

RADICAL AMERICA

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ITALY 1969 1970

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EDITORS'

INTRODUCTION

In this issue RA is presenting two sets of documents on working class struggles: a long series of documents from the Italian strikes and riots that have been given sporadic attention in the American media over the past two years; and a "model" American steel contract drawn up by the Writers' Workshop in Gary, Indiana based on demands raised by rank-and-file caucuses within local unions. Both sets of documents, and the accompanying commentaries by Dan Georgakas and Staughton Lynd, make clear the complex problems of working class struggles under conditions of advanced industrial capitalism. Militant workers are forced to fight not only against the capitalists and the state, but also against the bureaucratic leadership of ostensibly proletarian unions and parties. The Italian situation, in which unions are strong on the national level but incapable of dealing with the problems that the workers themselves find most pressing, has obvious parallels in the US. In both countries the unions can make some progress in getting wage increases, but find it impossible to control the intensity of work. This can only be accomplished informally by the direct action of the workers concerned, as the Lynd article makes clear.

American radicals often uncritically assume that the situation of the European workers is one of a united, militant class movement, quite unlike divided American workers. The Italian documents are striking because they point out problems of internal class divisions there very much like those that RA has long tried to analyze in the American proletariat. The Italian Southern migrants to the big industrial cities of Northern Italy face quite similar problems to those of the American blacks moving from the South to the North. Arriving on the scene after the good jobs have already been monopolized by earlier arrivals, both the Italian Southerner and the American black are forced to take the most monotonous, difficult, and poorly paid jobs. They are represented by unions and parties which are primarily sensitive to the demands of better established, more skilled workers. Both tend to live congregated

together in slums with poor housing and stores with high prices. It is not surprising, then, that both have a sense of themselves as composing a separate ethnic community. The Italian Southerners struck Northern factories in response to repression in the Southern town of Battipaglia, while American black auto workers forced the plants to close when Martin Luther King was assassinated. Riots involving both have taken place in which general ethnic community frustrations tended to merge with workplace frustrations, expressed directly or indirectly. And in both Italy and America working class unity has been impossible in the face of union refusals to make the demands of the most oppressed workers the demands of all the workers.

David Schanoes, a surrealist writing about the Chicago Post Office, shows the especially oppressive conditions of government workers, under heavy legal restraints in all manifestations of militancy from punching a supervisor to striking. This is the third article in our continuing series, "Work in America". We hope to present a wide variety of work experiences so that RA readers will have a better idea of the methods of struggle currently being employed by American workers and a sense of how today's workplace struggles can eventually become part of a national struggle for socialist revolution.

The CLR James piece on Black Studies was originally delivered as a speech in Detroit in the spring of 1970. RA feels that it makes very important points on the connections between James's black experience and the general history of the Western world sensitively. Only through understanding black and white interpenetration can one understand the rise of capitalism and its ultimate defeat.

After this issue goes to press, RA is moving to Boston. A collective remains in Madison working on a White Collar Workers issue scheduled for January 1972. The move to Boston will not mean an abandonment of our explorations into the American past, and we will retain our emphasis which has been growing over the past year on the experience and development of the American working class. However Boston will bring us into contact with new people and will allow a greater attention to developing Marxist theory capable of comprehending the contemporary American situation.

ITALY New Tactics & Organization

INTRODUCTION - Dan Georgakas

The hot autumn of 1969, when tens of thousands of workers and students demonstrated throughout Italy, let loose the frustrations and angers that had been accumulating since the end of World War II. During that period, Italy had achieved economic growth through planned development in the North paid for by planned underdevelopment in the South. The Southern workers who flocked to Northern cities were fairly conservative in the early years of migration, but the forced separation from their families, the contact with traditionally radical Northerners, and the poor conditions of life and work made them rebellious. The growing revisionism of the Communist Party during the same period had alienated many of its working-class supporters as the Party bargained for a place in government and for general respectability by offering higher productivity and industrial peace. Foreign commentators spoke of an Italian economic miracle, but in fact housing, education, medical care, and social services of every kind remained relatively inadequate, inefficient, and in many areas simply non-existent.

The French May acted directly as a catalyst upon the Italian ferment. Workers and students came together in Workers Committees and Base Committees which produced a wave of devastating demonstrations and strikes. The struggles within the factories and universities spilled into the streets and mobilized whole communities. Permanent contacts between workers and students were set up in important factories in Turin, Milano, and Porto Marghera (Venice complex). In April 1969

the southern town of Battipaglia erupted when a state-run tobacco factory was closed. Rioting continued for weeks, with one worker killed by the police. A year later three days of street fighting took place in Porto Marghera, with workers coming to participate from a hundred miles away. Demonstrations in the schools and factories continued in every section of the country right through to the present time. Unlike France, significant numbers of workers have refuted the leadership of the CP, and many more have adopted a fraternal attitude toward the extreme Left which has been able to maintain a situation of permanent tension and frequent crisis.

Much in the Italian events is particular to a national or at least a European context. But some aspects of the struggle relate directly to the American experience. The problems facing the Turino auto workers are not much different from those facing the Detroit auto workers. The techniques by which advanced capitalist management centralizes power, rationalizes resources, forces higher production, and sedates rebellion are all relevant to America. The CP and left unions cannot be absolutely equated with the liberal Democrats and the American unions, but there are striking similarities, and the trend seems to be for those similarities to grow. What can be valuable for American revolutionaries studying the developments in Italy is not so much the facts and circumstances of struggle, but the tactics employed and some of the new ideological positions being formed.

The most striking new development in terms of organization has been the formation of the extra-parliamentary groups. These groups are made up primarily of students, and they specifically reject the parliamentary road to power. Some of them have established a sizable national presence. Some are strong in specific factories or localities. Some are insignificant grouplets. Like the New Left in the US, the most important of these groups, Lotta Continua (Continuous Struggle, or The Struggle Goes On) and Potere Operaio (Workers Power), represent a decisive break with the past. Others have put Standard Italian wine in new plastic bottles in much the same way PL and YSA are not truly New Left, but younger versions of the organizational theory the old SDS and SNCC were rejecting.

Lotta Continua has been the largest and most active of the Italian extra-parliamentary groups over the longest period of time. Its cadres are influential in various factories, especially in the crucial Turino area. The group has attracted young workers and agitates daily at the factory gates. LC has been distinguished as the most persistent and aggressive critic of the CP and the unions, arguing that the workers must reject these organisms as thoroughly as they reject capitalism. LC's attack on the CP goes beyond economic retreat in the factories to the question of making the Italian Revolution. LC points out the opportunistic hypocrisy of the CP in idolizing the Black Panthers while squashing any discussion of armed struggle in Italy. LC asks by what

logic the CP can mount national demonstrations for Angela Davis while doing nothing to publicize the murder of an Italian anarchist in the Milano police station. LC's own editorials and activities on the issue led to the imprisonment of its weekly's editor and considerable other repression.

One of the characteristics of LC has been an anarchic organization that allowed many local units to have different policies. This has also led to a situation where the national office sometimes has extraordinary power to speak for the entire organization. A recent convention of LC attracted 5,000 delegates, but a select group meeting weeks before had formulated the policy to be adopted, a situation which brought forth considerable criticism from within the ranks of LC and other groups.

LC attempts to intervene in any disruption which occurs in the Italian order. This has led to some over-extension of manpower and revolution-by-media. An example of this occurred around the failure of the government to name Reggio Calabria as the capital of its region. A mass protest developed that fell to the leadership of fascists. LC was the first group of the Left to support the struggle and to admit the masses had been correct and the Left wrong in not taking up the issue. LC further criticized the Left for leaving the field to the fascists. This public position, however, was not backed up by physical action, and many workers were puzzled by an apparent coalition of fascists and Marxists, a situation the CP exploited to the hilt.

The Potere Operario group has a history going back through several important Italian journals, and its original members worked with the group which eventually became Lotta Continua. PO differs from LC in concentrating its limited strength primarily on the factories and in seeking a unified theoretical base. The workers' committee at Porto Marghera has a 10-year history of development and affiliates with PO. It is held up as an example of what the group seeks to create. In this sense it is like the old SDS, which felt that its community organizers had succeeded when they were no longer needed. PO has done considerable work on migrant labor problems in both direct agitation and research. PO extends the Italian experience to say that European development in general has been achieved through the deliberate underdevelopment of the South, which now extends beyond continental boundaries to take in Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, Turkey, and lately some parts of Black Africa. PO proposes a social wage for all Italians — whether employed or unemployed, Southerner or Northerner — as a means to undercut the uneven development. This position has been attacked for being too easily diluted into the guaranteed annual wage proposed by American liberals.

