

Can't we
get job
safety?

by John Marcotte

A woman worker got her whole hand cut off in a dough mixing machine this winter at the frozen baked goods factory my friend works in. The guard had been left off the machine. A few months later, a maintenance mechanic fell off the top of a high stepladder and smashed his elbow. He was lucky he wasn't killed. Two hours later, another woman got her finger cut off in a machine.

"The company talks a lot about safety rules. Any month there's no accident, they raffle off a hundred dollar bonus. But accidents still happen. To me, this is because of the supervisors' own negligence," explained my friend. "In the case of the maintenance mechanic, he was made to paint without a safety belt, with strong smelling paint. The steward told the supervisor that the fumes were killing the people working the line. The supervisor's response was to hand out paper masks to the workers, and shut the door where the mechanic was painting. The fumes made him dizzy and he fell. Why couldn't the company wait till the weekend to paint?"

AUTOMATION INCREASES DANGERS

What this brought to mind was the meatpackers on strike at Patrick Cudahy in Wisconsin, who had a story in the March 27th N&L where they said the scabs were getting about 47 injuries a day. And I remember the start of the Hormel strike in Austin. The workers said you could bet they weren't going out over 69 cents an hour. The high rate of injuries, the speed-up, the prison discipline at this newest and most automated plant were all part of why this strike happened.

Does meatpacking have to be cold, wet and hazardous? Does baking pies have to mean risking losing your hand? What has happened to the very nature of human labor along the way from the self-activity that it was in more "primitive" times, to the alien activity it is in today's automated mass production?

When my friend says the accidents are due to the supervisors' negligence, that is true. But it's also true that the supervisors are driven by the production numbers. I asked myself, are these industrial accidents really "accidents"? Two events came to mind:

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On the Inside

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Also—More on meatpacking, p.3; Women's Liberation: review of "The Handmaid's tale", p. 2.

Students challenge campus racism



Columbia students march to fraternity row.

Columbia protests

New York, N.Y.—A spirited group of close to 1,000 attended a rally on March 26 called by the Concerned Black Students of Columbia in protest against a racist incident that occurred at the University several days earlier. The demonstrators, who demanded the immediate expulsion of four white students charged with assaulting several Blacks, marched in neighborhood streets to the area where the fraternity houses are located. (The students charged with instigating the racist attack were from two fraternities.)

The incident occurred early Sunday morning when a

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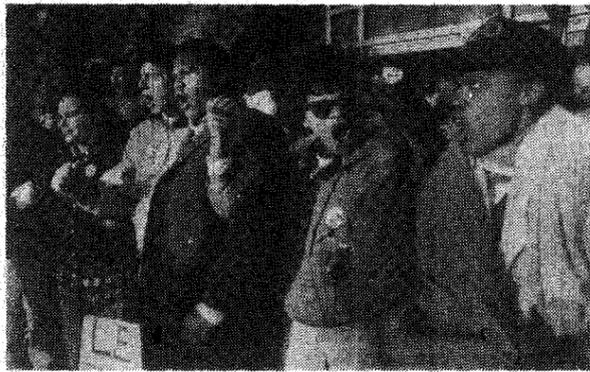
From IBP to Hormel: meatpackers
fight companies, union bureaucrats

P-9 strikers from Hormel rally in Austin, Minn.

by Michael Connolly

Over 2,000 members of UFCW Local 222, workers at IBP's Dakota City, Neb. beef-packing plant, voted March 15 to strike against a company-proposed concessions contract that would freeze wages for four more years—for a total of nine years without a raise—and impose a permanent two-tier wage system. The vote followed a three-month lockout at the plant by IBP, an announcement that the company intended to resume production with scab labor, and was taken in the face of a Nebraska law limiting strikers to two pickets every 50 feet. One striker told N&L: "We know it will be a tough fight, but we can't go back to wage cuts and the kind of injuries at work we had before the lockout."

The IBP workers' vote followed by one day a mass march and rally of 1,000 Hormel strikers and supporters in Austin, Minn. in which members of News and Letters Committees participated. "Revitalizing" is the word for the spirit seen in Austin, in the determination of the Hormel strikers of Local P-9 after 19 months of struggle against both the company and the UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers) International leadership; in the solidarity of rank-and-file workers from other companies and industries who drove 10, 15, or 20 hours from all over the Midwest to join the march; and in the



U. of Mich. students link arms against racism.

U. of Mich. demonstrations

Ann Arbor, Mich.—After several days of protests over a series of racist incidents at the U. of Michigan campus, students in two coalitions—the Black Action Movement (BAM) and the United Coalition Against Racism (UCAR) won an agreement from the university administration to increase the number of Black students and faculty on the campus.

The agreement did not come automatically. It took blockading the entrance to the student union, a confrontation at the Regents meeting and an all-night sit-in at the administration building before the University Presi-

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vision of a worker-controlled, militant, democratic union movement out to end Reagan's attacks.

LABOR SOLIDARITY IN AUSTIN

From Clarksville, Penn. came women coal miners speaking about unsafe conditions in the mines; from Kansas City came striking TWA flight attendants; from Pontiac, Mich. came autoworkers fighting plant closings. Meatpackers from nearly every company in the industry drove to Austin from Iowa and Wisconsin, Kansas and Oklahoma, Illinois and Nebraska. In defiance of Austin Mayor John O'Rourke's attempts to block the parade and his comment that "After all, we don't allow dogs to run loose," Hormel strikers led the parade by marching in mock dog houses. One striker's sign read: "I'm P-9, not K-9."

The IBP strike and the Austin rally took place just

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Direct from South Africa
Freedom Journal

UWUSA is a scab front

Johannesburg, South Africa—The United Workers Union of South Africa (UWUSA), has embarked on a unique organizing campaign to boost its membership figures—it has started organizing workers against striking COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Union) members.

Factories where bosses have dismissed progressive union membership have become fertile organizing terrain for this Inkatha-backed union. The union is said to be organized in at least two factories in Natal where COSATU members were dismissed. The Sarmcol factory in Howick is one.

The UWUSA campaign is in keeping with an unwritten commitment to clearing factories of any "radical worker presence." But the strong determination and unity workers have demonstrated to win back their jobs has proved to be a very real threat to the "scab front."

Bosses have been bowing to worker pressure and dismissing UWUSA-backed scabs. This makes UWUSA's long term presence at strike-hit factories very tentative.

It is therefore, not surprising that vigilantes linked to Inkatha recently attacked strikers in Natal when the unity maintained by the Metal and Allied Workers Union became a threat to UWUSA's presence there. Scab workers are not permanent workers. They are mostly used when workers are on strike.

Editor's note: Before the Botha regime gets too happy with its brilliant invention of a scab union, they should keep in mind that the greatest power strike in the U.S.—the Duquesne Power strike of 1948—was begun by workers from inside just such a company union.

* * *

New federation of youth

Johannesburg, South Africa—Youth organizations have not only survived the emergency, but have grown from strength to strength. The proof of this is

(continued on page 6)

Handmaid's Tale: tomorrow's horror today?

by Deborah Morris

The Handmaid's Tale, by Margaret Atwood, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston 1986.

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* takes us to Gilead; it is the United States one generation from now under the domination of a fundamentalist Christian sect. Gilead is race, class and sex segregated. Women's roles have become strictly defined as wife, maid and breeder.

Because the chemical and nuclear contamination of the earth has become so pervasive that women's ability to bear healthy children has become impaired, Gilead has forcibly created a class of women, the Handmaids, whose sole function is to bear children for the ruling class. It is through the Handmaid Offred (Handmaids are identified by the name of the man to whom they are currently assigned, in this case Fred) that we experience Gilead.

This book is not futuristic science fiction, it is real and immediate. The immediacy is addressed in "historical notes" at the end of the book, when Professor James Pieixoto, at a symposium on Gileadean studies held in the year 2195, argues that the seeds for Gilead could already be seen in the U.S. in the 20th century. The racism, sexism and fundamentalist Christian heritage allowed the fundamentalist takeover to proceed nearly unchallenged. Pieixoto also compares Gilead to another monotheocracy of the period, Iran.

SPECTRE OF IRAN

The resemblance to Iran is striking despite the fact that one culture is Islamic and the other Christian. Parvin Bahar (N&L March 27) described the step-by-step erosion of women's rights that represented the first stage of the counter-revolution in Iran. These steps are duplicated in Gilead: women are first denied money, then travel, and then jobs. They must cover themselves with clothing similar to a nun's habit, which also indicates to which class they belong. They are constantly watched by police, the "eyes of God," for signs of blasphemy in speech, dress or attitude. They are denied education and are not allowed to read or write. They are completely separated from men.

In an interview with MS. Magazine (January, 1987) Atwood said that she deliberately created a non-political woman in Offred because she didn't want people to be able to say that she got what she deserved. But she does make Offred the daughter of a women's liberationist of our era, and from that perspective she is able to take a searing look at Gilead and present day society.

A limited critique of the women's liberation movement emerges as well. Offred's mother had argued that the goal of the movement was the creation of a women's culture. But Gilead created a society with strong patriarchal elements, that was hardly the future the movement was seeking. Additionally, Atwood brings in the feminists' involvement in the anti-pornography campaign, and implies that their ritual burning of pornographic magazines dovetailed with the aims of the fundamentalist right.

The covering and isolation of women is dealt with at length. One of the Aunts explains to the Handmaids that there is more than one kind of freedom: There is the "freedom to" and the "freedom from." In the old society women had the "freedom to" wear what they wanted, to uncover their hair, to interact with the men of their own choice. While those choices were now limited, Gilead now offered the women "freedom from" the horrors and attacks that necessitated the Take Back the Night marches.

NO ALTERNATIVE PRESENTED

Neither the present nor the fundamentalist future solves the problems of women's reality. The solution to rape is not the veiling of women. Atwood clearly agrees with that, but the more disturbing thing about this novel is that no real alternative is even hinted at. We do see the small gestures of resistance—the plugged toilets, the whispers, the suicides. There are small snatches of revolt on newscasts, as well as the existence of the Underground Femaleroad which helps women escape to

Tigrean women's struggle

Sister Links, 38 King Street, London WC2E8JT, England

This is a quarterly journal based in England, Sweden and Ghana which assists local women's groups in Africa to fight abuses such as female circumcision, early childhood marriage, and nutritional taboos affecting the health of women.

