

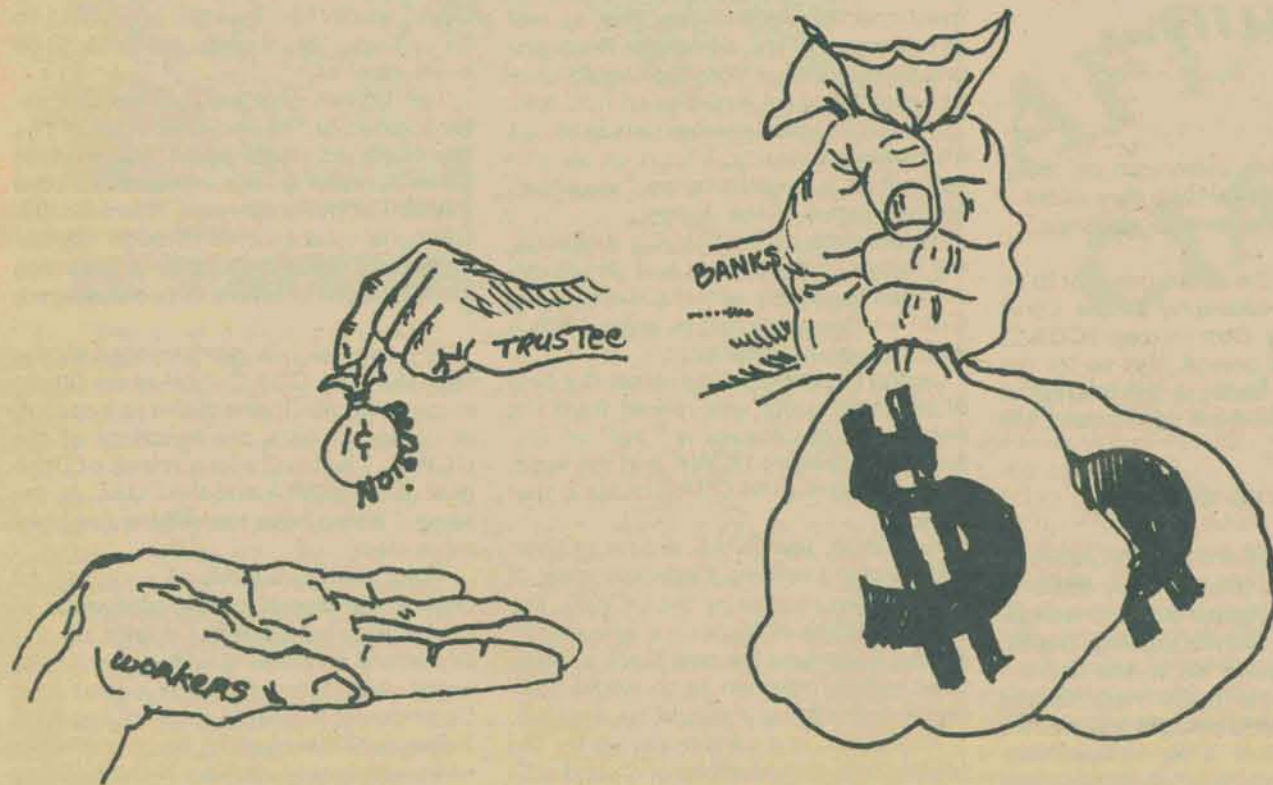
no separate peace

14

A news-magazine for construction workers.

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However, workers do not benefit from increased performance. Their pension benefits do not rise with the stock market. But, on the other hand, bad investments usually do result in a decrease or even cessation of employee benefits. Thus, with pensions invested in the stock market, the potential gain lies with the corporations, the potential risk lies with the workers.

With so much of Pension Trust money being invested in various corporations (70-80%), serious questions surface in connection with how the monies are used and maintained. Many workers seek information as to where the money is vested. Even with the new law, ERISA, the reporting of vested funds only states "where" and still does not provide the workers with a veto or any control of the vesting decisions.

With pension benefits so meager and with only 25% of all workers receiving pension benefits... "Why does Union leadership go along with the present pension system?" First, much of the power of organized labor's leadership is not based upon rank-and-file support. In fact, many of today's (mis)leaders came to power at a time when progressive rank-and-file movements were being repressed by the corporations and their agents in the government.

Since then, these (mis)leaders have served the interests of the corporations by not taking the initiative to organize the unorganized workers. Today, 78% of workers in the U.S. have no organization committed to protecting their interests, let alone retirement benefits. Thus, rank-and-file movements within trade unions, including efforts to control their pension funds, are often seen as threats to the (mis)leaders of Unions.

Secondly, the leadership came to power during the rise of imperialism, a period which allowed limited benefits to some sectors of the organized work force. Construction workers, as we have said, enjoy a pay scale much higher than the average worker. This high hourly wage has helped to "buy-off" some militancy amongst the workers (...a separate peace?..)

Consequently, the current leadership of organized labor operated from a premise of an acceptance of capitalism, advocating a harmony of interests between labor and management. And, because of these (mis)leaders position in the Union and industry, they enjoy the spoils of this so-called "harmonious" relationship.