PO strikes more unequivocally at capitalism when it poses NO WORK as the conscious goal of the revolution. This puts them directly at odds with the CP, which wants to tie wages to higher productivity, or MORE work. The NO WORK demand was developed from specific Italian

sources, but it is related theoretically to the writings of James Boggs and to the popular 20-30-and-out sentiments of rank-and-file workers in the UAW. PO also attempts to instill ultimate revolutionary ends into the present struggle. Thus, it likes to pose demands for free rent, free transportation, free education, and so forth to directly undermine the money economy from the earliest moments of the revolutionary process. More rigidly organized than LC and more academic minded, PO keeps up serious contacts with worker committees throughout the US and Europe. Where LC has given much exposure and support to the Panthers, PO has been more interested in the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

While the tempo of struggle has not abated in the past year, the extra-parliamentary groups have not been able to grow substantially or to extend their power. Repression accounts only partially for this situation. The extra-parliamentary groups have proven their ability to lead mass actions by students, workers, and communities on a wide geographical and theoretical front, but the existence of so many bickering groups (dozens in Milano, for instance) has tended to diffuse their power and confuse sympathizers who do not belong to a specific group. Often workers will follow the extra-parliamentary leadership during wildcats and demonstrations, but will vote for the CP and use union machinery. In short, rather than transferring their support to the extra-parliamentary groups, workers seem to be using whatever tool seems best for the immediate moment.

The union and party functionaries have toughened their attitude to the corporations to check eroding support. This has been especially true of lower-echelon leadership which tends to be genuinely working class. Workers also have expressed certain reservations and mistrust of students. They don't like the know-it-all tone of many leaflets, the pat slogans, the cavalier dismissal of the CP. Some feel the middle class students were anti-CP before because they were bourgeois, and now they have somersaulted to be anti-CP from a left position, but in fact still want to dominate workers. This feeling is less prevalent in Turino, which has many worker-students and students from working families.

Another frequently voiced feeling is that the groups have yet to prove themselves, and proving themselves does not mean simply leafleting day and night. Italian workers want a structure to relate to. They know the gamut of repression they face in the factory, and they know they can get a minimal protection from the CP and the unions. They are not sure the extra-parliamentary groups can provide that minimum or even want to. The workers still are not sure the students may not just go home one day or become so frustrated that they refute the working class altogether and take the position that they can make the revolution alone.

Underlying these doubts is the general problem of revolutionary

organization. Having rejected the Leninist party and having shown it is not needed to co-ordinate national struggles, the extra-parliamentary groups still haven't dealt with how a non-Leninist organization helps organize the revolution itself. Some groups advance the notion that the workers will create their own forms without outside tutelage. Others are content to lead by exemplary action eventually carried to the phase of armed struggle. Still others are pulled to some kind of formal party with the emphasis on democracy rather than on centralization. The problem confuses every action, yet it is rarely posed in mammoth meetings. Usually it comes in the thousands of discussions in working and living areas where people express their doubts about joining what still seems an extremely amorphous "movement". The CP has taken the position that the militants mean well for the most part, but are immature. The CP counts on the groups' tiring out dissident workers and thus eventually strengthening the Party by showing that it alone has the endurance and knowledge for the long-term struggle. With this strategy in mind, the CP exploits every extravagant statement and mistake that inevitably arises in struggle. The CP holds up the example of Communist Party participation in the governments of Chile and Sweden to show how its policies will eventually prevail even though they are less glamorous than Che Guevara's unsuccessful effort in Bolivia.

Nonetheless, the pressure of the extra-parliamentary forces has produced one serious break in the organization of the Communist Party itself. A group of long-time cadre, including members of parliament and the central committee, had to be expelled after publishing a series of theses challenging the basic direction of the Party. The group calls itself *Il Manifesto* and terms its politics extra-parliamentary, but in fact it is the stalking horse for a new party. The famous theses amount to a "good" communist party, a "revolutionary" communist party which includes many of the demands and tactics of the Italian New Left, but grafted onto a traditional party structure.

Il Manifesto hopes to serve a double purpose. First it seeks to unite the extra-parliamentary forces into one organization, and second it hopes to chip away sections of the CP. So far it has made dubious progress in both areas. Its biggest success is in establishing a national four-page daily circulating 100,000 copies. Unfortunately, the paper is dull in looks and content, more for intellectuals than for workers. The defections from the CP have been few and tend to include not worker sections but dissident intellectuals. Some of the extra-parliamentary groups in turn charge *Il Manifesto* with playing the old Italian game of let's-make-a-new-party-with-us-as-the-central-committee.

A second split at least partially triggered by the extra-parliamentary Left has occurred to PSUIP, the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity, a party in close alliance with the CP. The entire left wing of the party, including all major worker sections, has split and created a

monthly-soon-to-be-weekly called Contropotere (Counter Power) with a circulation of about 30,000. The Left PSIUP is very close to the extra-parliamentarians in many theoretical areas, but feels strongly the need for basic organization. Its cadres are placed in the traditional cell, section, federation, regional structure which seeks to have daily contact with its members in their places of living and work. The Left PSIUP feels that many of the students are not close enough to workers as people, and so offer what are essentially romantic and unreasonable alternatives. The group split from the mother party because it felt that the national organization was simply a shadow of the CP without any individual personality or program. Its cadres hope to maintain their contact with workers enrolled in the CP while taking part in activities and debates of the extra-parliamentary Left.

What is so profound about the disputes and actions of the Italian Left is their mass nature. Positions and ideas are debated at a popular level — which is unimaginable in the US. The militancy of Italian workers is proverbial. In the decade of the Sixties they lost more hours due to strikes than all the Common Market nationals combined. They have dealt with the problem of clerical workers who would not strike by forcing them out of their offices. They have battled with fascists and police and even their own union bureaucrats. On a shop-floor basis, some factories are under rank-and-file leadership. Rather than the protracted strikes favored in the US, the Italians prefer the work stoppage of a few hours or a few days, a practice effectively destroying the routine of production without forcing economic hardship. Contrary to the generally non-violent nature of Italian society Italian workers have frequently employed elements of arson, sabotage, and personal physical violence. Struggles in other areas of the economy have increasingly matched the militancy of the workers. The struggle over education has spread from the universities to the high schools, and from the high schools to the lower schools. The occupation of deserted houses has gone on in all parts of the country, including the red cities of Bologna and Florence, forcing the CP administrations to take action against the very classes they are supposed to be leading.

One great contradiction in the revolutionary process in Italy is the lack of a strong counter-culture. Blatant male chauvinism is still the rule throughout society, even in revolutionary groups, even in those revolutionary groups producing the first women's liberation sections. Long hair and exotic dress are more likely to be the uniform of the upper bourgeoisie than that of the working class or of student militants. There is no underground press, no youth music, and no underground literature. Divorce has finally been legalized, but sexual oppression of every kind is still the norm. Although some cracks in the traditional ways are showing, even the innovators tend simply to copy what is coming out of Northern Europe and the US, and to copy the form rather than the substance. LC has taken the lead in using counter-cultural

material in its publications, and the extra-parliamentary Left at large has used obscenity and profanity in its leaflets, a practice that the CP frowns on. "Porco Dio" identifies a challenge to Catholic hegemony. An illegal ham radio station has sometimes disrupted the national network, but all such tactics still tend to be very much the exception.

The lack of a truly liberating counter-culture could become a serious flaw in the Italian revolution. Certainly the creation of a dynamic women's liberation movement is absolutely essential to carry out any Italian revolution, especially with struggles opening up in areas like Calabria, Sardinia, and Sicily, where Italian male chauvinism reaches its peak. One hopeful aspect is that the women's liberation movement in Italy, although still in its infancy, already puts a decided emphasis on the problems of working-class women.

The material which follows is only an introduction to events in Italy rather than a definitive evaluation. Very often the Italian movement is richest in just those areas where the American movement is weakest or only beginning to accumulate experiences. Americans seeking to re-establish a militant working-class movement in the United States can learn much from the struggles of our Italian comrades.

The Italian documents are the main body of a British pamphlet. Additional copies and information about other relevant pamphlets can be obtained from Big Flame, 78 Clarendon Road, Wallasey, Cheshire, England.