The June, 1986 issue of *Sister Links* includes an interview with Bessert Asfaw, a woman leader of the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF) which controls 85% of the Tigre region between Ethiopia and Eritrea. They have been fighting the Ethiopian forces for the last 10 years, and struggling against the famine crisis of the region.

Asfaw describes the ways in which the TPLF has changed the situation of Tigrean women. Land has been distributed equally among men and women, the practice of female circumcision has been declared illegal, child marriage was abolished with young people being given freedom to choose partners, and parents being prevented from intimidating them. Wife beating was made punishable by law and both men and women were given the right to divorce.

The TPLF has been fighting nutritional taboos which retard the growth of girls, and is fighting the stigma attached to women's body processes, menstruation and child birth. The TPLF has also managed to challenge the concept of illegitimacy.

—Neda Azad

Canada, and the secret Mayday group.

But how does this society end? We never know. The world of Professor Pieixoto is very smug in its assessment of itself as more intelligent than the society that created Gilead, and yet it itself is not free from demeaning, sexist comments, as when Pieixoto jokes that the Underground Femaleroad was the "Frailroad."

In the MS. interview, it was Atwood's opinion that other countries such as Canada and England could escape a Gileadean future because they have solid religious traditions that are not fundamentalist in nature. These are dangerous illusions to have, and as Atwood herself has so vividly illustrated in *The Handmaid's Tale*, merely escaping a fundamentalist future doesn't begin to solve the problem of women's liberation today.



More than 1,000 Hispanic workers ended their 18-month strike at the Watsonville Frozen Food and Canning Company in California, March 11, by approving a contract to go back to work. The three-year settlement set wages at \$5.85 an hour, guaranteed the rehire of all strikers in order of seniority, accepted the union as the workers' bargaining agent and pledged not to rehire scabs. Teamsters Local 912 members originally walked out when the company cut wages to \$4.75 an hour.

Demonstrations throughout Spain commemorated International Women's Day, March 8. In Barcelona, 3,000 women marched for the right to jobs, free and unrestricted abortion and against rape.

Three hundred TWA flight attendants marked International Women's Day by picketing the sumptuous New York estate of owner and union buster Carl Icahn. It was the first anniversary of their strike. Five thousand of them are still seeking back pay and reinstatement through their union, the Independent Federation of Flight Attendants (IFFA). "TWA has turned the clock back 30 years," said Patricia Stevens, an IFFA spokeswoman, "It's the old sweatshop mentality."

Women students and faculty at the University of North Carolina are openly challenging the statements of some of the school's trustees who expressed concern that the growing number of women students (59.2%) could jeopardize alumni donations, and stated that "40% of the girls who graduate from Chapel Hill five years from now will not even be in the job market." The trustees suggested that the number of male students could be increased by giving more emphasis to personal interviews and SAT scores, and less to high school standing.

Marrist-Humanist Books

Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* 234 pgs.
by Raya Dunayevskaya \$10.95 per copy

Marxism and Freedom ...from 1776 to today
1982 edition. New introduction by author. 381 pgs.
by Raya Dunayevskaya \$10.95 per copy

Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future 294 pgs.
by Raya Dunayevskaya \$15.95

Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal Life in the South and North 295 pgs.
by Charles Denby \$7.50 per copy

Philosophy and Revolution from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao
1982 edition. New introduction by author. 372 pgs.
by Raya Dunayevskaya \$10.95 per copy

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Who's come a long way?

Oklahoma City, OK—After reading the lead article on working women in the March 13 issue, one thing stuck in my mind—that a woman makes 64¢ to every dollar a man makes. And I saw on the ABC Noon News that according to the 1976 census it was 59¢ to every man's dollar. So in 10 years of working, women have gained 5¢! We need to make more women aware of this. The cost of living has gone up more than 5¢ in any one given year, and 5¢ over 10 years is a joke.

We have to stand up and be counted and voice our opinions loud and clear, because Reaganism isn't helping and capitalism has done nothing for any worker. And the "fat cat" keeps getting more while we are at his mercy.

Two women who work at GM Oklahoma City have spoken and made the statement that with contract talks beginning in July or August, concessions are the issue. One woman, whose husband is salaried, stated, "If the union won't recognize a strike, then maybe it's time to change and let the union know who they work for, or get a new union!"

Another woman said about the same thing and the funny thing is that these women don't even know each other. Then how many other workers feel the same but will never say or discuss this with one another? It wouldn't take too long to make the union and company realize workers do have an intelligence and mind, instead of just their hands and body.

We've been made robots so now we have companies building them to replace us. Look what they have done to a human body, which can't be repaired like a robot. So workers as a whole have made fat cats fatter and stronger and we've lost all ground.

Workers need to remember how hard our parents worked and not let unions and corporations take it all back. How many workers even lost their lives in those struggles? The Black movement really came to mind too. In the early '70s the saying was "We've come a long way baby!" In the '80s it seems to be "Take it back, take it all back!" So what will the '90s bring? I'm scared because there's not much left to take.

—Woman worker

'Scholar and the Feminist'

New York, NY—The 14th annual "Scholar and the Feminist" conference at Barnard College drew roughly 500 women March 21 to discuss "Women in the 21st Century: Looking Forward and Looking Back." It might have been more aptly titled, "Will Women's Studies Step out of the Academy to Meet the Challenge from Reaganism?"

During the plenary session, the six speakers at least stuck a foot out into the real world of Reaganism. Sara Evans and Barbara Nelson, for example, discussed women's demands for comparable worth, while Temma Kaplan, Director of the Barnard Women's Center, focused on the problems facing poor women in and out of the labor force, problems we can expect to be exacerbated by the year 2000.

Bell Hooks, who teaches Afro-American Studies and English at Yale, was the one speaker who addressed feminism as a concept of liberation during her talk, "Toward a Revolutionary Feminist Pedagogy." Calling feminist pedagogy a "union of theory and praxis," she shared the experiences of students in her classes, especially the Black students, working through the pain they feel from having grown up in this racist, sexist society.

And yet, can the individual truly be freed within the world of the classroom? What kind of feminist theory will relate the individual's self-development to the actual struggles for self-determination of working women, of Black and Hispanic women, of women in the Third World, all of which were rarely discussed by the keynote speakers?

The need for that type of theory was apparent in other ways at the conference. In a workshop on "The Feminization of Poverty among Women in Puerto Rico," the speakers, Carmen Gautier and Alice Colon, gave statistics about the poverty of Puerto Rican women and men, both in Puerto Rico and in the U.S. They were so devastating, given the reality of automation and runaway shops, that both speakers concluded with the need to transform society.

—Laurie Cashdan

Indian women 'fill jails'

Bihar, India—Bihar is really boiling. About 700,000 government employees have been on strike. The state administration is completely paralyzed. All the schools are closed; none of the courts are functioning. All private buses and truck drivers were on strike for over one week.

The strikers have launched a "Fill Up the Jails" campaign. More than 10,000 have been arrested. The women employees are in the forefront of this agitation. Most of them are second-class employees — midwives and village workers. Many people were also arrested in the major cities for boycotting the Republic Day celebrations and for hoisting black flags.

All this shows that people in India are capable of fighting. Many times the Indian working class is more militant than that of Europe, since during strikes there is nothing like support from trade unions, and still strikes continue for months. However, one should note that Hindu philosophy has infused in many a spirit of tolerance, and that Gandhian politics encourages activities led by "Messiahs."

—Correspondent

Meat packers fight automation, firings

Hormel, Nebraska

Fremont, Neb.—Hormel is trying to fire a worker they haven't even allowed in the plant for over a year. Last month the personnel manager of the Hormel plant in Fremont sent a letter to a worker who had supported the P-9 strikers, accusing him of encouraging and supporting the boycott of Hormel products, even though Local 22 of the United Food and Commercial Workers was not involved in any labor dispute. The letter said his pick-up truck had been seen with a "Boycott Hormel" sticker on it and ordered him to remove it within a week or be terminated from the preferred recall list.

I understand this worker wrote back that he was not encouraging the boycott, but that he was not the sole owner of the pick-up truck; he did not put the sticker on it, and so did not have the authority to remove it.

This worker is the person with the most seniority on the recall list now—the list of workers who were permanently replaced when we refused to cross the P-9 picket line in February, 1986. But since that time, over 80 people have left the employ of Hormel at Fremont, yet not one person has been rehired. So the fact that he is first on the list hasn't mattered.

This same worker had been fired in December, 1985 for wearing a "P-9 Proud" sticker on his helmet. His case went to arbitration, but with no support from the leadership of Local 22. Hormel called him back while P-9ers were picketing the plant, trying to get him to cross the picket line. But he was

permanently replaced in February, 1986 when he wouldn't cross it.

The whole situation is a violation of freedom of speech in this country. Here they are, not paying him anything to feed his family, and yet they order him to take a bumper sticker off his truck. Will the next thing be that they "order us" to buy and eat Hormel products? We have to fight for our rights or we won't have any left.

—Local 22 member

Oscar Mayer, Chicago

Chicago, Ill.—At Oscar Mayer there is so much confusion about seniority. They are laying off senior employees who have nowhere to work in the plant. It is getting worse and worse.

One line, variety, is off for two weeks with the seniority workers having nowhere to go. Pork sausage has been taken out of the plant, which means more workers off. The 150 line will be going down in several months to put in a new packer and that will mean more seniority lay-offs.

The rules read that you have to bump the most junior worker in the entire plant. These workers often have the hardest jobs in the plant. So it means a woman with 15 or 20 years in the plant would have to take that job and try and do it. Many feel they have no choice but to end on lay-off.

The company is not thinking of people. Instead they are only thinking of more and more machines. But what I want to know is who will buy their product? Injuries are up. When the machines go as fast as they do, the people can't keep up with it. It is coming to a point where people are saying they aren't going to take it any more.