But the overall result of turning pension monies over to banks to invest in corporate stock, is to connect working class interests to the survival of the capitalist system, a system of profits for the few. This connection further disguises the completely opposite interests of capital and labor.

Suddenly, a worker's retirement security depends upon how well the bank performs or whether the corporations are able to protect their profits through undermining foreign governments or worker movements at home and abroad.

The private pension system redistributes wealth to the rich, rather than to the workers or the poor. Hundreds of thousands of workers never see a penny of the money taken weekly from their paychecks in the name of "retirement security." This money remains in the hands of the financial institutions and the large corporations for the benefit of the capitalists who control them. Those who eventually do receive retirement benefits at the end of their working lives have given over control of their pension assets to these same financial institutions. Adequate retirement security for all workers can only come through a massive redistribution of wealth, a redistribution which capitalism is incapable of making.

One alternative to capitalist control of labor's pension monies would be rank-and-file control. However, the struggle to obtain this control would bring rank-and-file into open conflict with capital and the labor (mis)leaders, who have given the pension assets to the big banks in exchange for their positions (...a separate peace!!)

We must recognize that the immediate struggle to obtain this control will bring us face-to-face with these local and national labor bureaucrats. We must caucus with each other and voice our collective opinions and demand that OUR unions are run for the benefit of all working people.

Pensions — Our Future Security?

Construction workers, one of the highest paid group of workers in this country, are beginning to question the effectiveness of their retirement plans. This scrutiny is a result of two things: 1) the meager payments made each month to retired plan participants; and, 2) an organized movement to increase "fringe benefit packages" because substantially higher wages in the construction field are doubtful, particularly with the depression of this economy.

Pension plans are designed to supplement other retirement programs as a basis of worker's future security. U.S. officials in charge of programs for the elderly use the analogy of a three-legged stool when describing retirement incomes; the three legs being savings, social security, and pensions. Just as with any three-legged stool, if a leg gets cut off or is shorter than the others, the person using the stool wobbles and often crashes. As designed, neither savings, nor social security, nor pensions can alone provide adequate retirement security. Together they barely provide subsistence.

Retirement should be a time when workers, who have through their labor built this country, can enjoy the rest of their lives doing things they were unable to do while they worked.

However, retired workers must struggle just to keep what they have earned and to feed, shelter, and clothe themselves and their families.

In the month of October, 1975, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Worker's Pension Benefit Fund paid out over \$3.2 million to almost 60,000 retired electrical workers. This averages only \$54 per month, each, which doesn't allow for too much relaxation or enjoyment.

Most labor (mis)leaders call for increased employer contributions during contract negotiations, or the distribution of regular annual statements to each plan participant listing current hour and dollar amounts in Trust. These would certainly be improvements. But they do not address themselves to the question of working people's future security.

In the construction industry, an equal number of plan trustees are appointed by labor (mis)leaders and management. These Trustees are responsible for the administration of pension trusts. Rank-and-file members have no voice in deciding the policies and practices of the pension trust administration. Moreover, the administration exerts little effort to provide the rank-and-file with pertinent information as to the activity of the Trust itself.

In who interests do pensions work? The lack of worker control allows Pension administrators to handle these funds as "they" alone see fit. Pensions are not administered by the Trustees. Rather, some financial institution is commissioned to do the actual administration. A financial institution is set up separate and apart from the Union to handle pension funds, thereby taking the worker's pension monies one more step away from their control.

It is because of this lack of worker control that pension funds are important to employers and even more so, the financial institutions.

The Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) of 1974 was designed to stabilize the "mismanagement" of Pension Trusts. But ERISA did nothing to give control of these funds to the workers. The most glaring defect in the private pension system was not even addressed in the new law — the fact that over 50% of wage and salary workers in the U.S. do not participate in any pension plan at all. Further, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates that fewer than half of all employees now covered by pension plans will ever collect a penny of benefits.

Employers realize that meager pension plans can serve their interests in two ways: 1) by tying pension benefits to 30-40 years of continuous service, they provide a way of retaining good employees for long periods, thereby reducing costly turnover; and 2) the pension plan can be less expensive than keeping older, "less productive" workers on the payroll. For the company, meager pensions often equal increased profits.

Today pension reserves surpass \$180 billion and represent the largest block of investable wealth in the country — one third of the nation's total.

It is no wonder that major financial institutions compete for a section of the great wealth in pension management. Originally banks were able to attract pension fund clients due to their supposed conservatism and solidity, which were considered important for long term planning of retirement incomes. But, as the large banks competed for more and more funds, they began to sink their managed funds into more speculative equities (stocks) and attempted to out perform each other. On the average, 70-80% of pension monies are invested in such stocks.

With access and control of so much wealth, the financial institution is free to invest pension monies to serve their own interests rather than those of the workers. The equity investments (stock) in various corporations purchase influence in the form of "stockholder votes."

Yet, as workers, we cannot even control the proxy votes we buy. These stocks provide an added incentive to financial institutions to participate in pension management. It allows them more direct control over corporations, more power and more profits.