Main Events:

ITALY 1969-70

1969: 50 labour contracts in the public and private sectors to be renewed. The unions had a programme of escalating strikes, but the struggle went far out of their control. Wildcat actions, starting from FIAT (April '69) and developing through Pirelli, Alfa, Chatillon, Fatme, Petrolchimica and many others; led in many places by rank and file committees set up in '68.

The unions tried to control this wave by calling general go-home strikes. These got out of control: July 3rd riot in Turin was followed by resignation of government; November 19th strike became a street battle in Milan in which a cop was killed.

The strength of the workers' movement won big gains (December '69 and January '70). Ruling class counterattack followed: fascist bombings (Milan, December 12th) were answered by a massive police round-up of the Left. And 10,000 workers were awaiting trial after the events of the Hot Autumn.

More than this was needed by the employers to recoup their losses. They aimed to stop the wage struggles, eat up the gains of '69 with inflation and price rises, and introduce new controls over workers. Speed-up provoked violent strikes in many places: Alfa, FIAT, Pirelli, et cetera. Porto Marghera exploded into three days of street fighting (Venice, October '70). The government took a last resort: as in July '69, they stage-managed their own resignation, forcing the unions to call off a general strike (July 7th). The "crisis" cooled a few union heads, but did not stop the struggles in the factory and the community. The capitalists' attack intensified with a series of vicious tax measures aimed at workers (October '70: the "Decretone").

Through all this time the South had seen urban rioting, beginning with Battipaglia (April '79), through Caserta, Pescara, and finally Reggio Calabria, where government troops were kept on the alert for months.

The end of '70 saw a rising in the schools — strikes all over the country — and massive demonstrations against the repression and the Burgos trials.

1971 has continued at this level. Labour struggles are as widespread as ever, the South is no quieter, and the country is slipping into recession.

TRANSLATOR'S

Introduction

Of the articles included here 3 deal specifically with FIAT. This does not mean that FIAT has been the only struggle in Italy over the last few years. It has certainly occupied a key position, but only in a much wider context of struggles in every sector and every area. We hope to deal with these in our later pamphlet.

In late 1968 workers in Italy, in some sense following developments in France earlier in the year, had begun to set up Workers Committees and Base Committees in many of the major factories. The most influential of these were the committees at PIRELLI (Milan) and in Porto Marghera, where workers and students had been in close contact from an early stage. Turin developed in another way, with the setting up of a Worker-Student Assembly, bringing together workers (mainly from FIAT) and students in regular meetings. It was this assembly that co-ordinated work in Turin, in and around FIAT, all through the contract struggles of the Hot Autumn.

In July '69 a conference of these Workers Committees was held in Turin, bringing together militants from all over Italy to discuss the experiences they had had in organizing their respective work places, and to work out a common (rank and file) strategy for the coming battle over the contracts. The main speeches were from FIAT Mirafiori, the chemical workers in Porto Marghera, the metal-workers in Rome, from OLIVETTI and from other FIAT plants.

In April 1969 the Southern town of Battipaglia exploded over the closure of a state-run tobacco factory. There was rioting in the town for weeks, and a worker was killed by police "intervention".

The speech from Mirafiori, printed here, deals with the period from Battipaglia — when FIAT along with many other Italian factories struck in sympathy with the dead worker — to the battle in Corso Traiano. It explains how the workers organized inside the factory, the demands they were putting up, and how they planned the struggle over the renewal of the contracts in the Autumn of '69.

ORGANISING AT FIAT

This is a speech made by a FIAT worker at the National Conference of Workers' Base Committees in Turin July 26th-27th, 1969 describing the build-up to the struggles of the Hot Autumn in Italy, reprinted from La Classe Number 13-14, August 1969.

COMRADES,

I speak to you as a worker from FIAT Mirafiori. I want to explain how our struggles started there, how they developed, and the lessons we feel they hold for all Italian workers.

Nobody could say that our fight at Mirafiori developed out of the blue. It was the product of everything that the working class had learned by their struggles of 1968-69, and at Mirafiori the way in which all these experiences came together marked an important step forward in our political growth and understanding.

In April 1968 the union called us out on yet another routine strike concerning hours, piecework, and speed-up. And this was where it all started. We realized immediately that our unity and militancy on the strike were much higher than we had expected, and that if we acted on our own strength we could really make something of the strike. But right away the union jumped in to keep us in check by calling for referendums, secret ballots, and the like. Everybody understood what the union was up to, but at the same time we weren't able to put this understanding into practice. We knew that it was time for us to take the leadership of the struggles into our own hands, and that this was something we would soon be in a position to do.

BATTIPAGLIA

It was during the strike in sympathy with the two workers killed in Battipaglia (April '69) that we took our next step in this direction. We are workers who come from the South, and we carry on our shoulders the full weight of the exploitation that capitalism allows in the South so that it can increase its profits in the North. We were angry, and instead of just going home as we would have done on a normal strike, we stayed inside. Just downed tools and ambled off the job, right under the noses of the foremen, to a mass meeting in the canteen. This was our first step toward internal struggle — keeping the struggle inside the factory — and the workers at Mirafiori were beginning to discover their own strength. It was a good experience.

After the strike, not surprisingly, many comrades thought that we should begin to push harder. But for the time being this was difficult, because there was nowhere they could turn for organizational support. The unions were out of the question, and the students hadn't yet arrived on the scene.

The strike for Battipaglia was a political strike. A factory in the North responds to and concentrates the immense drive of a city that revolts in the South. The revolt was against planned underdevelopment that drives young, able-bodied men and women from the South to seek work at FIAT and other factories in the North. But we can say that the struggles that began almost immediately after the Battipaglia strike were political too. They began in the Auxiliary Plant, and spread like lightning to the crane drivers, the trolley drivers, and the press shops, and in every case were dominated by the militancy and the drive of the immigrant workers. Immigrants from the South, showing their anger against the boss class, against the whole planning policy of capitalism, its government, its police, et cetera.

They arrive in Turin, hunting the big wage packets they have heard so much about, but find instead that FIAT is a slave camp. Naturally they rebel.

They refuse to work. Passively at first (with thousands of workers a day going off sick), but then more actively. They force the unions to call strikes, and really begin to make their presence felt.

UNION STRIKES?

The labor unions had 1969 all planned out as far as strikes were concerned. They wanted a whole series of strikes just involving a few people at a time, so that production would never be blocked completely, and so as to prevent large numbers of workers getting together. But we took the initiative and speeded things up, which meant an almost total stoppage of production, involving the great majority of workers.

When the union called a two-hour stoppage, the men made it four, and later stepped it up to eight. And different shops would stop work at different times, so causing maximum havoc. The presses weren't producing a thing, the cranemen and the trolley drivers had nothing to transport, and thus the production lines were virtually at a standstill.

This was dangerous for the unions. They had lost control, and they had to try to stem the tide of the workers' struggles. So they tried the same arguments that the foremen and the supervisors use: that every hour that the workers struck autonomously (that is, unofficially) should be penalized. But the threats didn't work, and the strike carried on. The very fact that the line was not running sparked off meetings and discussions among the men: first of all inside the factory, next to the stationary assembly lines, and then outside, together with the groups of students who had gathered at the gates. The strike spread down the

line, and political discussion followed it. Everyone was arguing and talking, and it was suggested that the demands of the Press Shop could be taken up by the assembly lines.

The strike had begun in protest against the speed of the line. But work speeds are decided from above in the factory, and are based on the whole way that capitalism organizes work — that is, gradings and wages. So our initial limited protest soon spread to all aspects of the work relationship.

WILDCAT

For the moment, though, it was important to pass from words to action. There was one line still running, and we had to stop it, even though it was our weakest point in the factory. And this is where the Snake came in. For three days there were stoppages up and down the line, and we would all get together in big groups and march round the factory, pulling out anybody who was still working. This was how we stopped the "500" line. And we added demands for big wage increases to our initial protest.

At this point the union really tried to throttle our struggle. It reached into its box of tricks and pulled out a new disguise for itself: the line delegate. They said that the delegates would represent us, but in actual practice the delegates' only role is to negotiate with the boss the extent of our exploitation.

And just as we say NO to exploitation, we say NO to the delegate. If we really need anything like a delegate, then our attitude is that WE ARE ALL DELEGATES. When they try to speed up the line, we'll just stop working.