After the lock-out at the plant I thought it would get better. It could get better if the union did something. But the leadership is pacifist. The people are in the middle. The company is on one side, the union leaders on the other. Both of them are squeezing us dry.

—Chicago Oscar Mayer worker

Stop GM plant closings!

Detroit, Mich.—Three thousand auto workers came from all over Michigan, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana to a rally against plant closings. It was held on March 21 in the parking lot of Local 174 in Detroit. The rally was organized mainly on the local level, and UAW (United Auto Workers) International reps were noticeably absent. Most workers were saying how fed up they



are with the way they have been forced to reopen their local contracts and make concessions, only to be told later down the road that they will lose their jobs after all.

One worker from Clark Street Cadillac (scheduled to close) carried a sign that said "GM promises are like Reagan's memory—I forget." A Black worker with 22 years at Detroit Fisher Guide (scheduled to close) said all the arguments about competition that the UAW and GM use to get concessions are nonsense, and that he and others are ready to strike for a day, a week, a year—whatever it takes.

Just the night before the rally, workers at GM Inland in Livonia (Local 174) voted down a local contract which had a provision that management could assign more than one job to a worker. This would have meant a cut of some 1,200 workers, but GM and UAW had told the workers to take it. GM had threatened to shut down the plant if it didn't get the contract.

The March 21 rally is the biggest so far, but it is not the first or the last. On the anniversary of the February 1937 UAW Sit-down strike victory, 2,000 auto workers rallied at the historic Fisher Body No. 1 plant in Flint (scheduled to close). In Detroit, around 500 GM workers from Michigan plants demonstrated in front of UAW Solidarity House on March 18. Also in Detroit, Local 15 at GM Fleetwood (scheduled to close) has held community meetings on the plant closings in Southwest Detroit.

There is more activity to come. Workers plan a march on GM world headquarters here in Detroit, and another rally next month in Flint. And they plan to demonstrate against plant closings when the UAW opens bargaining sessions in Chicago on April 6.

—Mary Holmes

Longshore walkout

San Francisco, Cal.—Over 1,500 members of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) walked off their jobs Friday, March 20, in an action that shut down every port in the Bay Area for almost six hours. The walkout was triggered when non-ILWU crane operators were hired at Redwood City to unload three barges of the Hawaiian Marine Lines, a subsidiary of Crowley Maritime Corp.

These barges had been tied up in the Oakland port since March 12. ILWU members there had refused to unload them because deckhands, who belong to the Inland Boatman's Union, have been on strike against Crowley since Feb. 6. Workers learned that the barges were being moved to Redwood City during the night, and pickets began massing at 6:30 a.m. At 11:30 a.m., longshore workers at the ports of San Francisco, Oakland, Alameda, Richmond, and Benicia walked off their jobs. By 2:30 p.m. the Redwood City port also closed, with the barges only partially unloaded.

It was the first time since the famous San Francisco General Strike of 1934 that a maritime terminal in the area had attempted to employ non-ILWU-affiliated workers. The strikers' action was taken in anticipation of the June 30 expiration of the West Coast ILWU agreement with the Pacific Maritime Assn. Longshore unions elsewhere have agreed to wage concessions and are facing increased use of non-union labor.

But longshore workers are determined not to let that happen here, and the March 20th action was viewed as a critical show of strength. One striking deckhand said, "I really believe this is it. This is going to make or break everyone." Another picketer said, "This is a big plus for labor. We need something like this here in the Bay Area. It's time we stood up and protected our jobs."

On March 21, a San Mateo County judge issued a temporary restraining order limiting the number of pickets at Redwood City. And Hawaiian Marine has filed charges against the ILWU with the National Labor Relations Board. But as we go to press, the picket line at the Redwood City port is still walking strong.

—Strike supporter

Workshop Talks

(continued from page 1)

One, the coal miners' general strike of 1949-50, the first strike against automation. There, miners found the new automated continuous miner such a "man-killer" they used their seniority to stay off the machine. Automation, far from making work safer by removing the human being from a dangerous situation, had made it more dangerous. They asked, "What kind of labor should people do?"

ASBESTOS DISEASE COVER-UP

Two, I was reading about how Mansville, the asbestos company, got its bankruptcy approved in December. The judge let Mansville separate into a profit-making producer on the one hand, and a trust to pay out injury claims from disabled workers on the other. What is shocking to me is the little history of asbestos that came out.

As far back as 1899, there was evidence that asbestos caused asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma. By 1918, insurance companies like Prudential were refusing to insure asbestos workers. In 1933, Mansville settled the first injury suit from disabled workers in exchange for a promise from their lawyer never again to bring such a case. All along, the company even kept x-ray evidence of disease from workers as long as they were not disabled, so they'd keep working. Now, doctors estimate there will be between two and three million cases of asbestos disease over the next 25 years.

What a monstrous separation between the laborer's very life and well-being, and the labor power he or she expends! Would that total separation be possible were it not for the deep contradiction right within the method of production, within labor itself, "when the division of labor, characteristic of all class societies, has reached the monstrous proportions where all science, all intellect, all skill goes into the machine, while the labor of man becomes a simple monotonous grind, ... (in) a process that has transformed the machine into an accumulated dead weight resting upon him, the living worker." (*Marxism and Freedom*, by Raya Dunayevskaya)

Can there be any real solution to "health and safety" until laborers take over and control production for themselves? Wouldn't we then return to human labor as the creative self-activity of free men and women, an activity so totally different from today's alien and hazardous forced labor that "health and safety" could not be separate from work itself?

Coming off the press

THE CORRESPONDENT

A newspaper written by rank-and-file packinghouse workers, for rank-and file packinghouse workers. For militant, democratic unionism in the meatpacking industry. Send us your articles on what is happening in your plant and your union. Send us your financial help to get us started. We need your support. Write to:

THE CORRESPONDENT, PO Box 2,
Cherokee, IA 51012

Oscar Mayer, L.A.

Los Angeles, Cal.—We're at work now under our new contract at Oscar Mayer. Workers are upset because of what happened with the \$1,000 bonus in our new contract. We received our bonus check and instead of getting \$1,000, we received \$686.50. We were taxed at a rate of 31%. Someone started a petition demanding an explanation of the tax rate on our bonus. The only response we got from the company and the union was that this was not illegal. But no one explained this to us when we ratified the contract.

People in the plant are talking about the strike of the Hormel P-9 workers in Minnesota. We know there was a rally being held there but heard nothing about how it went. This is what the workers here would like to find out.

—Oscar Mayer worker

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Who We Are and What We Stand For

News & Letters was founded in 1955, the year of the Detroit wildcats against Automation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott against segregation—activities which signalled a new movement from practice which was itself a form of theory.

News & Letters was created so that the voices of revolt from below could be heard unseparated from the articulation of a philosophy of liberation. A Black production worker, Charles Denby, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, became editor of the paper. Raya Dunayevskaya, the Chairwoman of the National Editorial Board and National Chairwoman of the Committees, is the author of *Marxism and Freedom, Philosophy and Revolution* and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, which spell out the philosophic ground of Marx's Humanism internationally, as *American Civilization on Trial* concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way road between the U.S. and Africa. These works challenge post-Marx Marxists to return to Marx's Marxism.

News and Letters Committees, an organization of

Marxist-Humanists, stands for the abolition of capitalism, whether in its private property form as in the U.S., or its state property form as in Russia or China. We stand for the development of new human relations, what Marx first called a new Humanism.

We organized ourselves into a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party "to lead." The world development of a half-century of Marxist-Humanism is recorded in the documents on microfilm and open to all under the title, *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, on deposit at the Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Detroit, Michigan.

In opposing this capitalistic, racist, sexist, exploitative society, we participate in all class and freedom struggles, nationally and internationally. As our Constitution states: "It is our aim...to promote the firmest unity among workers, Blacks and other minorities, women; youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor." We do not separate the mass activities from the activity of thinking.

Editorial

International economic crisis: market-monetary or production?

The weakness of the U.S. economy was driven home on March 30, when the continuing decline in the value of the dollar sent the stock market to its third-largest one-day decline in history, at the same time as the price of U.S. treasury bonds dropped at record rates.

The stunning decline in the stock and bond markets followed the decision of the Reagan Administration to impose protectionist trade sanctions against Japan for refusing to open its economy to U.S. semi-conductor manufacturers. But despite the effort to blame the economic crisis on intra-capitalist rivalry with Japan or on machinations in the money markets, the events of the past week have manifested a far deeper crisis—the crisis in production.

All that the leaders of the Western capitalist nations have come up with in face of the continuing crisis, however, was a meeting in Paris Feb. 22, which sought to establish a basis for the regulation of the West's currencies. The countries in attendance—the U.S., Japan, West Germany, Britain, France, Canada and Italy—projected the illusion that all would cooperate in "stabilizing" their respective currencies.

The main player in this stage-setting was the American dollar. At issue was the precipitous drop in the value of the dollar in relation to both the yen and mark.

HIGHEST DEFICIT IN HISTORY

This drop didn't just "happen," of course. The primary influence was the Reagan administration's policy of trying to cut the U.S. trade deficit by reducing the value of the dollar, thereby lowering the price of U.S. products for other countries. However, the U.S. trade deficit has continued to increase, so that it is now the highest in U.S. history.

Currencies and deficits are obviously a product of national and international economic relationships, and while economists spin their theories of the various factors effecting the economic developments, the critical ingredient—the essential nature of value—is almost never identified.

The measure of value, ever since the emergence of industrial capitalism some 200 years ago, has been labor-power as a commodity. The cost of labor power as a

commodity—the cost of the living worker, from whom both value and surplus value are derived—is what capitalists of whatever nation are always striving to reduce to the minimum. Rather than stock market speculation and money market manipulation, it is the productive power of an economy—both as to the amount of dead labor (machines), and of living labor (labor power as a commodity)—that, in the end, is the true measure of a country's economy, including its currency.