As Executive Vice-President C. Roderick O'Neil, head of Trust operations at Hanover Trust Company said, "Corporations have become increasingly aware of how many dollars a 1% increase in return can involve." A pension industry "rule of thumb" is that a 1% improvement in fund investment performance means a 10% reduction in corporate contribution to the fund.

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No Separate Peace

"No Separate Peace" is a monthly news-magazine covering local, national, and international issues as they affect us as members of a working community.

"No Separate Peace" is not an idea, a catchy slogan, or some bicentennial rhetoric. "No Separate Peace" is a FACT. We believe that no single struggle or issue is separate or isolated from another. Therefore we, as working people, should not be short sighted in our objectives and goals. Nor should we minimize whatever victories we have fought for. But to stop fighting or relax because a segment of our working community has won "better conditions" or "better wages" without realizing the true nature of OUR problems, is...a separate peace.

NSP embodies and advocates the principle of a combined effort by all workers of all nationalities for the accomplishment of common goals.

This publication is addressed to a specific audience...construction workers in Seattle and is intended to stimulate discussion and action.

"No Separate Peace" is a publication of the United Construction Worker's Association (UCWA). The UCWA is a Seattle based organization of Third World (national minority) construction workers who are also active members of various AFL-CIO unions.

The magazine is a non-profit publication. We ask a \$5 fee for yearly subscriptions. Address all correspondence, criticisms, complaints, and checks to No Separate Peace. The NSP offices are located at 105-Fourteenth Avenue, Suite 1A, Seattle, Washington 98122.

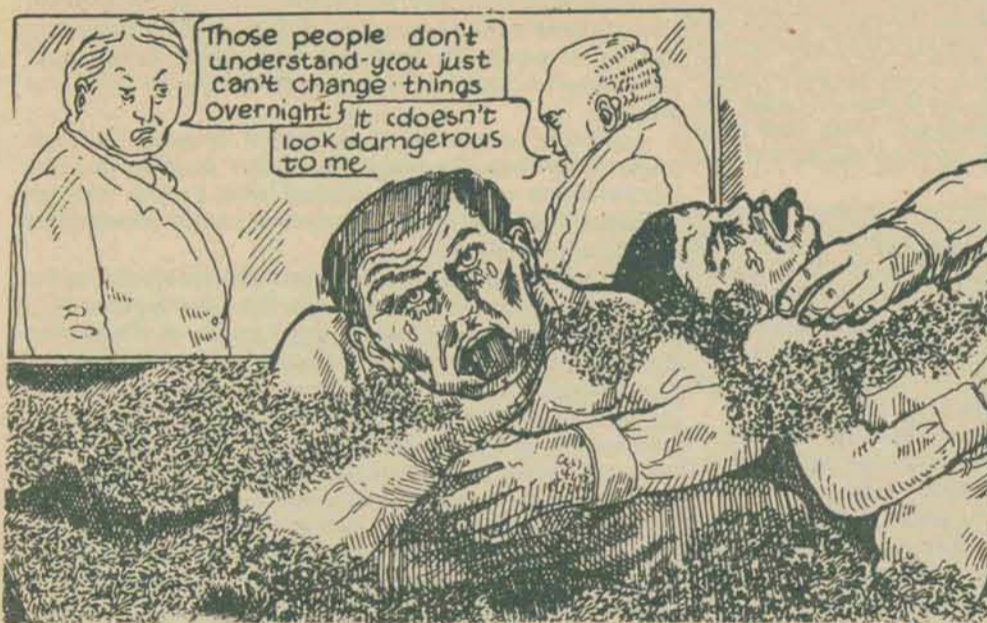
The Bug

"No Separate Peace" is a publication produced by trade unionists for trade unionists.

In choosing NSP's printer, the main concern was, "Is it a union shop?"

NSP does not support scab shops. Only through organization, that is, through strong unions can printers and all workers strive for better conditions in the workplace and in the community. Printing NSP in a non-union shop would weaken the struggle among printers to become organized.

Therefore, NSP is printed in a union shop and is proud to carry "the BUG" on every issue.



Local 7 - Another Struggle

An important legal battle was won in Jun, 1970, opening up the building trades to national minority workers. This battle affected five mechanical trades in Seattle.

We at UCWA assumed the remaining skilled trades, approximately 14 in number, would see it was inevitable that they could no longer be racist in their membership.

This assumption was strengthened by the carpenters and cement masons taking in large numbers of national minorities into their unions.

However, it took us four and a half years to realize that the domino theory was not going to affect the entire construction industry without us forcing the issue of affirmative action.

In July, 1974, UCWA entered into yet another struggle with Local #77 of the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Asbestos Workers, and the companies who employ Local #7 members.

Local #7 members should push their

leadership to implement affirmative action in their union. Presently there are only two national minority journeymen and two national minority apprentices among a little over 250 members working in the asbestos trade in the Seattle area.

By voluntarily taking in national minorities, the rank-and-file will demonstrate a willingness to overcome patterns of historical racism.

Today there are federal and state laws against racial and ethnic discrimination. A union can be found guilty of discrimination in a court of law if its membership is almost entirely white even though the surrounding community is made up of a large number of National Minority people seeking work.