That's the way we organize internally, and naturally the union's game did not succeed. After two days of official union stoppages, and four days of truce for the negotiations, the unions mistakenly thought they had the situation back under control. But on the very day they informed us that they had signed the agreement about the delegates, the strike restarted, and once again all the lines were stopped.

The unions had called four days of truce, but we had used those four days to prepare our struggle, to clarify our demands, and during those days, in some shops, our thrust began to take on the forms of a real autonomous organization. This time there were hundreds and hundreds of us marching round the factory in the Snake, and we marched till we came to the big office block that houses the administration. We weren't going to avoid a confrontation with the management and the unions — in fact we went looking for it, determined to hit them where it hurts.

By this time things were no longer running on an ad hoc day-to-day basis. In Shop 54 we knew we would be able to last out about a week. So we organized with other shops so that they would relieve us when we'd had enough. And sure enough, at the end of a week, the strike is taken up by Shops 52 and 53 and once again the lines are at a standstill.

ORGANIZATION

All this has needed, and will need, organization. We have begun to build organization at two levels — both inside and outside the factory. There are groups of workers who get together on the job, and they organize with the students into intervention groups outside the factory gates. Then there are the worker-student assemblies that we have been holding every day in a warehouse near the factory, where we come together to exchange and share news and information from all the different plants and factories in the FIAT complex.

But these assemblies don't just work at the level of co-ordination. On one hand we began producing leaflets to tell workers in other parts of the complex how our struggles were going, and we also began to take initiative in deciding what course the struggles would take. In fact it was in one of these oh-so-many assemblies that the workers and students decided to organize the demonstration for July 3rd of this year, which, as everybody must know, exploded into a great workers' battle.

At this point (July '69) we are now faced with the coming clash over the renewal of the contracts, and in the light of this, over the past few weeks, we have been restoring a strong degree of autonomy to the worker-student intervention groups at the gates. The aim of this has been to widen political discussion at a shop-floor level, and to put us all in a better position to begin to consolidate the organization of all workers at all points in all of FIAT's factories. When the official union strikes begin this is going to be crucial.

WORKERS AND STUDENTS

There are some things that ought to be said about our relations, as workers, with the students, and about the relationship of the factory as a whole to the external political groups. Our reason for deciding to work with the students was, and is, political. The students with whom we work are people who fight, and who are ready to fight with us, and like us, against the common boss, right to the end. The unions and the political parties will not fight the boss to the bitter end: they stop halfway at compromises that only end up reinforcing the control that our employers have over us. Which means that they're always fouling up the works, trying to put the brakes on our struggle, trying to slow us down.

It's clear to us that if you're going to fight the employers right to the last ditch, you need organization and a clear political understanding of what you are going to do. It is a struggle that's going to last a long time, and you can't just improvise it from day to day. But we do not accept that we should be fed this organization and this understanding ready-made by groupuscules that come round advertising themselves

and who are far more interested in strengthening their organizations than in helping us in our fight. In the last few months we have seen so many of these groups coming round, particularly when the struggle's all over. But we have had nothing to do with them.

It's for us to create our own organization and our own political understanding based on our own experiences of struggle continuously discussed and examined among ourselves.

The contact with the students is also useful in other respects, because we can pool experiences of struggles in other places, as the first step toward our unification with the struggles of all working people — farm labourers, peasants, white-collar workers, technicians.

CORSO TRAIANO

And inevitably, the organization that we have created will have to come to terms with not only the problems inside the factory, but also the problems of the workers' life in the city — of our relationship with this dormitory city, this robber city of Turin. We have understood that FIAT controls this town, and that therefore it is not good enough to fight just inside the factory. We must also fight outside. The struggle must become generalized, massive, and social. And this is precisely what happened a few weeks ago, when the struggle spread outside, and we had the streetfighting in Corso Traiano.

By now everyone knows the story of Corso Traiano. After the battle we went back into the factory with our heads held high. We have not been defeated. We are not defeated. Anybody who says that the struggle has died down since Corso Traiano is forgetting two elementary facts:

First, that Agnelli (head of FIAT) has not managed to regain control over the speed of the line, over timings, over the whole way production is supposed to run.

Second, that he has not been able to do this because our organization is getting stronger and stronger inside the factory.

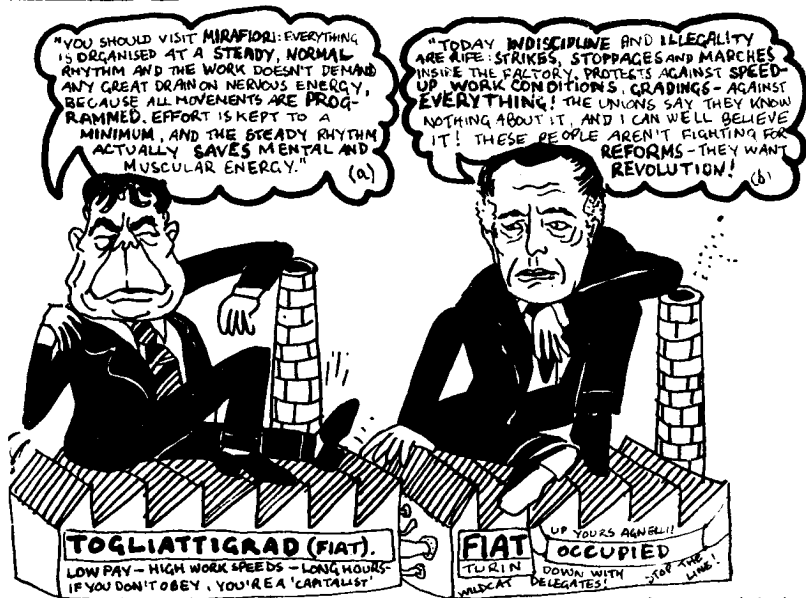
We say this so as to highlight a tendency: that is not to say that every now and then Agnelli finds himself unable to speed up the line, but to state categorically that from now on he is going to find it less and less possible. The workers of Mirafiori are no longer going to be trodden on. We have organization now, and not the sort of organization that is only strong during high points of struggle. The proof of this is that Agnelli has been forced to take back various people that he had sacked or transferred, because of the organized response from the workers in Shops 53 and 54 and in the Auxiliaries.

But this is not enough. We must go further.

The next stage will be the renewal of the contracts. In September the majority of Italian workers (metal workers, chemical workers, building workers, and others) are going to find themselves called on strike, all together, by their union.

We know what the contracts mean for the unions and the employers.

They are their way of ensuring that workers only fight once in every three years, and that after that they sit still and behave like good children. The contracts are a sort of cage, in which the worker is locked up, and the union given the keys and told to make sure that the cage stays shut. But in the last year, in hundreds of factories all over Italy, it has become clear that workers don't accept orders from bosses or from unions. The employers would have liked to come to the renewal of the contracts after a long period of social peace, and with a working class that was divided and weak. But the battles that workers have been fighting over the last year have smashed that plan in one factory after another.



(a) From an article in the Russian daily 'ISZVESTIA' (b) From an interview with Agnelli, head of FIAT.

Now, the first thing to be said is that we refuse to tie ourselves to the contracts. The employers and the unions have already planned out the strikes for the contracts, but we refuse to fight by their timetable. However we realize that we shall be able to use the renewal of the contracts for developing our own struggle. It will enable us to use the strength that we have developed, and unite the factories that have been in the vanguard of the struggle with those that have so far remained outside it. The employers and the unions use the contracts as a means to keep us down, but we shall transform them into weapons with which the working class will be able to organize and fight. We shall use them to develop the revolutionary political organization of the workers and all working people. We shall do this by consolidating and generalizing

the lessons that we have learned from the struggles of the past year. The workers have virtually expelled the union from the factory, and have begun to formulate their own demands, and carry them forward in a fight that is led entirely by themselves. During contract struggles we shall have to make this a permanent conquest of the working class, in every Italian factory, in every productive sector, exploding all the ways in which the contracts and the unions are designed to divide and weaken us.

During the struggles of the last year certain demands have cropped up repeatedly. We must take these and use them as our first priority to unify workers throughout Italy. They are:

Equal wage raises for all, not linked to productivity or any other employer's standard (like time and motion, incentives, plus payments, conditions payments, et cetera)

An immediate reduction in working hours, without loss of wages.

Abolition of compulsory overtime.

Abolition of the lower gradings as the first step toward abolition of all grading divisions.

Complete parity with the white collar workers.

