularities in the election for District 31 director when Sadlowski ran in 1974 against Sam Evett, who was backed by Abel. Evett won narrowly, but there were enough irregularities to launch a Labor Department investigation of the election. This prompted the USWA Executive Council to accede to Sadlowski's request for a new election, which he won by a large margin. Neither Sadlowski's attorneys nor the government investigators charged Evett or the Abel administration with fraud, which would have been the basis for criminal charges under the Taft-Hartley Act. To avoid a repetition of the District 31 situation, Abel has now called for intervention by the Department of Labor to ensure a fair election this time.

While Sadlowski dominates the media coverage, the strengths of the McBride ticket lie in other areas, three mainly.

First is its far broader base among union leaders and activists on all levels, which has already been discussed.

Second is the record of the Abel administration on bread and butter issues, particularly achievements in the areas of wages, benefits, and reforms in the grievance procedures which have, in many cases, been pacesetters in industrial unionism. In 1965 the pay in basic steel averaged \$3.46 per hour according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Today after eleven years of the Abel administration, the figure is at least \$8.04 an hour—up more than 132 percent with real wages up 27 percent. Average hourly earnings in basic steel are highest for any major industry. At the same time, the union has gained comparable increases in fringe benefits, giving members a high level of security, unequalled by workers in other industries, such as 13-week paid vacations every fifth year for senior employees and cash bonuses on top of vacation pay. Supplemental Unemployment Benefits (SUB) paid by the employer, when combined with government unemployment benefits, equal close to what a steelworker makes on the job. SUB maximums rose from \$37.50 to \$66.00 in 1965 to a range of 28 hours pay—\$100 to \$141 per week by 1975. And, most important, steelworker pay and benefits have kept pace with inflation.

The third strength for the McBride slate is the case they and Abel have been making against "outsiders" who have designs on the union and are intervening in the election. Is this a real or, as Sadlowski claims, a phony issue?

An article in the *Detroit News* reported that Victor Reuther, the retired UAW International Affairs Director, "is making an unusual foray into the affairs of the United Steelworkers of America," referring to a number of activities, including a fund appeal he signed on behalf of "Steelworkers Fight Back," the anti-administration faction inside the USWA. So unusual is the involvement of a trade unionist in a union to which he does not belong that Reuther had to justify this step in his letter with the spurious claim that Abel had intervened on behalf of Tony Boyle against the UMW reform movement. Reuther charged that the USWA is run

"in an autocratic manner" and that its policies will lead to "the destruction of democratic unionism."

An editorial in the August issue of the USWA's publication *Steel Labor* replied to Reuther's charge by noting that "Victor Reuther made not one criticism of the Teamsters Union during the entire period that it was joined with the Auto Workers in the ill-fated Alliance for Labor Action (ALA)." The editorial continues: "[Reuther's] course is reckless and irresponsible because he is enlisting forces alien, even hostile to labor, in his feud with the AFL-CIO He clearly reveals his objectives in his letter when he says: the Steelworkers hold the key to a 'realignment of the AFL-CIO.' Thus domination over the labor movement itself is at issue, they observe."

Outside Influences

The editorial notes that "Reuther and his associates are bank-rolling what he describes as the 'progressive' forces within the USWA," referring to the "thousands of copies of this letter [fund appeal] sent out to the mailing lists of left-wing, liberal and academic groups." It adds: "Reuther candidly acknowledges that he faces great difficulty in raising any substantial funds from Steelworkers for what he calls his campaign to return the union to its membership."

Abel forces charge that Sadlowski's campaign is "primarily backed by wealthy interests outside the union." Sadlowski is quoted as saying that "less than twenty percent of his funds have come from outsiders."

McBride aides say that Sadlowski employs a full-time professional fund-raiser and that tens of thousands of people on liberal or left-wing mailing lists are likely to have received a Sadlowski fund-raising appeal. This "war chest," they say, is bolstered by fund-raising parties given by affluent liberals around the country. Typical of these events was the one for Massachusetts McGovern and McCarthy angels (referred to earlier) where the donors included, according to a press report, a president of a major shoe company, an owner of a large chain store, a Wall Street investment counselor, and a number of Ivy League professors.

McBride aides point to these posh soirees to mock Sadlowski's charge that Abel is guilty of "tuxedo unionism." They also say it undercuts Sadlowski's claim that "his backers will raise the money from benefit appeals to rank and file workers."

Anti-Sadlowski forces are also attacking what they describe as his strong support from authoritarian leftists. Sadlowski's "Steelworkers Fight Back" caucus, which has been transformed from a protest group into his campaign vehicle, has evoked a counter-reaction in the recent formation of a group called SMART (Steelworker Members Against Radical Takeover). SMART is keeping up a drumfire of criticism against the activities of what it charges are radical groups inside and outside the union that are supporting Sadlowski. SMART members include more than three hundred presidents of USWA locals who put their names on a leaflet headed "Outside Extremists Move Into 'Fight Back' Posts." The leaflet states that Fight Back is run by "outside radical organizers who never worked a day in their lives in the steel mill," naming among them Edgar James and Robert

Hauptman, two Ivy League graduates close to Rauh who supported Arnold Miller in the UMW conflict and were added to his staff as high-priced consultants. They recently left their jobs at the Washington UMW headquarters to take over Fight Back on a full-time basis, SMART says.