Lawsuits are expensive. Union members' dues should not be wasted paying lawyers' fees and court costs in a needless court battle. Union dues should be used to benefit the members, for example, by increasing health and dental coverage.

An important innovation in the court's decrees was the creation of the Court Order Advisory Committee (COAC). A COAC staff was set up to comply with the orders from the Committee and deal with the day-to-day activities and disputes.

The Committee is composed of nine members, two each from labor, management and the black community, as well as one representative from the State and one representative from the United Construction Workers Association (UCWA). The court required another person to be a non-black minority. This nine-person committee is chaired by an "impartial" representative of the Judge.

At the time of the COAC's inception, the failure of the unions and employers involved to comply with the terms of the court's orders were met by angry UCWA members and supporters.

Judge Lindberg, who even at the time of his initial order was retired from the bench, sought for some "buffer" between the militant UCWA and the violators of his law...The COAC became that buffer.

However, the COAC did more than keep Judge Lindberg's calendar clear of motion after motion by the UCWA. The COAC, with its all black counseling staff, served to confuse the new black apprentices and journeymen as to where their continued militancy should be directed.

The COAC is a service set up by the courts...and should not be confused with collective efforts by working people to gain their rights. Rather than organizing national minority workers to collectively and directly deal with the problem of discrimination, the COAC's existence actually undermined organized militancy, ...the COAC attempts to solve discrimination through "compromised and friendly phone calls" to employers and union (mis)leaders.

This approach is well received by both management and the union bureaucrats because it is a program that is consistent with the policy of labor-management peace that exists today in the American trade union movement.

This policy of the COAC is reflected in their lack of initiative and independence to carry out responsibilities such as the enforcement of journeymen-to-apprentice ratios...ratios which were made "mandatory" by the court. These ratios are designed to create the additional employment necessary for the industry to absorb the incoming black apprentices without causing white apprentices or would-be apprentices from losing employment or apprenticeship opportunities. The Order reads:

"...When Special apprentices [black] are assigned onto a construction job, they shall be in addition to and not in lieu of any employees or normal (regular) apprentices already on the payroll or who would normally be employed..."

National Minorities are desperate for jobs but they are unable to gain membership into a union because of those policies which have caused them to be used as scabs forcing them to work for lower wages and fewer benefits and to weaken the organized sector of the industry.

In recent years Local #7's leadership has put all its energy into obtaining higher wages for its members.

Local #7 leadership has also been grossly negligent in dealing with the issue of better working conditions for its members. It's like being able to work for more money but having a shorter life in which to enjoy the income. On the average, asbestos workers last only ten years in the trade before they begin to feel the effects of working with asbestos.

Asbestosis is the scarring of lungs. It is the most common illness directly related to working with asbestos. Asbestos is also a known factor in the cause of cancer to the lungs, stomach, intestines, rectum and chest.

When the UCWA asked the COAC Director, Glenwood Buxton to instruct his staff to aggressively pursue compliance with this ration, his response was, "...I'd be glad to enforce the ratios...but, I should wait for the full COAC committee to instruct me to do so..."

Even though the Court's Order already stated that this should be done by the COAC staff, Mr. Buxton preferred to "play it safe." He wanted the Order to be re-interpreted.

The UCWA pointed out that the enforcement of these ratios in all of the court ordered trades could only work to the advantage of the workers in those trades. For the employers, however, the additional jobs created through the enforcement could only mean a reduction in the amount of profits they anticipated.

The confusion is compounded by the fact that the COAC staff themselves incorrectly view their actions as a part of, or consistent with, the functions of the UCWA. The staff often speak of "the goal of the UCWA and the COAC as the same." Never have the differences been more clear.

They see the COAC as a vehicle to change the discriminatory attitude(s) in the building trades. Some do not see the limitations of working within the framework sent down by their board (the Committee), a board with such opposite interests. Consequently, black and other national minority workers in the building trades who are not clear about the differences, also view the COAC as "the answer."

If there is all that confusion, then why not have the UCWA do the work of the COAC?

Initially the UCWA dealt with the recruiting and counseling of applicants and the monitoring of selection and dispatch procedures to insure compliance with the court's orders. UCWA was not given the functions of the COAC because of their militancy. The courts, labor (mis)leaders, and management were concerned that continuous demonstrations would occur by the UCWA if they failed to comply.

The Committee needed a staff that acted on orders only and that certainly would not demonstrate against themselves.

Also, the UCWA recognized the inability of the "reasonable party" concept to work.

It is therefore necessary for all of us to see the structural shortcomings of the COAC. As designed, it will never cause any significant changes in the industry because of its compromising nature. It is not necessarily the people at the COAC who are at fault...but the whole institution itself which must be done away with. Militant workers must be organized into organizations such as the UCWA for it is that creative interplay between tough court orders and workers' organizations that hold the greatest promise.

Recently a study was conducted by Dr. Samuel Epstein of the Case Western Reserve School of Medicine for the AFL-CIO. The study revealed up to 50% of asbestos insulation workers die of cancer.

These glaring facts point out the urgency needed in finding new materials which are not harmful to the lives of Local #7 asbestos workers.