We are organizing political discussion on these points by circulating a discussion document inside the factories.

'In statements to the Bologna newspaper 'Resto del Carlino' today the heads of Italy's two largest industrial groups, Sig. Gianni Agnelli of FIAT and Sig. Giuseppe Petrilli of IRI expressed their anxiety over the situation in industry, which is grinding to a halt because of the strikes. In describing the situation within the plants, Sig. Petrilli said bluntly that it amounted to anarchy.' (Financial Times 8th July 1970)

But it is not enough for us to know what we're fighting for, because we also have to know how we're going to fight. The age of passivity is dead. The old days are past in which we would wait for the union to call a strike from the outside, and then take a day's holiday at home. It is possible, in fact probable, that as the autumn progresses wildcat actions are going to start happening in the same way in other factories. And if, in any place, the union does call an official strike, then it will be used by the workers as a chance to move, united, into the fight.

OUR FIGHT: OUR POWER

The sort of strikes that the union intends to call for the autumn are the sort that cost us the most and cost the employers the least — the sort where the employer has plenty of warning of the strike, and can



organize himself so as not to be hit too hard — and the sort that gives us precious little help to get together and organize ourselves. But in the strikes at Mirafiori, and previously at the PIRELLI rubber factory in Milan, as well as in many other advanced struggles recently, we have been able to organize in new ways. We have understood that if the factory is the heart of the employer's power, then it can and must become the center of our power. We have understood that organizing and fighting inside the factory allows us to come together to discuss and organize much more than was the case when we all just used to go home for the day. And we have understood that if we use this sort of organization, arranging to relieve each other in our strikes, taking it in turns to strike, we shall hit the employers more effectively, and pay less of the cost of strikes ourselves.

This kind of autonomous organization already exists in many shops at FIAT, and during the strikes for the contracts this autumn we are going to have to spread it — both to other parts of the plant, and to other factories that it has not yet reached. For us the password is FIGHT INSIDE THE FACTORY, because it is only through fighting inside the factory that we shall be in a position to outlast a prolonged clash with the bosses and the State. We must put them in the weakest position, where they will have to pay the highest price, and not us.

THE AUTUMN

I need hardly say that all this does not mean that we should confine our struggle to the shop floor. But we must use the factory to build the strength that will mean we can move outside of the factory in a way that is not totally disorganized, and in such time as we ourselves may choose. This also means that when employers try launching particularly hard attacks on us inside the factory — like lockouts and reprisal sackings — we shall be in a position to respond equally hard with an intensification of the struggle inside the factory, to the point of actually occupying it if need be.

Now, the struggles in the autumn are going to be hard. Nobody is saying that we shall see the final frontal clash of the proletariat with the armed forces of capitalism for the conquest of State power. But over the last year Italian workers have revealed a certain revolutionary awareness that their problems are class problems, and that the only way to solve them is to mount an attack on the system that perpetuates them, with the aim of destroying capitalism and abolishing all classes. Our problem now must be to use the struggles over the contracts this autumn to translate this general awareness into organization — the general autonomous organization of the Italian working class.

BATTLE IN CORSO TRAIANO

This article is taken from La Classe Number 10, July 1969. It is an account of a demonstration called by workers and students in Turin which developed into a running battle with police and spread to many other parts of the city.

THURSDAY, JULY 3RD, 1969

5:00 am Groups of workers and students gather at the gates of the Mirafiori and Rivalta plants for the strike picket. By 6 am barely a single person has entered the factory, either at Mirafiori or Rivalta. At Gates 1 and 2 of Mirafiori the police are out in force, with lorries and Black Marias. Police Chief Voria is doing his best to intimidate the workers and students: the picket lines are repeatedly being broken up and pushed back to the other side of the wide avenue that runs round Mirafiori.

A few scabs try to get in, and the police do everything in their means to prevent them being stopped. Despite this no more than five or six manage to get in, and at Gate 1 they are immediately met by workers coming off the night shift, who drive them right back out of the gates again.

1:00 pm Tension on the gates is rising. At every entrance the picket lines are growing. Whenever the workers try to stop the few scabs who are trying to enter the factory for the second shift, they are charged by the police.

2:00 pm In the area in front of Gate 2 the workers off Shifts 1 and 2 begin to gather, along with a few hundred students. There are already more than 3,000 people there, and people keep arriving. There are two big banners proclaiming "All Power to the Workers" and "The Struggle Goes On". A hundred, maybe two hundred police, in full riot gear, with helmets and tear gas, begin pushing people to the center of the area, deliberately provoking them and trying to isolate them in every way. The Police Chief announces that under no circumstances will the march be allowed to leave.

2:45 pm People are still standing there when the police make their first charge, brutal, with them using their rifle butts as clubs. From this moment on the charges follow thick and fast: the people disperse, regroup, scatter, and regather again. Police reinforcements arrive and begin to fire tear-gas grenades. They fire directly into the crowd. Nobody can breathe, and everybody scatters into the surrounding fields. The police start grabbing people. The response is immediate: the center of the street is won back again, and cobblestones gathered from the bed of the tramway begin to hail down on the police from all sides. They are driven back. By now the struggle is reaching mass

dimensions. Seeing that it is now impossible that the march should start from Mirafiori, a new departure point is proposed.

3:30 pm Around ten thousand people gather between Corso Agnelli and Corso Unione Sovietica. Then the march sets off. But when it turns into Corso Traiano the police attack in force, using jeeps to charge the crowds and tear-gas in incredible quantities. They try to encircle the crowd with a pincer action: with Carabinieri on one side and Public Security police on the other. Now a violent urban guerrilla battle begins which will last right on into the night. The police, with their violence and their tear-gas, are concentrating on preventing even small groups from re-forming. It is plain that they are absolutely determined to stop the march getting together again: they must foil any attempt at a repetition of the Piazza Statuto incident.

In the two hours that follow, the demonstration seems apparently to have dispersed. But in fact nobody has left the scene, and groups of people are reorganizing spontaneously, throwing rocks, and then dispersing, only to reappear somewhere else.

4:00 pm Workers from the FIAT plants at Lingotto and Rivalta start arriving. The workers and students are joined by people from the neighborhood around Mirafiori: young kids join the battle, women hand round damp handkerchiefs to protect people from the gas, and many local homes open their doors to comrades who are being chased by the police.

5:30 pm The real center of the battle is Corso Traiano. The wide avenue becomes the scene of a raging street battle: workers, students, and folk from the neighborhood return to the attack, construct the first barricades out of rocks, and almost succeed in capturing Police Chief Voria. Meanwhile groups of comrades have scattered and gone back to the University, where the Faculty of Architecture is occupied. Police arrive there with jeeps and lorries and make ready to surround the building. There is a moment of confusion and uncertainty. Some people are proposing that there should be a General Assembly inside the Faculty, so a couple of hundred people enter the building. The police promptly fire tear-gas grenades through the windows. For this they are attacked with a shower of rocks and bricks by the people who have stayed outside.

Outside the violence of the police onslaught and the violence of the rock-throwing increase. The battle spreads out of the courtyard into the street, into the arcades and the surrounding side-streets: there is tear-gas, hand-to-hand fighting, and some arrests.

6:30 pm The majority of the comrades set off once again for Corso Traiano, which by now is totally in the hands of the demonstrators.

People are still arriving. You can hear the steady rhythm of falling rocks.

The police have regrouped at the end of Corso Traiano. It's hard for them to surround and comb the whole area, what with the building sites,

the factories, and people's houses.

7:00 pm The sheer volume of the tear-gas forces the workers and students to withdraw. The police slowly regain Corso Traiano, but barricades are being built in all the sidestreets. People who are caught are beaten up and loaded onto Black Marias. Many police take a beating too.

8:00 pm The battle spreads. The most violent fighting is in front of the FIAT administrative offices in Corso Traiano, in Corso Agnelli, in all the side-streets, and in Piazza Bengasi, where the police are making absurd, insanely violent charges. The comrades respond to the charges by building barricades one after another. Three cars are set on fire, and they manage to halt a car-transporter loaded with FIAT cars, which become the target for well-aimed rocks. Meanwhile the behavior of the police becomes still more bestial: they are firing their tear-gas right into people's houses. Voria appears brandishing a grenade-launcher and telling people to get back from their windows or else.

10:00 pm In Piazza Bengasi the attacks and the rock-throwing go on. The police surround the square, enter apartment blocks, and even drag people out of their own apartments. Sporadic fighting goes on till way after midnight, with people shouting "Pigs!" and "Nazis!" as police drag people out of their houses.