When President Ronald Reagan declared war against U.S. workers by breaking the air traffic controllers union (PATCO) in 1981, he wasn't just telling American capitalists that they had his administration on their side. He was inviting investments internationally by sending a signal to foreign finance capital that the cost of U.S. labor would be declining because he was launching an assault against the living standards of U.S. workers.

JAPAN'S INVESTMENT

Japan in particular has read the message and has stepped up its financial capital forays in America. Holders of \$64 billion in U.S. debt securities, Japanese firms are expected to buy up three times the \$5.6 billion in U.S. stocks and bonds they purchased last year.

But now, so massive and crucial to the economy has the influx of foreign investment become, that many economists believe any further decline in the value of the dollar would cause a reduction in profits to the point where foreign investment would dry up and lead the economy into a recession. On the other hand, a rise in the value of the dollar would further exacerbate the unfavorable U.S. trade balance. No pathway out of this economic crisis lies ahead.

The real truth of all the "free market" economies is that they are forever holding these international economic conferences to try to plan, plan, plan. While the national politicians attack the notion of economic planning as "socialistic," their conferences are nothing less than an effort to have their own state-capitalist economic planning, even if not yet on the scale of a Russia.

In truth, some 120 years ago Karl Marx in *Capital* showed that the true opposites were not

"free market" versus "Plan," but the "despotic plan of Capital" versus the "freely associated plan" of the workers. It is that which haunts all capitalist economies—whether West or East.

These capitalists, private and state, can never succeed in overcoming the crisis because the laws of capitalist economic development have their own logic that emerges from the relationship of labor and capital at the point of production. Capital reproduces itself by extracting the maximum labor power from the worker while paying the minimum. The worker, to escape this exploitation and retain a human character, is necessarily driven to revolt against the capitalist system and the contradictions it generates.

Those are the contradictions that have created the present chronic international economic crises, and the solution to those contradictions lies precisely in the hands of the workers and other revolutionary forces in society who are forced into daily confrontations with the increasing dehumanization.

News & Letters

Vol. 32 No. 6

April 10, 1987

(closing news date April 1)

News & Letters (ISSN 0028-8969) is published 21 times a year, biweekly, except monthly in August, September, December, for \$5.00 a year (bulk order of five or more — 15¢) by *News & Letters*, 59 East Van Buren, Rm. 707, Chicago, IL 60605. Telephone (312) 663-0839. Second Class Postage paid at Chicago, Illinois. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *News & Letters*, 59 East Van Buren, Rm. 707, Chicago, IL 60605.

Raya Dunayevskaya, Chairwoman,
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Charles Denby Editor (1955-1983)
Felix Martin Labor Editor
Eugene Walker Managing Editor



News & Letters
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BLACK WORLD: TOWARD UNIVERSAL FREEDOM FIGHT

"South Africa: the ever-deafening wall of silence" (N&L, Mar. 13) was one of the best editorials you ever printed. It makes me sick to see the way the press is gagged by Botha. But it makes me furious to see the way the daily press here—thousands of miles from Botha's censorship, gags itself. It's like South Africa is out of sight, so it's out of mind. Yet the jailings and murders of youth, women, workers go on. The stories in N&L from South Africa are tremendous. Keep them coming.

Long-time reader
Massachusetts

Dialogue is important; but is not properly appreciated even among revolutionary activists, I think. Last week I was involved in two conversations about solidarity with South Africa. One activist said that we in the U.S. should recognize that the African National Congress (ANC) is the legitimate liberation organization there, and give only their representatives a platform in the U.S. Another—a student at the U. of Chicago—felt that we should offer a platform to other tendencies in the South African revolution because the differences between all the groups are "tactical" ones.

I can't agree with either position. Just read "A Soweto youth's journey to revolution" (N&L March 27). Here is an AZAPO supporter, with deeply rooted ideas about the movement and about what vision of a new South Africa he has. Maybe we wouldn't agree with all of it. But as American youth, it behooves us to listen to all the voices, visions, debates coming out of the revolutionary ferment of today's South Africa. The differences aren't tactical, and maybe they aren't insurmountable. But "unity" for the sake of unity is no act of solidarity. Listening, thinking, speaking, having a dialogue at the same time as we march and boycott—that is solidarity to me.

Solidarity activist
Chicago

I heard a South African revolutionary on the radio last week. At the end of his talk, an indignant white South African woman called in. She insisted that his description of treatment by whites of Black domestic workers was exaggerated. SHE was always kind to her maid; SHE paid her a better than average sal-

ary; SHE gave nice used toys to the maid's children.

She reminded me of a classmate I had in college. He was from the royal family of an Arab "oil country." He once admitted to me that women in his country have very few rights or privileges. "But," he said proudly, "we give them everything they could ever want or need. We treat them like precious jewels." I told him I would rather be free than depend on the wealth of someone who controls my life.

Feminist
Los Angeles

Like John Alan (N&L, Mar. 13), I loved Richard Wright's book *Native Son*. I think Black youth today should read it—it's about being Black and young and oppressed, and living in fear. It's an indictment of white society.

I didn't completely agree with Alan's conclusion that commentators are wrong if they compare today's unemployed Black youth with Bigger Thomas, whose revolt didn't go further than a solitary nihilistic act of rebellion. It's true that Black youth aren't the same today as in the 1930s—but breaking away from the chains of oppression often starts with an individual revolt, and from that there is the possibility of a self-movement towards a universal movement for freedom.

Young Black worker
Los Angeles



UFW
NEEDS
SUPPORT

Last month a local California judge ruled that the United Farm Workers Union must pay \$1.6 million in damages to one of the biggest agribusinesses. The case came from a strike 8 years ago. Such is the nature of justice here that this same judge had earlier dismissed charges against grower foremen who had shot and killed one of our strikers. And this same judge's wife had volunteered as a strike-breaker. (For more on this story, see Felix Martin's article in N&L, Mar. 13, 1987.)

Naturally we are going to appeal. But meanwhile, we are faced with one of the most serious financial crises in our

union's 25-year history. We have to come up with 10% of that judgement just to make our appeal, and the appeals process is very expensive.

On Saturday, May 23, we plan a big celebration in Delano for our 25th anniversary. Your help now will enable us to reach that date with strength and independence... Send donations to:

United Farm Workers
PO Box 62, La Paz
Keene, CA 93531

TODAY'S LABOR BATTLES

I have been a reader of N&L for about 17 years. I have always respected your balanced Marxist point of view, and your incisive analyses brought confusing issues into proper socialist perspective. I am a ship scaler under the auspices of Ship Scalers and Painters Local 2, ILWU. Our duties include cleaning or "bringing up to scale" ships that harbor in San Francisco.

There is a cry for justice in this letter. I was fired by a "temporary walking boss" and never sought any litigation in my favor. Basically a dispensable character I was, and did make no protest, although I bad-mouthed the boss, and possibly threatened him verbally. I was unjustly accused of "refusing to go back to work," "causing a work stoppage," and other minor infractions. I could have won litigation easily, since I was never brought up on charges before. Now I face the loss of income from ship cleaning, or scaling, as it's formerly called. Yours for "Justice for Brother Beck."

Comrade Fred Beck
San Francisco, Calif.

When we had a meeting with the UFCW International, after 9 months out on strike, we told them: "you never even reported our strike and shut-down in your paper. Why do you ignore us? Only *News & Letters* has supported us." We told them we are another Hormel in New York City.

Hebrew National striker
New York City

The March 14 parade and rally in Austin was a great experience. Police Chief Hoffman liked the march so much he videotaped it. No doubt what he has in mind is more Gestapo-type tactics against those he can identify and iso-

Reader's

late. Hormel isn't convincing anyone that this strike is over.

Hormel management has developed a serious fissure. The sales manager is in hot water due to the national boycott of Hormel products. The door-to-door sales campaign seems to have failed. They are planning "Hormel days" in Austin to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Spam. We see this as a major opportunity to show up wearing "Cram Your Spam" T-shirts.

BOYCOTT ALL HORMEL PRODUCTS!

Strike supporter
Minneapolis, Minn.

WHY N&L? WHY NOW?

The "Reader's View" last issue from the "Mine Women's Club" in Zimbabwe meant a lot to me. It shows that what is great about N&L is the way it is a forum for myriad voices; it is concrete, and that is what was essential for Marx. The philosophic articles interest me, but they are difficult. I'm slowly getting used to them though. I especially like that I don't have to subscribe to a special "theoretical journal" to read them, as is the case with so many other Left papers.

New reader
Chicago

N&L gives me knowledge about what other people in different localities think. We never hear this in the capitalist press.

Union activist
Baraboo, Wisc.

The necessity for brevity in a small paper like N&L, especially in its new format, is clear. I'll try to adhere to it in my own contributions in the future. But I hope the rule will apply to all levels of writers, not only for equality between the top theoreticians and the rank-and-file, but to turn N&L from a high-ranking theoretical journal (which I'm afraid isn't always comprehensible to many of your readers) to a more popular propaganda paper of Marxist-Humanism. Mazel Tov in your new venture!

Supporter
Israel

Two-of-a-kind: Reagan and Gorbachev and their bi-polar world

Theory/Practice

by Raya Dunayevskaya
Chairwoman, National Editorial Board

Part II

The Iran-contra scandal, far from stopping what has been going on from the beginning of Reagan's imperial presidency—the retrogression at home and the turning back of the clock in international relations, especially with Latin America—has now reached the stage where it is competing with the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) itself. What looked, just a week or so back, like the possibility of an arms control agreement with the other nuclear Behemoth, Russia, has now hit a snag.

THE CONTINUING ACTS AGAINST NICARAGUA

Instead, what is occupying the headlines are the preparations for military maneuvers, which the Reagan Administration is calling showing a "continuing presence" in Honduras and the Caribbean, but which Daniel Ortega considers an open threat of invasion of Nicaragua.

This May we will see the mightiest ever military practice against Nicaragua in maneuvers in Honduras and around the Caribbean, which the U.S. has been carrying on for four years now.

Operation "Solid Shield" will be conducted in Honduras, the Caribbean, the island of Vieques off the eastern point of Puerto Rico, as well as at the Marine base at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. The only reason some maneuvers will be held as far away as North Carolina is that the whole of Honduras has limited airfields, ports and roads.