Ironically, safe insulating materials do exist which are less hazardous to a worker's health. But due to added cost employers continue to use asbestos.

The experience of UCWA in the mechanical trades has shown that this struggle goes beyond the question of affirmative action. All members of Local #7 should see the need to fight for a stronger, more democratic union to represent their collective interests.

Any and all UCWA members going in to Local #7 will take up this struggle. With us the economic struggle is important, however, life takes precedence.

Labor History

We will have an article in every issue on United States labor history. It is important that we know the past in order to

understand the present. Most so-called labor leaders today have us believe that we must beg for our rights, trying to make us forget our history of struggle and the many gains won through solidarity and struggle.



The story of "May Day" is one chapter in our labor history.

"Five Thousand Attend Big Celebration of Labor." So read the headlines of the May 2, 1919 edition of the Seattle Union Record, a militant trade union paper of the 1900's. Five thousand people attended a militant rally, followed by food and dancing on May Day, 1919.

What is May Day and why a "big celebration of labor?" Why do the schools teach that May Day is the day when children dance merrily around the May pole? Why does the government call May 1st "Law Day?"

If working people are mentioned in the schools, by the government, or the media, it is only to report of May Day celebrations in other countries, especially socialist countries. The news media present May Day as a "communist holiday," showing pictures of working people marching in Paris and a military parade in Moscow.

May Day started as a struggle to gain the eight-hour day in 1886 in the United States. The late 1800's were a time of massive immigration, the building of giant corporations, struggles by working people to form unions, speed-up, high prices, high unemployment, and violent repression by the bosses to smash any advance or gain made by the workers.

Working people lived in slums and were forced to work ten to fourteen hour days, and in some industries, eighteen hours.

At its 1884 convention, the young American Federation of Labor unanimously adopted a resolution calling on all labor to join together on May 1, 1886 to gain the eight-hour day.

Workers and unions across the country responded with great solidarity and determination. By mid-April, 1886, almost a quarter of a million industrial workers were involved in the eight-hour movement. The upsurge was so powerful that about 30,000 workers had already been granted the nine or eight-hour day.

On May 1, 1886, workers in every city in America went on strike for the eight-hour day. About 350,000 workers in 11,562 shops and factories walked out. In Chicago alone, 40,000 workers went out on strike, and more than 45,000 were granted a shorter work day without striking. "Every railroad in the city was crippled, all the freight houses were closed and barred, and most of the industries in Chicago were paralyzed." In Detroit, 11,000 workers marched in an eight-hour day parade, 25,000 marched in New York City.

Altogether, it was estimated that 185,000 out of 350,000 workers who struck for the eight-hour day gained their demand on May 1st and the days following. Many more had their work day reduced.

In Chicago, the 11,000 workers at the McCormick Harvester factory were on strike for the eight-hour day, a \$2 daily wage, an end to wage cutting and the piece-work-system. On May 3rd, police escorting scabs into the plant opened fire on the striking pickets, killing at least four and wounding many more.

A mass meeting to protest this police brutality was called for the next day in Haymarket Square. Several thousand union members and supporters gathered to listen to three speakers. As the meeting was ending, with most of the crowd already gone, the notorious Chicago police moved in, 180 patrolmen strong.

The crowd began to run as a police captain ordered the assembly to disperse. Then — a terrific explosion! — an agent provocateur had thrown a bomb! One policeman was killed instantly, five others died later and several more were wounded. The police immediately opened fire on the crowd, chasing, clubbing, and shooting down the workers, killing several and wounding hundreds.

Hundreds of workers were arrested in the days to follow. Eight were finally selected for trial on a murder charge: Albert Parsons, August Spies, Samuel Fielden, Eugene Schwab, Adolph Fischer, George Engel, Louis Lingg, and Oscar Neebe. None of the eight were at the Haymarket meeting when the bomb was thrown, except Fielden, who was speaking. The eight were chosen by the employers because of their militant trade unionism and well-known organizing.

They were given a stacked jury, hand-picked by the prosecutor, consisting of businessmen and their clerks, and a pre-judged judge. The predetermined verdict of guilty was reached — seven were sentenced to be hanged and one to 15 years in prison.

Support for the framed labor leaders came from around the world. Resolutions were passed, petitions signed, rallies held, and millions of laboring people expressed their contempt for the coming executions. The governor of Illinois, responding to the massive outpouring, commuted the death sentences of Fielden and Schwab to life imprisonment.

On November 11, 1887, the remaining four defendants were hanged. Six years later, the three still imprisoned were pardoned by Illinois Governor Altgeld. One defendant committed suicide or was murdered in jail before the executions.

The Haymarket bombing was followed by a nation-wide reign of terror against the labor movement. The lockout, the "iron-clad oath," the Pinkerton detectives, the blacklist, and the red scare were the answer of the employers to the militant labor movement. The police and courts were assigned special roles in breaking strikes and imprisoning union members.

The nation's working people, however, had moved together and made great gains. There was no turning back. The labor movement pushed onward to organize still greater numbers and engage in struggle with the employers.