Meanwhile in Nichelino, a working-class suburb of Turin some miles away from Corso Traiano, street-fighting has also been going on all afternoon. Concrete sewer pipes are used to build barricades across the streets. Via Sestriere, the big street that runs across Nichelino, is blocked by more than ten barricades, made from burning cars and trailers, with road signs, rocks, and timber. During the night they burn huge piles of wood and rubber tires, starting a fire on a nearby building site which lights up the whole area.

4:00 am The fighting is still going on. The police are slowly winning back the ground they lost, and begin house-to-house searches utilizing methods which are cruel and vicious. But still the people don't go away. By now the workers and the people of the neighborhood are used to the tear-gas, and they ignore it, taking it in turns to build the barricades. By now a hundred people have been stopped by the police, and thirty of these arrested. Every one of these thirty was a worker. Meanwhile, police reinforcements are converging on Turin from 80 miles away in Genoa, from Alessandria and Asti. The local police are just not able to cope.

At FIAT the struggle has been moving ahead. People are refusing to accept the conditions under which they work and live, both inside the factory and out. They are refusing the unions and the political parties any control over their movement and are organizing autonomously to fight for objectives that they themselves have decided on. Added to this they are coming out onto the streets.

It's been twenty years since the workers of FIAT have been able to show themselves in the streets fighting hand-to-hand with the police and coming away victorious. Once again the bosses and their minions have provided us with a chance to generalize the struggle. The police intervention meant that the inhabitants of Turin-South were ready to come down and join the workers and the students in their fight. But the struggle also spread to many other areas of Turin, involving many other workers in a way that a routine union demonstration would never have done.



CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The atmosphere in Italy's factories is fast changing. Social peace is no longer the order of the day. This article describes some of the changes that are taking place. It comes from Lotta Continua Number 18 November 1970.

At this moment there are five million workers fighting in factories all over Italy. The struggle is becoming harder, and something important starts to happen in the minds of the workers, in their ways of seeing themselves and seeing the world. They are slowly beginning to free themselves. They are destroying constituted authority in the factory. They are taking apart the mechanisms that the bosses use to divide and control them, and are freeing themselves from the taboos that till now have kept them slaves. People are discovering that the power of their bosses is based on their own complicity, on the fact that, from fear or ignorance, or from lack of interest, the workers have up till now accepted as normal and necessary something which, in fact, they as workers have the power and the ability to destroy.

The Struggle Against Hierarchy in the Factory

One means of control is the respect people have for their superiors. But now it's the foremen and the higher-ups who are beginning to be afraid of the workers. This began when we started what we call the internal struggles. Traditionally workers have been kept isolated in the face of their superiors. But now that we are fighting inside the factory, it's the foremen who find themselves isolated in the face of a mass of workers who are strong and confident in their own strength and the strength of an anger that has been nurtured for years. The workers are losing their fear.

There are thousands of stories that bear this out. Workers are beginning to feel confident enough to tell their foremen what they think of them, to refuse orders, to challenge foremen to carry out threats that they make. But they are going even further than this. At Miraffiori the foremen came out on strike demanding bodyguards during working hours! Some of them have been forced to walk at the head of internal marches, carrying red flags, and sometimes they're forced to stand up and make revolutionary speeches. In a lot of the shops, when a bit of tension brews the foremen don't dare start up the line, but run off to hide, saying that they have something else to do. In such a situation, the possibility of giving people harder work to do as a punishment, of transferring people to other parts of the factory, speed-ups on the line and the whole system of fines and penalties have all become impossible to operate.

The Struggle Against the Factory Managers

But the workers' anger has exploded with greatest ferocity against the factory managers. At PIRELLI in Milan the decision to strike has usually gone hand in hand with a none-too-polite invitation to managers to leave their offices. They are not usually too willing, but in the event of hesitation the decision is often helped by judicious application of the boot — one form of struggle that Mr. Donat Cattin does not approve of. In FIAT the managers took a long time to learn obedience, and were several times forced to run the gantlet between two lines of furious workers. Onto their bald heads, beaded with sweat and spattered with gobs of spit, the workers showered five lire coins, which sparkled like confetti in the sun. At the end of this cycle of struggle it would be hard to count the managers who ended up in hospital (even if they only went there so as to have their injuries examined with a view to reporting workers to the police, as happened at FIAT Lingotto in Turin).

At INNOCENTI of Milan the workers don't soil their hands. Instead they pulled up a birch tree from one of the factory avenues, and used the trunk as a battering ram to smash one of the glass doors of the administrative offices in which managers had barricaded themselves. They sent in the Works Committee as a legal pretext, and then chased one senior manager out of the factory, ramming him up the arse with the tree-trunk as he went.

At BREDA in Milan the managers live on the "qui vive", literally with one ear to the wind. When the workers stage a walkout, they do it by surprise, marching through the various shops ringing a bell. For the managers this bell is the sign that it's time for them to run. But they can never tell in advance just when the bell is going to ring.



To fight managers is to fight the whole way the capitalist factory functions, and workers know this. Managers are part and parcel of the factory system — the means that link up the machines, the shops, the different sectors of the productive process. To chase them out means bringing production to a standstill. Intimidating them means reducing efficiency. Slowly, as the struggle grows, the factory system ceases to be an alien and mysterious force in the eyes of the worker. Its

mechanisms are uncovered, attacked, and hindered in their internal workings. Workers discover that they are only slaves to their machines insofar as they are bound to their managers.

Refusal of Wage Differentials and Material Incentives

The first way that workers express their autonomy is in recognizing and attacking the means the bosses use to divide workers, to oppose the interests of one section to those of another so as to maintain their control over all. The workers, having freed themselves from the control of the unions, are refusing to be divided into organizational categories, refusing wage differentials, refusing incentives and every other attempt to involve them jointly in production.

Relations Between Workers and White Collar Staff

The workers want equality. Not because they are good Christians and see themselves as "all God's-children", but because they know that the differences that divide them can be of use to the bosses. So they are trying to establish relations with white collar workers, not on the basis of a vague solidarity, but against the differences in the way they are treated, and against the idea that the staff are somehow more "valuable" than workers. Encounters between workers and staff have not always been peaceful affairs, but where there has been a clear perspective initial misunderstandings have been easily overcome. On the day that the scab tires were brought in from Greece, the workers at PIRELLI wreaked havoc in the salaried staff canteen (to the extent of using a pneumatic drill to break down a door that was in their way), attacking what they saw as a symbol of divisive prestige.

FIAT was the same. At first there was violence. The white collar staff who were scabbing (all of them) were forced to run the gantlet between lines of furious workers, just like the managers before them. The FIAT staff, at the mere mention that there were 5,000 workers in boiler suits approaching the offices, could be seen running like rabbits through a little hole between lines of four guards, scooting down the slope and out of the gates. They ran down the street in total panic for hundreds of yards. This really is emancipation. This is the capacity to re-establish a correct scale of values between social categories. But following this we began to see white collar staff coming to the Internal Assemblies of their own accord, joining in the marches that went round the factory hunting for scabs, attending workers' meetings and so on.

Throughout FIAT, as well as at PETROLCHIMICA (Porto Marghera), PIRELLI, and many other factories, the unions have manipulated white collar staff in Assemblies, trying to play them off against the intention of the workers to intensify the struggle. But in places where workers have come to understand their own position as regards the crucial

matter of wage differentials, this maneuver has totally failed. There was one white collar worker who came to a meeting at FIAT and tried to justify wage differentials between the staff and the workers on the grounds that he had spent more than 250 pounds a year on his studies, and was entitled to some benefit from his investment. But the workers said NO. He was already once privileged because he'd had a chance to study — the sort of chance that workers don't get. And therefore it was not right that he should be privileged twice over by earning more money than a worker, who has the same, if not greater, needs as any white collar worker. The problem of parity in wages and fringe benefits with white collar workers and the refusal of categories and "merit" bonuses are beginning to be faced as a fundamental political fact. They bring the whole factory hierarchy into question and challenge the ideas of career, promotion, and merit which employers have always played on to tie their own employees to the wheels of exploitation.