Communist Participation

In announcing his candidacy, McBride said he and his supporters were not and did not intend calling Sadlowski a Communist, but were disturbed by the radicals he has associated himself with in the fight for union leadership. At the Steelworkers convention, Sadlowski challenged his critics on this issue, declaring: "Stand up and start naming the names of these subversives," as according to the union constitution, charges must be brought against them. This comment disturbed a writer for the Socialist Workers Party's publication, the *Militant*, who asked: "What if the right-wingers named names?" adding that this was "a dangerous concession" as it could lead to the reform movement "policing its own ranks." But those in labor who do not see opposition to authoritarian leftism as merely "red-baiting," or acting as a tool of the bosses who want to divide the workers, as Sadlowski has maintained, can well ask: What is wrong with democratic movements self-policing to eliminate totalitarian elements? Why wouldn't it enhance a reform movement's appeal and promote true reform?

Sadlowski will be hard-put to evade such questions. The Socialist Workers Party Presidential candidate, Peter Camejo, was quoted in the *Pittsburgh Press* as saying, "We support Ed Sadlowski one hundred percent, although he's not a socialist . . ." That support is seconded by every other authoritarian leftist group trying to latch on to discontent in the Steelworkers, except for the Maoist sects who denounce the Communist Party's support of Sadlowski as a "revisionist effort" on behalf of one layer of the labor bureaucracy against another, both of which they claim are guilty of selling out workers. But the Communists—unlike the left-wing sects which are fighting a losing battle to build a strong base in the USWA—have only one purpose: to oust the Steelworker leadership whose strong anti-Communist role inside American labor and political life is a thorn in Moscow's side. Thus, the Communist Party, with a narrow agenda, is more able to gain entry into the mainstream of the campaign against the Abel leadership.

What few members these left-wing groups have in the USWA have been thrown into the fight. But they have very little to throw. The United Mine Workers' Mike Trbovich, who was Jock Yablonski's campaign manager against Tony Boyle but who recently broke with Arnold Miller, has warned: "Many of the same groups and many of the same people" from the "outside radical forces" who created the UMW's recent problems, "are now trying to take over the Steelworkers." However, it is unlikely that they could rock the USWA in the same way unless its more stable internal situation undergoes sharp deterioration. It is possible that if Sadlowski wins the presidency he may not be able to govern the union. He would be locked in a bitter conflict with an executive board composed of district directors with their own strong power

bases. Such a polarization could paralyze and then shatter and set back the USWA. While the union's district directors are up for re-election, their political complexions are not likely to change. The diverse objectives of the de facto coalition backing Sadlowski—ranging from genuine rebel workers and discontented trade unionists, to New Pol publicists, to the authoritarian leftists—can only disorient his efforts. The only thing that unites them is their opposition to the "ins." Certainly he could only govern the union adequately if he made an accommodation with the district directors, who now strongly oppose him. But this would lead to sharp divisions within his own ranks. Up to now he has given no indication of intending to moderate his course; his major tactic has been polarization. Sadlowski will come to be identified with instability, and this could be fatal to his chances.

The authoritarian leftists don't dominate his campaign; they only influence and color it. Some of Sadlowski's ideological formulations for attacking his opposition are a pale echo of the old "Labor Lieutenants of Capitalism" theme, which has been totally discredited as a strategy as well as a philosophy by the radical splinters of democratic labor movements whose actions served only to aid reactionary forces in country after country where fascism took power. Sadlowski is really charging his opposition with the equally discredited doctrine of "class collaborationism" when he says that their "bureaucratic unionism works well for companies and the union leaders who have cozy relationships with them." But Sadlowski is far from Leninist in ideology; he is a pragmatist as he adopts the New Left rhetoric of "participatory democracy" and liberalism's anti-alienation theme. In tactics as approach he is closer to Saul Alinsky's Chicago school for radical organizers than to Lenin's Moscow school for revolutionaries.

Sadlowski's hodge-podge ideology stems from his desire to get the attention of the media. To this end, he uses an ideological weapon to create a clash of images and political symbols, and he also employs innovations in stylistic appeal. The message is crude and geared toward the lowest common denominator. But it may be effective in the absence of contending images and views.

Snobbish Contempt

It may well be that the USWA election will turn on whether Sadlowski's media advantage will neutralize McBride's organizational advantages, or the reverse.

The real outside muscle behind the Sadlowski campaign comes, not from radical groups, but from affluent New Politics-type liberals who will contribute most of his campaign funds. Most of these elements have shown a snobbish contempt for the average worker and his elected leaders. In their political activities in the Democratic Party and elsewhere, they have demonstrated an elitist impulse to subordinate organized working-class movements to their own "enlightened" political and social leadership.

The *Steel Labor* editorial replying to Victor Reuther's attack concludes: "Looking at the sources of his support, Victor Reuther needs to be asked the basic question—'transform the labor movement'—into what, by whom, and for whom?"

It's a good question—one that is relevant to the struggle now going on within the Steelworkers.