In 1889, leaders of the organized labor movement in various countries met in Paris to form an international association of working people. After hearing reports of what had happened in America, they voted to support the eight-hour fight and designate May 1, 1890 as an international eight-hour struggle day. On that day, workers all over Europe showed their solidarity with working people in America by taking part in parades, meetings, and demonstrations for a shorter work day.

It is obvious that the schools want to promote a merry, happy attitude to make us forget our own history of struggle by telling us to dance around a May pole. The police and courts ironically call May 1st "Law Day," in an attempt to blunt the history and scope of working people's struggles.

We shall never forget, however, that May Day, the international worker's day was born in America out of the struggle for a shorter work day. May Day reminds us that the eight-hour day was not a gift from the bosses, but was fought for and won with militant labor solidarity. Today, we should discuss the lessons learned from the struggle for the eight-hour day. In this age of increased mechanization and high unemployment, a shorter work week (30 or 32 hours) at full (40 hours) pay must be put on labor's agenda.

The participation of the US government in the violent overthrow of Chile's elected government in 1973 has been well documented by the US Congress and US news media. By now it is well known that the CIA played a major role. What is not so well known is the role played by the AFL-CIO.

AFL-CIA?

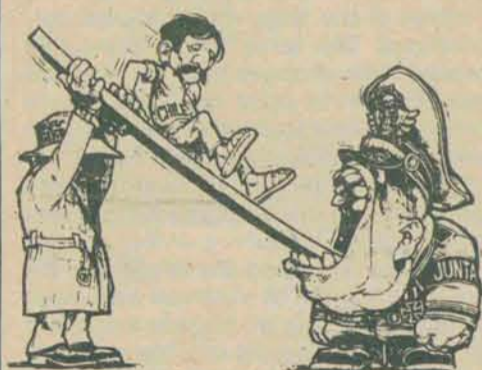
The AFL-CIO? What does the federation of US trade unions have to do with the smashing of the federation of Chilean trade unions? A lot.

Have you ever heard of the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD)? Probably not. Not many Americans have. Least of all, trade unionists. AIFLD, a non-profit organization, is the mechanism for AFL-CIO programs in Latin America. Its president is none other than George Meany. The stated goal of AIFLD is "the development of the democratic trade union movement in Latin America and the Caribbean."

According to its Executive Director, William Doherty, "the real function of AIFLD is collaborating with the Council on Latin America which is made up of primary US business institutions that have activities in that area (Latin America). Our collaboration takes the form of trying to make the investment climate more attractive and inviting to them."

What could be "more attractive and inviting" to US companies than cheap labor? So attractive and inviting is the current labor situation in Chile that General Motors intends to build a multi-million dollar truck assembly plant there. This move spells more unemployment in the US, not only for autoworkers, but for electrical workers, sheetmetal workers and rubber workers as well. Eventually, it means more unemployment for all US workers, as General Motors and other companies rake in record profits overseas.

In collaborating with US business interests, AIFLD collaborates with the CIA. According to ex-CIA officer, Phillip Agee, in his book *Inside the Company: A CIA Diary*, AIFLD provides the cover for CIA labor operations in Latin America.



AIFLD provides information to the CIA through its "social projects." Detailed questionnaires on trade unions and trade unionists must be filled out for any union involved in one of these projects. AIFLD has training courses for Latin trade unionists in Front Royal, VA. The training consists of course in anti-communism and American trade unionism ("what's good for business is good for workers"). Information is also provided through the International Trade Secretariats, autonomous confederations of unions involved in similar occupations.

The primary threat to US interests (being the interests of US business) in Latin America comes from the Latin American workers and peasants. A major function then of the CIA is to gather information, disrupt and destroy organizations, political parties and governments that represent those workers.

Since 1962, with the help of AIFLD, the CIA has been involved with government overthrows in Guyana (1963), Brazil (1964), Uruguay (1973), Chile (1973) and Argentina (1976). In each case, a constitutionally elected government was replaced with brutal military dictatorships whose primary task has been to stamp out workers' rights.

Was AIFLD involved? Up to its ears. Here is what William Doherty of AIFLD had to say after the military coup in Brazil: "What happened in Brazil April 1 did not just happen — it was planned and planned months in advance. Many trade union leaders — some of whom were actually trained in our institute — were involved in the revolution and overthrow of Goulart (constitutionally elected President).

Specifically what AIFLD trainees did was break a general strike called to prevent the military from taking power. Communications workers in AIFLD-trained unions kept telegraph lines open to coordinate troop movements.

In Chile, AIFLD trained professional and truck owners' associations. It then planned, directed and subsidized strikes by these associations to paralyze the government and pave the way for the military take over.

Chile is a country 6000 miles away from here, along the southwest coast of South America. In 1970, the workers in that country: miners, ironworkers, electrical workers, garment workers, longshorement, etc. elected a national President, Salvador Allende. Todo it, they worked through the organization of their Central Workers Federation (called CUT, the federation of Chilean trade unions).

The workers voted for Allende because he represented the interests of the workers, not the interests of the owners. Previous governments in Chile, like the government in the US, always benefited the owners, and wrote laws against the workers. Allende began to change that. The workers got the privileges and the tax breaks, not the owners.