Here is Reagan's hare-brained illusion that with U.S. money, military training, oratory and some old Somoza fascist National Guards well-practiced in atrocities, he can actually overthrow the legitimate government that had arisen from a fight of so many years against both the Somoza dictatorship and U.S. imperialism's stranglehold.

The U.S. armed forces' maneuvers in May will total 50,000 soldiers, sailors and marines, the largest ever since such maneuvers began in 1983. At Camp Lejeune two battalions of 1,500 paratroopers will team up with

5,000 marines for a combined "mock assault," while at sea Navy warships centered around aircraft carriers will be joined by cutters from the Coast Guard that are "normally" used to search for drug runners (not that the contras aren't engaged in drug running too). The military air command of the Air Force will be responsible for transporting the soldiers and equipment.

I have not detailed all that the military officers have revealed, but it is certainly sufficient to establish that this is a great deal more than just a "mock maneuver." **It is the practice for an invasion.**

Don't forget that 1983 was the year of the invasion of Grenada. That kind of "practice" was at that time also aimed at Nicaragua, though tiny Grenada was a much easier target for achieving "victory."

Indeed, that artificer, Ronald Reagan, hasn't slept a night ever since the Nicaraguan Revolution in 1979 succeeded in overthrowing the favorite of American imperialism, Somoza's neo-fascist regime.

Reagan's excuse for his first acts against Nicaragua was the baseless charge that Nicaragua was spreading revolution to El Salvador, as if El Salvador didn't have its own very urgent reasons for fighting that still-continuing militaristic "los catorce" regime. Not only Central America, but all of Latin America has always known that it must conduct its revolutionary struggles under the whip of counter-revolution. This involved fighting its own ruling class as well as U.S. imperialism, whose puppets these rulers were.

It is true that Marxism in Latin America has long been, and will continue to be, a very pivotal element in its existence. But it wasn't ever as a surrogate of Russia.

Marxism in Latin America has always been indignant, liberationist, original in the sense of always combining peasant and worker. Something totally new characterized the post-World War II world. Movements from practice burst forth as revolutions in technologically backward countries, East, South, Middle East, Latin America. Something new was born—a Third World as well as a new stage of production in the technologically developed West, automation. The first new revolution was the 1952 Bolivian Revolution, which preceded the

first-ever revolution against Communist totalitarianism in East Germany in 1953. But the next year, 1954, American imperialism showed its bloody hand in overthrowing the mild populist regime of Arbenz in Guatemala.

THE END OF THE 1950s AND THE BIRTH OF A NEW WORLD

By 1959 we had the true dividing line for all of Latin America—the revolution in Cuba against both Batista and U.S. imperialism. Russia had still been flirting with Batista when Castro, with no help from Russia, came to power. And Castro, like the East Europeans, at first called his philosophy "humanism." Castro said in 1959, "Standing between the two political-economic ideologies or positions being debated in the world, we are holding our own positions. We have named it Humanism...this is a Humanist revolution because it does not deprive man of his essence, but holds him as its basic aim. Capitalism sacrifices man; the Communist state, by its totalitarian concept, sacrifices the rights of man....This revolution is not red, but olive-green."

The Idea of freedom nevertheless failed to develop theoretically. Instead, Che Guevara tried substitutionalism: "This is a unique Revolution, which some people maintain contradicts one of the most orthodox premises of the revolutionary movement expressed by Lenin: 'Without a revolutionary theory there is no revolutionary movement'....Even if the theory is not known, the revolution can succeed if historic reality is interpreted correctly." But what is "correct interpretation" if it isn't Marx's philosophy of revolution?

Without philosophy as action, dialectics of thought as well as of act, we have seen the transformation into opposite not only in Russia, but aborted, unfinished revolutions worldwide, be it Latin America or China, the Middle East or Africa. New revolutions are constantly emerging, nevertheless, as witness South Africa.

In the specificity of Central America, it was in the late 1970s that two absolute opposites emerged—on one side, the American Right never forgot the failure in Vietnam, not only because the Vietnamese won,

(continued on page 6)

Views

WOMEN'S ACTIONS, IDEAS

We celebrated the 8th of March here. I managed to gather about 25 women from the slums around, and went with them to a public meeting. It was the first time they attended a meeting of that type and they were happy with it. The issue taken up was housing, as most of these people are continuously being evicted from their places and sent a few kilometers away in an attempt to "beautify" the city. We demanded permanent house sites and sent a memorandum to Rajiv (Gandhi, the President of India).

Feminist activist
Bombay, India

I am grateful to have gotten the chance to read *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution* as part of my studies. Raya opened up a new and eye-opening concept of Marxism for me, and that is the concept of Marxist-Humanism. As a young feminist, it is inspiring to read about women "not only as force but as Reason," women who change society with their ideas and are active in, and lead, revolution.

Laura B.
De Kalb, Ill.

The Lead article, "Working Women Fight Reaganism" by Olga Domanski (N&L Mar. 13) shows that working women are a part of the Women's Liberation Movement today. The bourgeois press likes to think that women working is a new phenomenon (for second incomes). The fact is that many women have always had to work to survive and feed their children, mostly in low-paying jobs without unions.

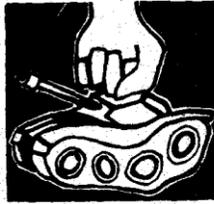
Women workers in clerical and service jobs (like those mentioned in the article at AT&T and in nursing homes) also fight for new human relationships at work. Domanski's article makes it clear that as women fight against Reaganism, they are fighting against capitalism, and so the Women's Liberation Movement today, as Adrienne Rich says, can benefit from an understanding of Marx.

Young working-class woman
Southern California

The San Francisco Chronicle carried a review of *Rosa Luxemburg: A Life*, by Elzbieta Ettinger, calling this new work "the latest sign of and increasing revival of interest" in Rosa Luxemburg. The review by Oscar Eustis made an interesting criticism. He claims the neglect of Luxemburg's "theoretical work is almost total" adding that "the slighting of her intellectual work smacks of sexism: Would any biographer of a male theoretician focus so exclusively on his private life?"

To my mind he raised another question. Why have so many reviewers in big papers ignored *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* by Raya Dunayevskaya? This work gives a thorough presentation of Luxemburg's theoretical views in relation to revolution, to Marx, and in light of today's Women's Liberation Movement which refused to separate the personal and the political.

Reader-activist
Oakland, Cal.



ANTI-WAR THOUGHTS

Having seen the movie "Platoon" three times, I was glad to read Sheila I. Fuller's review (N&L Jan. 30), particularly the quotes from youth who related Vietnam to Central America today. But I think one crucial element missing from "Platoon" was the political discussions amongst soldiers. A lot of us who were drafted were just steps away from the anti-Vietnam War movement, and political discussions were commonplace. It was during these discussions that I learned that the war in Vietnam was because of big business interests there, and we were drafted as their cannon fodder.

Because of this, I had a reservation about Fuller's quoting the lead character, Taylor, at the end of the movie: "The enemy was not outside. The enemy was within ourselves..." This statement can mean a number of things. At any rate it is abstract and puts too much blame on the individual. Indeed, the enemy is outside ourselves, and this is what Fuller shows in the rest of her article.

Vietnam-era veteran
Los Angeles

The annual Mobilization for Peace & Justice is being held on Saturday, April 25th, in San Francisco. It will assemble at 11 a.m., at the foot of Market Street, and march to the rally at Civic Center, in solidarity with its sister mobilization taking place in Washington D.C. the same date.

The Mobilization is calling for: "No U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean"; "End U.S. Support For South African Apartheid"; "Jobs & Justice, Not War"; "Freeze & Reverse the Nuclear Arms Race." Look for the News & Letters table at the rally, with our comprehensive display of Marxist-Humanist literature.

News and Letters Committee member
Berkeley, Calif.

'UNDERGROUND EXISTENCE'

At a feminist conference at Barnard College, we got a sense of Marxist-Humanism's "underground existence." Two Puerto Rican women rushed up to our literature table. They recognized N&L because a subscriber to N&L in Puerto Rico, who is associated with the journal

'TWO OF A KIND: REAGAN AND GORBACHEV'

"Two of a Kind: Reagan and Gorbachev and their bi-polar world" (N&L, Mar. 27) made fascinating reading. The machinations of Reagan and Gorbachev are so complicated—at least they seem complicated. I do think that Dunayevskaya is right that Gorbachev, for his own reasons, is now willing to help save Reagan's Presidency, with his new offers on arms control. Since we have all marched for disarmament, it is strange to be saying that "arms control" can be a narrow issue, or serve a narrow purpose. But that is exactly what is happening here, when the Geneva talks become the smokescreen behind which all else is hidden.

Enlightened
Chicago

I wish to take issue with Raya Dunayevskaya's essay "Two of a Kind: Reagan and Gorbachev and their Bi-polar World." Gorbachev did not "save" Reagan—he made him an offer he couldn't refuse. Because Reagan was at the lowest point of his presidency, having been criticized soundly by the Tower Commission, Gorbachev used that moment to further the cause of world survival. News & Letters has become

Sin Nombre, passes the paper on to an 83-year-old woman political scientist, who in turn shows it to one of the Puerto Rican activists who came up to the table. The two women turned out to be from the Univ. of Puerto Rico, where they put out a journal and are interested in reviewing *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution*.

Laurie Cashdan
Manhattan, NY

HOLY WARS

Every night the news gives more details about the "Holy Wars" of the right-wing, fundamentalist preachers. Bakker vs. Swaggert, Oral Roberts vs. Jerry Falwell. Frankly, I think it's great. These are the hypocrites who denounced women's liberation as "immorality." Now look at them, with sex and greed exposed as the driving forces of their lives and thinking. This is the "ideology" that justified Ronald Reagan for the last 6 years. It crumbles from its own hollowness.

Working woman
Illinois

too much doomsday mongers—seeing extreme crisis and lack of hope in every aspect of the general situation. We cannot deny the possibility that for the second time in the 20th century, a major revolution in humanism is happening in Russia—and that this new revolution may be more important to the future of the world than the first one was.