Relations Between Workers and Students

Armed with the confidence they have gained from their own struggles the workers have begun an attack on the education system. The unions and Communist Party have been driven by the course of the struggle into proposing mass meetings of students and workers, and suggesting that workers march — or send delegations — to invade universities and schools. But there's no hope of lasting political links being made at these encounters, because the Party controls everything. They are usually reduced to exchanges of information: the workers talk about the latest union platform, and the students about the problems of their education. Then everybody goes home, and the only people who really profit from these get-togethers are the Party and the unions, outside of any control from the mass of the people.

However things are different when workers do such things off their own initiative, as they have done in Turin, Trento, Venice, and other places. Here the workers have attacked the school system directly, as the root of the divisions that weaken the working class, that divide workers from white collar staff, and that fragment the staff among themselves. In this way the workers' struggle has bound itself to the students' struggle, against a system of class selection and education, and the workers' point of view has helped give a better orientation to the student struggles.

The Struggle Against Production

Nowadays a worker is just an appendage of a machine or production line: The only way people relate is via the flow of production. So that an important indication of the relative strength reached by the workers and the weakness of their employers is the extent to which workers

have been re-establishing real links of solidarity.

In the course of the recent struggles the factory has changed from being a place where the isolation and the weakness of the workers are at their strongest, and instead is becoming a place where the strength of the working class is being reconstituted, and where the links that are established can be used directly to organize and fight. This is the main meaning of the internal struggle, as the situation in which the workers can use their numbers as a source of strength, to isolate their foremen and overcome their fear of their superiors. And this goes, above all, for the internal marches, the assemblies, and the informal meetings and discussions both inside the factory and outside at the gates. As long as they're not dominated or taken over by the unions.

Capitalist production is based on the silence of its workers, on the systematic repression of their creativity and of their need to express themselves. When this silence is broken, workers begin to liberate themselves from their own chains and discover that the center of the factory is them and their own needs: their interest, and not the interests of the boss (machines, production...). This discovery has been at the root of forms of struggle that have been developing with a view to reducing production, like the go-slow. These tactics have been very successful in some cases — as at PIRELLI, where in some shops the workers have reduced unit output to such an extent as to bring the production almost to a standstill. This form of struggle sometimes costs the workers a lot, but it represents a fundamental conquest since it hits directly at productivity and can be practiced right where people work.

The Struggle Against "Things"

Another way in which this is expressed is in innumerable episodes of violence against machines and production, from the destruction of the scab Greek tires at PIRELLI to the systematic way in which the FIAT workers have been damaging productive machinery. The workers have transformed mute sabotage at an everyday level into a liberatory act performed collectively and consciously by all the workers against that production that keeps them everyday screwed under the rule of the boss. The same is happening with the leaflets, posters, and graffiti that are beginning to cover the walls of Italian factories; these are beginning to spread from the toilets to the cloakrooms, and from there onto the shop floor, where they are put up right under the foremen's noses.

The workers of PIRELLI do not forget that the truncheons the police use against the Italian people are made by them, and that they can always make them for their own use. In many factories the internal telephones that the foremen use to transmit orders to different parts of the factory are being used by workers to organize and communicate the struggle to the different shops.

The Struggle Against the Unions

The unions were born a hundred years ago, and claim to be free associations of the workers to defend themselves against the bosses. But today, in every country in the world, they have become one of the main instruments that the bosses have to maintain their control over the working class, to keep workers in a state of mutual isolation and disorganization, in a subordinate position which finds a voice only through union delegates. They have become the principal obstacle to the emancipation and the autonomy of the working class. For this reason, whatever factory you may care to choose, you can say with certainty that the unions are strong when the workers are weak, and that they are weak when the workers are strong. The more isolated the workers are, the more they are divided and impotent, the more they have to take a stand against bodies which put themselves forward, or at least function in real life, as their collective representatives, the "guardians of their interests".

As the workers gradually begin to emancipate themselves, getting together and overcoming their isolation, any attempt to define their interests from outside the development of the struggle comes to be seen for what it really is: an obstacle to the development of their own autonomy, a means of oppression in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

The Struggle Against Authority

The stories about the ways people have been fighting the unions in factories all over Italy are too numerous to mention. They go from people trying to grab the union megaphone at factory-gate meetings (as at FIAT Rivalta) to full-scale punch-ups. At mass meetings inside factories the union leaders have been booed and jeered at, and often refused the right to speak. Once at FIAT Mirafiori the entire Central Committee of FIM, the Catholic metalworkers' union, was isolated and attacked verbally and physically by workers who were coming out of the gates after one shift, and who demolished every argument they put up. The tactics that these gentlemen usually come up with consist of agreeing with everyone and never taking up fixed positions on anything. They are consistently attacked for this.

In other factories, the main obstacle that the workers have come up against is the argument "We are all the union." As one worker from PIRELLI put it: "That's well and good. We might all be the union. But when it comes to it, all the decisions are really made in Rome."

The Struggle Against Delegation

The unions, however, have tried to make a comeback, and it's not yet clear how this will turn out. Particularly the attempt to introduce line delegates and delegates' committees into the factory. When delegates were proposed to FIAT workers, they replied "We are all delegates." By this they meant two things:

First, they refused to accept the unions' position on piecework, on rates and transferrals, et cetera, and the instrument (the delegates) by which the unions were trying to impose their position, because the workers' position on these things is radically different from that of the union. Workers say these things are non-negotiable.

Second, the discovery that the only point of strength that workers have in their dealings with employers or unions is when they don't have representatives, but rely on their own strength exclusively, on their own numbers, their own unity, and their own ingenuity.

The workers have always refused to speak of the formal and abstract "need for organization", counterposing the content of organization, the reasons why they feel they need organization — the form and objectives of struggle. The unions say that we need delegates. Why? All formal discussions about delegates are, and have proved to be, blank checks to be signed by the union.

A worker from one of the most militant plants at PIRELLI said at a national meeting: "I would like all the workers of Italy to be on their guard against this trap of the Delegates' Committee. With these committees they're trying to turn vanguard militants into union activists, and when they're not doing that they are turning what could be an instrument of shop-floor co-ordination into a little parliament where the workers, instead of coming to say what their comrades on the shop floor feel, merely stay to hear what the union has to say, then report back to their comrades. Here the representatives of the more militant shops are drowned in the swamp of the more indecisive (or passive) delegates. And situations that could well develop into hard struggles all too often peter out into useless argument."

The New Organization

The union bureaucrats and the spontaneists are going round saying that all we are describing represents a total refusal of organization. But this is not true. It is a refusal of the unions. The union is by definition the organizer of the particular interests of workers, of their interests in the factory, in their category, in their sector. In other words it is the organization of those interests through which workers are isolated, divided, and kept as slaves. But workers in Italy today are demanding a new organization, a general and political organization which will link every aspect of social life.

AN INTERVIEW

Three workers from FIAT Mirafiori describe the experiences of the Southern immigrant coming to work in the industrial cities of the North. The conversation was recorded in Turin during December 1970.

Q. It was only after the summer of 1969 that people in Britain began to hear of the struggles at FIAT. Was there a tradition of struggle before the middle of 1969, or were these clashes the beginning of the revolutionary movement of FIAT?

LUIGI. You mean was it that they broke the lethargy of the last 20 years here? Yes, it was. Of course, there were struggles before this time, but all were dominated by the unions. And they were struggles that came around at fixed intervals when the unions set them. So every two or three years, when the contracts were about to expire, we would have the classic sort of struggle — you know, two or three days of strikes, all kept within union channels, and then the boss's repression would begin all over again. And the little politicization achieved through those two or three days would be blocked for the next three years of boss's rule.

But then, in about 1966, the immigrants from the South began to arrive. And the whole social situation in Turin blew up, what with the shortage of housing, lightning price increases, building speculation, and so on. All of a sudden there were 15,000 to 20,000 people arriving in the city, and quite apart from the way the prices rocketed, there were not the facilities to cope with them.

Q. When did the three of you arrive in FIAT?

LUIGI. These two are young. For my part, I've been at FIAT for twenty years. This lot are the new generation, who've broken with everything that we've become used to.

TONI. I've been here for two years. I joined FIAT right at the time that the struggles started.

Q. When you two arrived in Turin, what was it like for you?

NINO. I've been here for a couple of years now. For most of the time I've worked in small places — you know, sweatshops — always inside Turin. And then I was taken on at FIAT. In the beginning I didn't know anything about anything. But the political work there was already well under way, and there were students doing leafleting at the factory, explaining a few things to people, like what the union was all about.