In 1973, the Chilean armed forces, supported and directed by the Pentagon, killed Allende and 40,000 other Chileans. Today there is no CU, no right to strike, no collective bargaining. There is widespread unemployment (18-25%) and some of the worst inflation in the world. Since 1973, the real wages of workers has been slashed 50%.

In a time when multinational corporations dominate the world economy, the smashing of worker organizations in one country means the weakening of those organizations in others. It is obvious that the bargaining position of unions in this country is seriously impaired when the company has the option to move to a country where cheap labor is guaranteed. When companies are making super-profits in one part of the world, they can afford to betough back home.

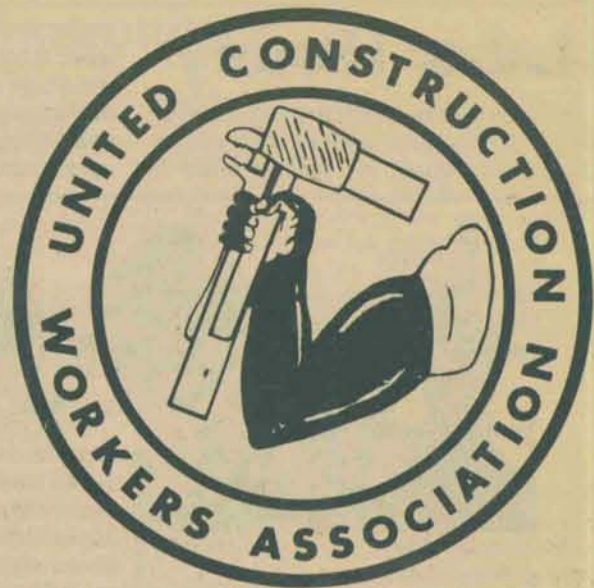
Most of the money for AIFLD's operation comes from US taxpayers. It also receives funds from multinational corporations and union dues from AFL-CIO. The interest of corporations in the activities of AIFLD are obvious. But why does the AFL-CIO sponsor and contribute money to AIFLD?

AIFLD claims to have the "whole hearted backing of the vast majority of the North American labor movement." This is doubtful since hardly any worker knows of AIFLD's existence, let alone what it does. And when a local union finds out about AIFLD, it immediately demand that the AFL-CIO have nothing to do with it. This is easy to understand since what happens to workers in Latin America affects what happens to workers in the US.

Trade unions are supposed to protect and promote the interests of workers, not companies. When the AFL-CIO acts against workers' interests in South America, trade unionists should look closely at whose interests are being served in the US.

Workers who belong to local trade unions should introduce and pass resolutions in their unions to withdraw its support of the AIFLD. Workers should talk to each other in try shacks at lunch, over coffee, and when you work, about the role of your union and the AFL-CIO in other countries.

AR IN VIETNAM



Who Are We?

"Now you got it...what you gonna do with it?" are the words from a recently popular song. The words fit well with the dilemma at U.C.W.A. After six years, we found ourselves in a situation with 500 black workers in the skilled trades and no program for change. We realized that having gotten into the building trades, we had won a great victory. We also recognized that even though our goal had been to fight our way into the building trades, our expectations were that things would be better all around. That was of course before we got in.

In 1970, when we first got together, there were only 10 black workers in the skilled trades. We talked about all the problems in our community (that was the year the police set up and killed Larry Ward). We talked about the problems of the failing school system, and the high unemployment rate.

We desired to fight for what we knew were our rights as workers with the hope that this would somehow help solve these community problems. We were sure that the lack of economic opportunities were tied to these problems.

1975 — now we've got it

Five years later the ten black construction workers had mushroomed into 500. We had fought a good battle and learned some valuable lessons. However, that was the year the police killed Joe Hebert.

The Seattle Urban League completed an unemployment survey and it showed that the real unemployment rate was up from 1970; and, Garfield was winning at basketball and losing our kids.

What was all this fighting about? The people in our communities had supported our fight for more jobs in the building trades. We now had an obligation to fight for real change. What about all those lessons we had learned in our struggle to gain entry into the skilled trades?

We first started to look at ourselves as an organization. We were no long a black workers group, but a multi-national group with Chinese, Filipino, and black workers in our ranks and leadership. We had come to realize that the same problems that affect the black community also affect other Third World communities.

We had three experienced organizers who had spent a total of four years organizing workers in seven other cities. And, we had successes in those cities similar to the ones gained in Seattle. We had developed our own law office, the Northwest Labor and Employment Law Office (LELO), along with the Alaska Cannery Worker's Association and the United Farmworker's Union. It was staffed with three full time lawyers who had lots of experience in labor and employment discrimination laws. Consequently, we developed a sharp and clear understanding of how to use the law to fight for our rights. We also learned of the limitations of the law.

In short, we had a much broader view of the problem. We knew that the problem was not simply a black one nor could it be solved by getting a few black workers into the building trades.

no separate peace

It was at this point that we realized our real problems. The question of police brutality and crime is tied to the problem of unemployment; and the problem of unemployment is tied to the problem of poor education.