Subscriber
Yardley, Pa.

The title of Raya's "Theory/Practice" column was very helpful. We grow so accustomed to the daily press comparing the US and Russia that we think of the "bi-polar world" as if it were the nature of this planet. Raya's title reminds us that the "bi-polar" character emanates from the leaders of the two superpowers, not from the common people around the world. For us, the world isn't "bi-polar," it's a world with many pathways for mutual support and solidarity, between South Africa, and America, between Polish miners and British miners, etc. After all, isn't that the "real world," the world to come?

Student
New York

Direct from South Africa

(continued from page 1)

the imminent launch of a super-federation of hundreds of Youth organizations, the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO).

Despite the state of emergency the organization of township Youth continues. SAYCO will be the largest grouping of Youth since the Youth League of the banned African National Congress.



Youth at the launching of COSATU

The idea of a federation of progressive Youth organizations in "coloured," African and Indian communities was first put forward by the banned Congress of South African Students (COSAS) at its 1982 conference in Cape Town.

Following the mushrooming of youth movements in the early 1980s, the National Youth Organization (NYO) was set up to coordinate progressive Youth organizations countrywide. A series of national conferences to plan joint strategy was staged. The first was held on Jan. 14, 1984 in Johannesburg, with subsequent meetings taking place in Durban and Cape Town in 1985 and 1986 respectively.

The federation was to have nine regions—Northern Transvaal, Southern Transvaal, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Western Cape, South-Eastern Cape, Border, Natal and Orange Free State.

According to the Southern Transvaal Youth Congress (STYCO), it would campaign to isolate vigilantes and other unprincipled political groups, by forging unity among all progressive organizations; for people's education; for the neighboring states to stop harassing exiles and handing them over to the South African government. STYCO would also add "flesh and blood" to campaigns of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

* * *

Health campaign launched

Johannesburg, S. Africa—The Health Workers Association (HWA) launched its "Health Charter Campaign" and affiliated with the United Democratic Front at the end of a two-day annual congress at the Funda Centre in Diepkloof, Soweto, on March 1, 1987.

The HWA has grown since its inception in 1979 with the primary objective of helping families rendered homeless in Soweto. It has a membership of more than 25,000 health workers in the Transvaal and sympathizers in other provinces. Its major test was the Baragwanath Hospital strike in 1985.

Women's reality in Haiti

Port-au-Prince, Haiti—International Women's Day is celebrated on March 8. In Haiti, out of a population of six million, there are a bit more than three million women. Women are an important part of the working people of Haiti. However, when we analyze Haitian reality, we must declare that the woman is dehumanized, humiliated, abandoned. Haitian musicians and singers try to dehumanize women by giving them negative descriptions such as: "Woman is the infidel," or "Woman is a necessary evil."

Haitian women are in several social categories: students, working women, peasant women, unemployed and poor women.

1) **The woman student:** This category includes all the women who attend schools (classical and professional) or the universities.

2) **The working woman:** This category is the most exploited in Haiti. Working nine hours a day from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Haitian working woman earns \$3 per day. In recent years Haiti has become one of the biggest exporters of baseballs. Women are exploited by the capitalist system, and are living in near slavery...they cannot buy medicines against tuberculosis which infects nearly 60% of women.

We should also speak of the bad working conditions of women. In the factories of Haiti, during the lunch break, the women workers have neither a cafeteria nor restaurants. They have to run out into the streets to find a plate of nourishment, often prepared indecently in deplorable hygienic conditions.

3) **The woman peasant:** The women in this category live generally in the countryside. They devote themselves to cultivating the earth. They are on their own, because they have no agricultural equipment.

4) **The poor and unemployed woman:** In this category one finds prostitutes, drug addicts...They are exploited as well.

In sum, we must underline that the problems of the Haitian woman are complex. In the middle of the 20th century it would be desirable that all leaders of the countries on earth give attention to the problems which women suffer from in order to resolve them. Because no matter what country we name, the woman is a social force.

—Renan Hedouville, Correspondent

Fight over Indian land

by Shainape Schapwe

Detroit, Mich.—I read an article in the New York Times (March 10) that both angered and excited me. The article reported that Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey is working to create legislation to be passed by Congress, which would return over a million acres of the Black Hills of South Dakota to the seven tribes of the Sioux Indians to whom it originally belonged.

Long ago, in 1868, Indian retention of this land had been agreed to by the federal government in the Treaty of Fort Laramie. But later, when gold was discovered in 1876, the government forced the Sioux to give up the land by threatening them with starvation, and following through with a siege for over a year.

The article told how Bill Bradley came to Pine Ridge when he was a basketball player in the 1970s. He saw how we wanted our land, and promised then that he would get it back for us if he could. Like the fairy tale that the rest of this story is, he waved his legislation wand and, like magic, we are to have our land back.

Yet, the *New York Times* and Senator Bill Bradley don't talk about the years of litigation and money spent by Indians of the area to get the land back. They don't talk about the threats made by the government officials against us—that we had better accept money or else forget about anything else to make up for the loss of this land. They don't talk about how the government was still taking our land in the 1970s. I wrote about this (*News & Letters*, October 1975) when the people of Pine Ridge were being harrassed and intimidated following the shooting of two FBI agents:

"Since 1868 the Federal Government has taken millions of acres from the people without their consent. On June 26, Dick Wilson, Tribal Council President, ceded one-eighth the Pine Ridge Reservation to the Federal Government, including one-half of the White Clay district where the shoot-out with the FBI occurred on the same day. I don't see how that could have been a coincidence."

Yes, Bill Bradley needs to be thanked for his help. But it's not just a question of passing a law. The government has always demanded compromises and concessions against us. We need to remember that this land, which is only part of the seven million acres taken from us—if we get it—was won at a great cost to us. It took our time, and money, and lives lost by Indians.

Afro-Asian Revolutions

"The fact that there is no way out except by a unified struggle of the masses the world over does not condemn the colonial and ex-colonial countries to 'inevitable' capitalist development. A people mature enough to fight for its freedom is mature enough to take destiny into its own hands in the matter of reconstructing its own society."

Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism
and the Afro-Asian Revolutions
by Raya Dunayevskaya

\$1.25 per copy

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Theory/Practice

(continued from page 5)

but because it produced, on the other side, the greatest mass movements in the U.S. itself in the anti-Vietnam War Movement which gave birth to new forces of revolution—Youth, Black, Women. It is they—the whole American people—upon whom Reagan wants to move the clock backward to pre-New Deal days. For Reagan, the scoundrel-type of patriotism must become the imperial rule. As corporate takeovers and wild gyrations on the stock market show—where foreign capital, especially Japan's, dominates, in disregard of our stagnant economy, high unemployment and myriad political crises—we live not only on borrowed money, but on borrowed time.

Ronald Reagan's attitude to Central America and the Caribbean, as if it were his lake and talking as if democracy ruled those lands, is much like Gorbachev's shadow-boxing in Afghanistan when he talks of having the Russian troops withdraw and a "pluralistic" regime be installed in Afghanistan. These two-of-a-kind nuclear superpowers have actually only one thing in mind, and that is each other's race for world nuclear supremacy.

Is Central America so predominant in Reagan's vision, his ideology, that even the possibility of being saved by an arms control agreement with Russia becomes secondary? Is that the Damocles sword which is now hanging over us?

WILL THERE BE A PAUSE OR RUSH TO NUCLEAR FIRSTEDNESS?

We must turn back to the latest snag that has appeared at the Soviet-American arms negotiations in Geneva. What is the significance of the re-appearance of the two very different interpretations of what happened at Reykjavik? Why should the Reagan Administration suddenly need to present what made everything fall apart at Reykjavik—the fact that Gorbachev would not agree to anything that wasn't tied to the non-deployment of SDI? Reagan wouldn't consider non-deployment of SDI under any circumstances whatsoever.

Why is it that just a couple of weeks ago, the dramatic gesture of Gorbachev to decouple the question of SDI from arms control agreements was hailed as coming over to Reagan's position, but now Reagan is introducing a totally new point, demanding the transformation of those Intermediate Ballistic Missiles into "short range" missiles, instead of their destruction.

Is everything just a bluff so that the next step by Schultz, who is to visit with Shevardnadze next month, will be played up as a victory? Or is each out for his own national interests? Finally, the West European governments, who were all for the "zero option" when they hadn't yet voted to install the new U.S. intermediate weapons in their countries, are questioning the whole idea of it now that they allowed the installation of those missiles.

We may get some illumination on this question from Thatcher's visit to Moscow, but one point is clear already: Gorbachev aims to draw a division between West Europe and the U.S. That is the dominant issue, and this will determine whether there is a breakthrough or just the playing of a game for high stakes and alchemy. At this point Russia is saying that the Americans are still "negotiating with themselves."

Has Reagan so beguiled himself with the artifices of Star Wars that he will let go of this one chance to cover up the illegitimacy of his Presidency that the Iran-contra scandal has exposed, to proceed with the helter-skelter rush for nuclear firstedness?

—March 28, 1987

Youth speak out on teen suicide

Alienation of human spirit

Newark, N.J.—In the past two weeks, there's been some talk about the problems of youth, stemming from the mass suicide in Bergenfield, N.J. of four friends and then the joint suicide of two friends in Illinois. When it comes to drugs and alienation in this society it is not a question of being for or against it, but a question of what is driving youth in increasing numbers to drugs and suicide in this country and all of the industrial world.

Is drug abuse a cause or the effect of something else? You see, that is the question that is driving me, coming out of the drugs/alcohol problem. What I see as the main thing that is driving people to drugs/alcohol/suicide is the alienation of the human spirit, and the "thing" relationship, where people equal machines to the rulers.

Take the case of two people I know. One sells cars and pushes himself to the limit to make more and more money, coming out of the poverty of his homeland, Puerto Rico. But when the pressure of his life gets to be too much, he feels he must try to block out this feeling of alienation through the use of drugs. But by doing this he is going deeper and deeper into the feeling of alienation.