We had also witnessed the actions of the poverty programs and government agencies as they came and pacified all the black leadership, and then went out of business, leaving the basic social problems unanswered and unresolved.

This period in our development was also the period of startling revelations on the part of our governments wrong doing both here at home and abroad. We watched our President lie about petty crimes that he and his men had committed. And we listened to the Secretary of State admit to crimes that he and the CIA had committed abroad.

We came to realize that the national interest of our country was in fact the interest of the large multi-national corporations. The same corporations that closed their shops in this country and moved them to other countries, where there were new sources of raw materials and native people they could exploit for cheaper labor. All this...while at the same time causing massive unemployment here at home.

We also witnessed the struggle of the working people in Vietnam and all of Asia, the people of Angola and all of Africa, and the people of Chile and all of Latin and South America. We became aware of the problems of white workers and recognized that they also were the victims of layoffs, inadequate pension plans, and poor schools. The same dope that had destroyed our communities was now creeping into their communities. We came to the conclusion that all our problems were tied together and that there could be "no separate peace."

The question then before us was, "...what do we have?..." We knew we had 500 workers out there in the building trades among thousands of white workers. We very quickly recognized that as workers, we also fought the wars and built the country. Now we keep it solvent with our pension plan monies (see article on front page "Pensions — Our Future Security?"). We knew that any changes would have to be made by all of us. What about a united action by national minority workers and white workers??

...what you gonna do with it?

Our first task now was to assess the objective conditions around us. We had come to the conclusion that there would be "no separate peace," yet we found the majority of our members had in fact declared a separate peace. Some had moved to the suburbs. Others had forgotten they were in the skilled trades because of the mass struggle of the people who had come before them, and wrongly saw themselves as individuals who got there on their own merits. Still others were taking advantage of every opportunity to keep their job and bad mouthing any and all forms of militancy. In short, we had to fight individualism and opportunism in our own ranks.

The white workers were still smarting over the fact that we had gotten into the building trades and were a threat to "their jobs." (The fact that we had been engaged in struggle for jobs and a better life made us see more clearly our task.) They had been put into a defensive position, one of conserving status quo, and had come to a wrong conclusion. They saw us as a dual union until we proved that we were fighting to get into the trade unions. (We are now and have always been opposed to all forms of dual unionism.) They saw us (national minorities) as the problem, i.e. a threat to their jobs, welfare, crime, etc. Added to the problems of our own individualism and opportunism were the problems of white chauvinism and racism among the white workers. These had to be overcome before we could mount a united action which would be in the interest of all working men and women.

We made an attempt at unity with white workers by demanding that employers pay them a day's pay whenever jobs were shut down by UCWA. We took the position that no UCWA member should jump the out-of-work-list to be called to work by employers ahead of others, black or white.

In 1975 we put forth the demands of jobs for all, tax the corporations' profits, and shorten the work week. None of these calls were supported by white workers. We started to understand that many of them had not fought and didn't understand that they could win greater control of their lives.

We looked at the history of white workers to try and understand why they did not join us. We were surprised when we found the grandparents of today's white workers being hung in Pennsylvania, shot in Colorado, framed in Utah, and beaten in Everett. We wondered why they didn't fight today as their grandparents and great-grandparents had fought. Then we came to understand that they themselves did not know this important part of history and therefore did not understand the lessons to learn from it.

We found the leadership in the local trade unions were the same as the poverty pimps in our communities. Every time the workers tried to fight, the leadership found ways to make deals with management for a labor-management peace. We found all signs of democracy gone from the trade unions each time the rank-and-file demanded their rights. The International President would say, "...Be cool, ...from where I sit, I can see the whole picture..." And indeed he could.

In short, we found the trade union leadership united with management and ready to fight against us (national minorities). We had it...what were we gonna do with it?

toward a principled unity

"We starting all over again, it's going to be rough on us,...but we're going to make it." These words come from another popular song and this is where we find ourselves today. We see the problem much clearer today than we saw it in the spring of 1970. We will not be misled by our government or trade union bureaucrats. Nor will we allow opportunism and individualism in our ranks.

We knew we needed unity with the white worker to win our common struggle for a democratic union.

But what about the racism and elitism based on skill that divides the workers? Would this be a fight where we would support the issues and get whatever's left? NO! This time we had to fight first for a principled unity. This time all those engaged in the struggle would know all the issues. The unity would be forged on principles, not race.

The roots of racism, national chauvinism, opportunism and individualism can be understood only through the study of history. We realized we had to know the past in order to understand the present. We knew we had a task of study and education on our hands.

We will demand that our members know who they are as working people. We will demand that our members understand the historical developments of this country and the rest of the world. We recognize that this can only be done through intensive study.

We realize that through the study of history and through our own experience, we will come to understand the root cause of the chronic problems we continue to find ourselves dealing with and their connection with the peoples of Vietnam, Angola, Chile, and the rest of the working class struggles throughout the world.

Our recognition of the fact that we need allies in our struggle against wage slavery forces us to look outside ourselves. We will unite with all honest forces. We think that we have fought and won an important battle. However, we see the real war ahead. "But we gonna make it!"