The second person comes from an upper middle-class family of professional people. In college the pressure to succeed was so much, she tried to commit suicide. She and I were talking about the death of these young people and the one thing that's the cause of all this to her is the alienation of the person as the result of this industrial life.

To some in the Left this may seem abstract, or unimportant. But not to Karl Marx, starting with his break from bourgeois society and the writing of what's been called his "Humanist Essays" of 1844. You can see in these essays that relationships in alienated life are the driving force in the push to freedom.

But do not look to state-capitalist countries calling themselves Communist for the answer, because there is still the division between thinking and doing there. The alcoholic rate in Russia has been on the rise as the ruling class tries to sweat more and more labor out of the workers.

The ruling class of both forms of capitalism would like to stop the drugs/alcoholism problem, because it cuts into the time and the amount of work. But they cannot, because of the relationship of capitalism itself that brings this about, be it state or private capitalism.

But this is not so for the person who can see that the negative aspect of life is the driving force to work out a more human and free life for the people of this world. This is the challenge to all of us to turn the physical/mental alienation against this society.

—David Anderson

Today's school system

Editor's Note: The following is excerpted from a letter to the editor which appeared in the Philadelphia Inquirer.

...I am a youth of today. I have used drugs and alcohol, I listen to rock music, and I have seriously contemplated suicide more than once. I chose to drop out of school instead, so fortunately I am, at the age of 20, still around to express my feelings. Let me speak for those of my generation who are no longer around to do so.

The real source of the problem is not drugs, it is not alcohol, and it is certainly not rock music. It is society. More specifically, it is the part of society we are forced to deal with: school. Not education, but the ultimate paradox of education, today's school system...

Today's system of education is a factory, trying to

Youth in Revolt

by Franklin Dmitryev

In Tegucigalpa, Honduras, 2,000 students, joined by workers and peasants, demonstrated March 5, calling for the expulsion of both the contras and U.S. military forces. Many of the protesters had worked the land in southern Honduras before being forced off by the contras.

A nearly month-long boycott by 90% of the Black public school students in Senatobia, Miss., ended March 14 after the school board agreed to demands that they hire a Black administrative assistant and school counselor within six weeks. The boycott was sparked by the board's breaking its promise to hire a Black for the vacant post of assistant superintendent. Blacks also protested the board's condoning of illegal transfers to Senatobia by 300 whites from neighboring counties with mainly Black schools. A boycott of white merchants, begun Feb. 27, still continues at press time.

Reports have surfaced of the underground second national congress of the Independent Students' Association, held in January in Warsaw, Poland. The group, founded as part of the Solidarity movement, has been operating underground since it was banned in 1981. At the congress, delegates from across the country debated the situation in Polish colleges and universities, discussed ways to fight the government's attempts to divide students and established a national commission.

turn out preconceived packages of what adults think we should be. We are so confused!

We are never taught to look within ourselves to find our life's meaning. Instead, we are simply given a limited number of possibilities to choose from, and then told that we have complete "freedom" to choose. Freedom? Hardly.

...The only way to solve the suicide problem, the drug problem and the alcohol problem is not to come up with more rules that prevent us from escaping, but to create an environment that is so fulfilling that we have no desire to escape from it.

We do not want to live in the environment that has been forced upon us. We want to come up with an alternative. Until we get one we will continue to try to escape our present environment. How many more of us must kill ourselves before our statement is heard?

—Robert A. Henkel

U. of Mich. demonstrations

(continued from page 1)

dent Harold Shapiro would even agree to meet with the students to talkover their demands. Those talks resulted in an agreement calling for an increase in the number of Black students and faculty "proportionate to their numbers in the population."

But the heart of the protest was the students' response to a series of racist incidents on campus. These included racist jokes aired on a campus radio station and a leaflet calling for an "open hunting season on Blacks" slipped into a meeting of Black women at a university lounge. Earlier in the school year, anti-apartheid shanties built on campus to support the protest movement in South Africa had been maliciously destroyed.

The university administration became the target of the students' response because they felt the incidents were not isolated, but part of a climate of racism that had reached the U. of M. campus. Two weeks before the demonstrations, students in UCAR had first put forth demands for increased enrollment and recruiting of Black students, as well as other demands to end the racist climate. No university response was forthcoming. BAM also put forth demands.

On Wednesday, March 18, the first actions began. More than 400 students organized by BAM III, (after Black student strikes and sit-ins in 1970 and 1975), blocked entrances to the student union building and threatened to shut down the university.

On Thursday, March 19, five hundred students marched around the administration building in the afternoon; two hundred students, Black and white and other minorities, entered the building and refused to leave. The Regents had moved their meeting to another building. Students followed and asked the Regents to respond to their demands. When no response was forthcoming the students occupied the Regents' seats. The sit-in continued at the same time at the student union.

The next morning President Shapiro suddenly found time to begin discussion of the student demands. An agreement was reached, which included not only an increase in the number of Black students and faculty, but also the creation of a vice-provost for minority affairs to direct the recruitment and retention of Black students and faculty; allocation of an independent budget of U. of Mich. funds for the Black Student Union; and the creation of a university policy against racist harassment that would include specific penalties.

Whether the agreement will truly be implemented remains to be seen. In the '70s U. of Mich. protests had produced other agreements on racism that have yet to be fully implemented. But the key here is that the protests demonstrated a strong response on the part of hundreds upon hundreds of students to the threat of a growing racism on university campuses.

Closed-campus walkout



Lindblom students walk out

Editor's Note: After six months of a closed campus policy which prevents students from leaving school at lunch time, some 2,000 Black students at Lindblom Technical High School spontaneously walked out of classes on March 25, following a sit-in and two fire alarms which brought the Chicago police to the scene. Below Lindblom students speak out on reasons for the walk-out.

Chicago, Ill.—Rules and regulations get changed all the time by the principal, Mrs. Pease, without any input from the students. We must have had eight or nine different tardy policies since I was a freshman, and we still don't have an effective one. She tells us that our parents agree that closed-campus is good, but they don't have to go here. Now it's going to be like a prison, with more harassment in the halls.

Mrs. Pease is supposed to have a meeting with parents and some students who haven't even gone around to find out what the rest of the students want. That way she can say that we now have better communication, but really nothing has changed.

Because our scores went down they've been cracking down on us. In 1985 we had good SAT scores—we had open-campus. In 1986 they went down and Mrs. Pease imposed closed-campus.

They make us pay \$1 for temporary ID cards [if you forget to bring your permanent one]. And then they tell us that the money goes to students who can't afford to take the bus to school! There must be 50 students a day who are forced to buy them. If you don't have the \$1, you have to go home. And if you're one minute late you get three days suspension. The student body isn't taken seriously. We are treated like children.

We're probably going to chill now. But if things aren't changed, there's going to be a boycott.

—Lindblom students

Columbia protests

(continued from page 1)

Black student was attacked on campus. It was reported that a gang of about 20 white students, some of them football players, began beating up Black students in the vicinity, including two Black security guards. Black students were chased by white students shouting racist epithets.

The first thing those attacked did was to organize a meeting. They all felt that the university wanted to keep it quiet, and would make them rather than the racists the criminals. They felt that the deans who are to conduct their own investigation would try to white-wash the affair.

About 60 Black students met and decided to march to the fraternity house where they believed the white students lived. As the march began, white and Latino supporters joined the demonstration. The next day word spread around campus and became the talk of College Walk. A solidarity and information meeting was held that evening in Malcolm X Lounge. As more and more students turned up the meeting room had to be moved twice to accommodate the 600 students, staff and faculty who attended.

Black women from Barnard and Columbia College told what happened: "It was a lynch mob, I cannot describe it in any other terms.... It was sheer terror. When two Black security guards arrived, whites turned on them as well, calling them N-----s. I thought they were killing us. I ran onto Broadway and they came after us shouting..."

"Maybe they were drunk," one woman said, answering the excuses from some white students, "but you don't become a racist by having a beer."

In an open letter to Columbia President Sovern, the Black students demanded that the racists be immediately expelled. They situated the racist climate at Columbia "as part and parcel of a national and global problem...this Howard Beach type attack...should not be seen in a vacuum, but rather as a predictable expression of the escalating racial hatred on white campuses nationwide."

Many felt that Columbia fostered the racist climate: out of 2,000 faculty members, only six are Black; Columbia still does not have an Afro-American Studies Department, while its liberal arts core curriculum is completely Eurocentric; and it continues a policy of evictions and gentrification in the surrounding neighborhood which kicks out minorities.

The Concerned Black Students of Columbia and their supporters are demanding a change in these policies and that Columbia make a sustained effort to recruit students from the inner-city areas as well as provide sufficient financial aid so that minority students are not forced to drop out.

—Fred Shelley

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Our Life and Times

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

Yugoslav strikes

A wave of spontaneous and "illegal" strikes has spread through Yugoslavia since late February. More than 11,000 workers have walked off their jobs in Yugoslavia's six republics, as well as in Vojvodina and Kosovo provinces. The strike actions have been most concentrated in heavily industrialized Croatia.

Yugoslav workers were jolted in January and February by a series of price increases on rents, transportation, electricity and basic foods. Working families often must spend half of their income for food. The last straw was an austerity wage freeze which rolled workers' current pay retroactively back to late 1986 levels, and linked all future increases to "higher productivity and workplace discipline."

The Yugoslav government announced a 90-day freeze on the prices of some items on March 20. But Prime Minister Branko Mikulic followed that up two days later by threatening to call out the Army against strikers. The unprecedented workers' revolt continues, showing the true face of Yugoslav workers' "self-management."

Occupation in Scotland

Workers at the Caterpillar factory at Tannochside, outside Glasgow, Scotland, have occupied their plant since Jan. 15, when management announced the factory would be closed this year. This decision was an abrupt about-face to the U.S. company's announcement last fall of a multi-million dollar plant expansion, and the workers were furious.

One project of the men and women occupying the plant was to assemble a bulldozer. They painted it pink and delivered it to "War on Want," a famine relief organization. The workers have



Santiago, Chile—Hundreds demonstrated in front of the Justice Ministry to protest the torture of political prisoners. Some 400 prisoners are on hunger strike around the country demanding they be recognized as political prisoners and that their cases be heard in civilian courts. On March 27, some 40 demonstrators who chained themselves to a railing in front of the Justice Ministry were arrested. The 38 women and two men arrested belong to an organization of families of people jailed for political reasons.

received much local sympathy, in the form of money, food and services. Union officials from Caterpillar plants in France and Belgium visited Tannochside and mounted an effort to have their own union members boycott parts that would have been produced in the occupied plant.

Despite a big severance pay offer by management at the beginning of the occupation, the workers refused to give up. With unemployment in Scotland at 17%, there is no where to go and the workers have decided to fight.

Saharawi guerrillas

On March 6, Saharan guerrillas from the POLISARIO movement made their second attack within 10 days on Moroccan positions. POLISARIO claimed to have taken over a ten-mile stretch of the famed wall built to contain them in the Western Sahara desert by Moroccan King Hassan. They destroyed a whole section of the wall and captured both prisoners and military equipment.

can King Hassan. They destroyed a whole section of the wall and captured both prisoners and military equipment.

Ten days earlier, a similar attack had taken place at another section of the wall, and this time French reporters actually counted the 83 Moroccan soldiers taken prisoner. On Feb. 27 King Hassan, obviously stung by these new attacks against his "impregnable" wall, sent terrorists on a botched assassination attempt against POLISARIO's principal leader, Mohammed Abdelaziz.

Hassan has fought the Saharans for 11 years, at a cost of \$1 million per day, most of it contributed by the U.S. government, which considers the indigenous inhabitants of the Western Sahara to be "Algerian-backed rebels," and King Hassan "legitimate." In fact, their history and culture on the land go back centuries, but it is Saharan mineral wealth, especially phosphates, that Hassan covets.

Ecuador: protests

A one-day national strike to protest government-ordered austerity measures prompted by the devastating March 5 earthquake took place on March 25.

With no oil revenues (which provide 60% of government income) coming in after the earthquake, President Febres Cordero tried to shift the bill onto the backs of the Ecuadorian people. He nearly doubled the price of gasoline which set off other price increases, from transportation to food. Protesting students were joined by workers; together they battled police in several cities.

Even before the earthquake, Ecuador was in economic shambles. The peasants, many of them Indians, never got a cent from the oil pumped across their lands from the Lago Agrio oil fields in the Amazon basin. When the government lost 50% of its income last year due to the drop in world oil prices, Cordero, a disciple of Reaganomics, instituted a series of austerity measures and cutbacks in public spending programs. Despite that, Ecuador announced in January it would not make the next payment on its \$8 billion foreign debt. U.S. Vice President George Bush dropped in for a photo-opportunity visit to Quito promising U.S. aid.

Number one priority for the government is to repair the ruptured oil pipeline. The government places no such priority on repairing the main roads, although that is the way the peasants get their food to market and receive supplies. The Amazon Indian organizations in the area have pointed out angrily that the earthquake has finally drawn attention to how little development—save for oil exploitation and massive land thefts by agribusiness—has gone into their communities. They are resisting government "solutions" to the present disaster, such as the plan to resettle families without consultation, and are turning to communal work efforts as a first step to rebuilding their lives.

Meatpackers are fighting company and union bureaucrats

(continued from page 1)

as the Dept. of Labor was finally admitting what was plain to see—that the number of major labor disputes (strikes and lockouts) rose in 1986 for the first time since Reagan took office. Current meatpacking strikes include not only IBP and Hormel, but workers at Cudahy in Wisconsin, John Morrell in Iowa, and Hebrew National in New York.

At the heart of all the labor upheavals—in meatpacking as in all manufacturing—is the fight to call a halt to capitalism's roll-backs of wages, benefits and conditions of labor, roll-backs that in meatpacking have been ceaseless from 1980-86. It is not only that average wages in the industry have fallen from \$10.69/hour in 1981 to \$8.07 in 1985, nor only that the UFCW saw its packinghouse membership fall from 130,000 in 1979 to about 90,000 today, while 30% of the industry is now non-union. It is that massive automation and the drive for higher productivity have both extracted a terrible human toll and brought forth from meatpacking workers a fundamental questioning of conditions as they are.

AUTOMATION IN MEATPACKING

Listen to a Hormel striker describe automation in the company's new Austin, Minn. plant, opened in 1982 and built with money from worker concessions:

In the old plant they had two chains to kill hogs; in the new plant they have one that goes three or four times faster. They are doing almost 900 hogs an hour. The number of injuries is incredible at that speed. People were stabbing each other, plus 75% of the workers have carpal tunnel syndrome....

They brought in a new machine from Holland called "Proton." It sits on four legs like some giant in a horror movie. It's got this gigantic piston in the middle of it, which comes down and de-bones the ham—squeezes the bone out of the meat. Each machine costs \$375,000 and replaces 30 workers. And the workers who are left each operate two machines.

About once a month one of these machines would blow this giant piston with incredible force. You have oil hitting a ceiling that's two stories high. A guy comes from Holland to fix the machine and tells them: 'This machine isn't designed to operate that fast.' It was deboning a ham every 15 seconds. They are wrecking the machine. If they feel that way about the machine, how do they feel about the workers?

Another worker, discussing automation, was drawn to the chapter in Raya Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom* on "Automation and the New Humanism." He singled out the idea that "from workers' experience with automation comes a new Humanism." Clearly meatpacking workers today are challenging the totality of the situation they face—and not only the conditions in union and non-union plants, but their UFCW bureaucracy. They are raising questions both about what kind of organization workers need now, and what kind of

thinking should direct it.

A Wilson Foods worker from Iowa told us: "Rank-and-file opposition is very widespread in the industry now. Up until the Hormel strike the International was very good at co-opting dissidents. Now that's impossible."

OPPOSITION TO UFCW LEADERSHIP IN ORGANIZING

In an attempt to re-assert its control over the rank-and-file, UFCW Packinghouse Division V.P. Lewie Anderson called a national conference in November 1986. He issued a thick report "On the U.S. Meatpacking Industry and the Challenges Workers Face," pointing to "organizing the unorganized" 30% of the industry as the key. IBP is the biggest of the non-union companies; only its Dakota City, Neb. plant is UFCW.

Rank-and-file workers agree that IBP is a threat to all meatpackers, but they question whether the International is serious about it. One volunteer organizer noted:

The UFCW organizing drive at IBP is a joke. How many full-time organizers do they have for the whole IBP drive, in 10 plants? Five! And they expect the locals to foot half the bill for the IBP campaign. It's a matching fund. It limits the drive to the resources of the locals in the area. They have pulled the drive out of West Point, Neb., and Columbus Junction and Council Bluffs, Iowa. Now they are concentrating on Storm Lake, Iowa and Emporia, Kansas.

Here you have the largest union in the AFL-CIO going against the toughest anti-union company in the meatpacking industry, and they're going at them with a pea-shooter. We know what needs to be done to organize IBP, but it's like we have to raise our hands to the International, like we're kids in class, and say: 'teacher, can we do that?'

NEW KINDS OF ORGANIZATION

What is happening today, in local after UFCW local, is that workers are not "raising their hands" anymore. They are establishing worker-to-worker links among rank-and-filers at many plants of the same company, or even across company lines. These new kinds of organization, new lines of communication, have taken many forms:

- At Oscar Mayer, militant workers from Chicago, Madison, Wis., Davenport, Iowa, and Sherman, Tex., drove hundreds of miles in mutual support actions during their fights against new concessions contracts, and then exchanged names and phone numbers so that future information would not have to be channelled through the International.

- At Hormel, P-9 strikers have fanned out across the country, speaking to union locals and rank-and-file groups, and supporting women's liberation, civil rights, and anti-war struggles.

- At Wilson Foods, workers are launching a new rank-

and-file paper called *The Correspondent*, seeking to coordinate actions in different companies and locals. "The paper," they say, "would advocate democratic unionism, and be open to different opinions about what to do." Its name was drawn "from the Committees of Correspondence in the American Revolution, something we first heard about in high school history classes." (see p. 3)

A Wisconsin Oscar Mayer worker enthusiastically supported the idea of such independent papers, precisely because of her experience in organizing support for striking workers at Cudahy (see N&L, March 27). "The leadership," she asserted, "doesn't do anything. I call them the 'brain-deads.' They aren't going to show up at night to load semis with food for strikers. That's what the rank-and-file does."

No one can know in advance what forms of expression will emerge from such bursts of worker creativity, though there are certainly many, from the UFCW leadership to the myriad Left organizations now active, who wish to set the workers' agenda. In Austin, P-9ers abandoned by the UFCW have sought to create an alternative union—the North American meatpackers (NAM-PU), pledging "a return to the one plant/one local philosophy that built our old union," a "federation of locals—controlled by locals." Others have been working to link caucuses within the UFCW, seeking to fundamentally alter its direction and leadership.

WORKERS' WAY OF THINKING

Hormel strikers travelling around the country for the boycott have drawn some of their own conclusions about what is needed now. One young worker told us: "The rank-and-file has to realize that they are the union. The big thing I hear people say is 'the union doesn't do anything, and I'm paying dues.' I tell them: 'You are the union,' and that starts people listening. We need a whole different way of thinking."

Something as seemingly simple as forming worker-to-worker lines of communication, instead of having to go through the union bureaucracy, may bring forth the most far-reaching change, just because such dialogue of ideas, when united with action, has a development, a reaching for total freedom, that can go beyond even what those who began the contacts imagined. And these new developments in rank-and-file communication are not limited to the meatpacking industry alone, as we saw from the outpouring of supporters in Austin on March 14.

Thus the mass rally there—which brought together meatpackers and miners, autoworkers and airline workers, steelworkers and telephone workers—may show what is to come in all industries. And not only did it give new impetus to workers' solidarity, but to their "way of thinking." That is sure to develop further when the P-9 strikers host the "Mid-America Conference of Rank-and-File Packinghouse Workers," in Austin May 1-3.