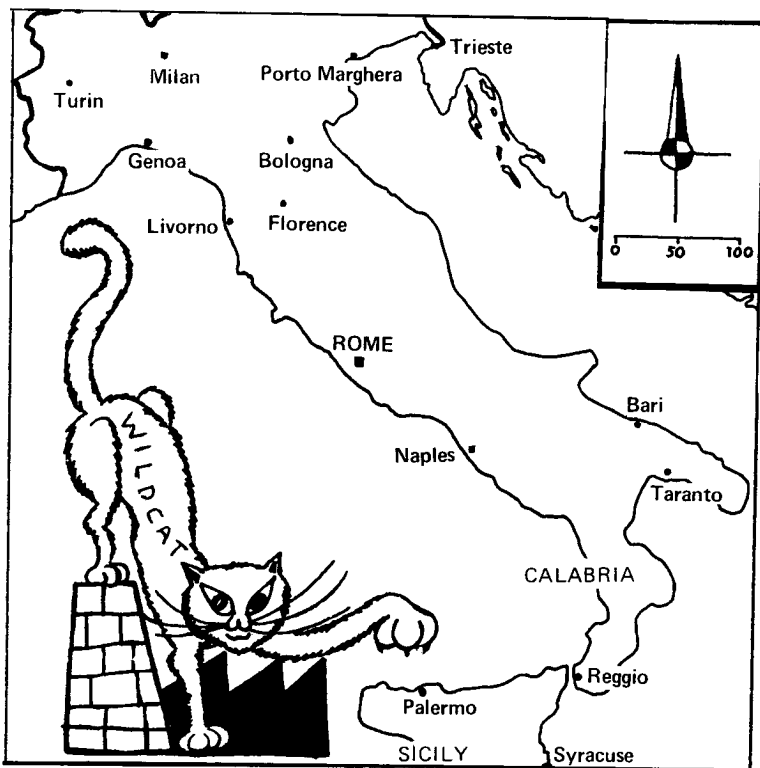
Then we had that whole big explosion during 1969. Everything went up. Boom!

TONI. I'd never seen anything like this in all my life. Because, as you know, I come from Calabria, and my town's a pretty small place. It's ruled by God, you might say: Three or four priests, who were all a bunch of shits, brought us up to be boy scouts and the like, and told us all about what they thought democracy was. Then there were the four or five Communists and the seven or eight fascists, and that's it. Really Calabria is still a region that's in the hands of the counts and barons that ran the place in the time of Mussolini, and who did very well out of him, what with their power, their villas, and so on. That's the way Calabria is.

Anyway, down there, even if I only had 50 lire I could always buy myself a cheese roll or something. But I come up to Turin and fuck it: I find I'm paying out 200! It was all crazy to me. Then I began to pick up on the politics that Lotta Continua were into. At first, you know, I really didn't understand too much. I used to read their leaflets, but only in a sort of informative way, so as to know what they were saying.

One day one of the student comrades from Lotta Continua hunted me out and began talking to me. He really attacked me because I was still in the union. Before I worked at FIAT I'd worked for a few months at other little factories, and all that I'd heard was that the unions were there to defend the workers. Of course, down in Calabria we don't even know what a union is; people don't know that they exist! But gradually I began to understand what they really are. There are so many things I've learned that I didn't know before, and I hope to be able to pass them on to all my workmates in the factory, and help them understand for themselves what I've learned....

At the beginning, when we were few, we started our struggles going round the factory in huge processions that you would think were never going to end. We used to call them "Snakes". One time there were three hours of official union strike called. This was about the time that all the big strikes were happening, in Autumn 1969. A few of us got together with other militants and asked ourselves what we were going to do. We decided that the best thing would be to have a Snake — a big march round the factory, pulling out everyone we could. So there we were, with the three-hour union strike, and the two of us got together with five or six other comrades and contacted a few people from Lotta Continua. Then we set off; just the seven of us. And by the time we got to the head offices where all the staff hang out, there were about seven thousand of us! Bloody beautiful it was. The staff were all looking out of the windows, and saw us down below. They didn't know what to do. And the few guards on the doors were terrified, Beautiful! Now when the next lot of contracts comes along...well...this year we started with seven of us and ended up with seven thousand. Next time we'll



start with seven thousand and end up with seventy thousand, and that'll be the end of FIAT. Goodbye, Agnelli!

There's another time that I remember was really fine. We'd been in and out on strikes for a couple of days, and then we were having one of those marches inside the factory. And people started saying: "Let's kick out the supervisors. They've been around giving orders for about a hundred years now, and we've had enough!" So we went down and started routing them out. People were looking at them, jeering, spitting on them, and they looked back as if they wanted to kill us, but there wasn't a thing they could do. They just didn't know what was happening. There's them who've worked their arses off to become supervisors, and there we were treating them like shit.

LUIGI. It was these young people who began the fight, spontaneously. And we, logically, found that this was a sort of alternative to the usual union struggles. An alternative which went along with the contacts growing at the same time with the students. As you know, from 1967 the university movement joined up with the struggles of the workers.

Q. What has been the relationship between the revolutionary workers and the militants from the student movement?

LUIGI. It's been a sort of team effort really. Them outside, and us inside. At the start we would work on all the antagonisms inside the factory, using them as a lever. For example, say FIAT hadn't provided some work clothes. We would kick up a fuss, and the students would support us from the outside with loud-hailers, gate meetings, leaflets, big posters, and so on.

Usually what we do is find out the facts of the situation, write them out in rough form, and give them to the external militants to print, because they're good at that sort of thing — and they have more time than we do to work right through the night. We hope that later on we shall begin to do the leaflets ourselves, and already we are starting to do more of the work — like typing and so on, as well as some of the distribution outside the gates.

Once upon a time it was the ex-students that held the leading role in Lotta Continua, and we were the ones that carried out programmes. Now we are beginning to take the leadership. There's a bit of confusion about this at the present, as to whether we should have the leadership of the organization, because they still control a lot of the apparatus, like the national newspaper, the duplicators, poster printing facilities, and so on. However I'd say that by now there's really joint leadership.

Q. So you can really say that the new wave of struggle arrived with the immigrants and the students?

LUIGI. Yes. Italian students understood very early on, first with the Movimento Studentesco (Student Movement), and then with the ultra-left groups, that the only way they could expect to have any life at all was by allying themselves with the struggles of the workers. So that was really how it all started. Apart from very early factory leafleting in isolated areas, like Pisa from 1964, it was in 1967 that the really massive work began in front of the factory gates. And this was exactly when all the new workers began to be signed on, all the workers from the South, cut off from their own roots, who had burned their bridges behind them and come here to Turin to find themselves without houses fit to live in, with sky-high prices and so on. Add to that the students outside, who were focusing on these problems, pushing them toward eruption, and of course everything exploded. But it exploded in ways that were sometimes very disorganized, very unconnected, sometimes a real mess.

Now the spontaneous struggles are over. I'm convinced of it. Now, when the struggles start again, they're going to have to be struggles for organization. Last year we were fighting seven or eight at a time, limited to single shops, all of us at Mirafiori, linked through Lotta Continua because we'd had enough of the unions. But now we're moving

LA CRISI DEI PADRONI



**E' UNA VITTORIA
DEGLI OPERAI !**

toward a situation in which we'll have the factory co-ordinated shop by shop. When we decide at a certain point to launch a strike, we'll start with an assembly in one shop, say Shop 55. Then we'll begin the roundup, setting off in a Snake toward, say, the Varnish Shop. Before we used to waste two or three hours getting everyone together. And by that time, as we were going round collecting the comrades, the anger would somehow melt away. To co-ordinate the struggle inside the factory means that when we decide on a Snake, it no longer takes half an hour to get it moving. Every group, every shop moves together. And when we start, we can come to a certain point where we can decide on what objective we are going to be heading for. We can decide to leave the factory grounds and tie up with other area factories, radicalizing the struggle outside the factory so as to involve other places.

Q. What has been the role of the unions during these struggles?

LUIGI. The unions are there to make sure that workers are kept inside the system, and have less possibility of beginning to challenge it. The unions are the political extensions of the sicknesses that exist inside the government; the "long arm inside the factories" of political parties. Every group, every political party has a little hand inside the factory. The Christian Democrats have CISL, the Communists have the CGIL, SIDA are the Fascists, UIL is the Social Democrats, even some Republicans... every one of them has a certain presence inside the factory to control the situation.

Now a lot of workers understand this. However they don't as yet have an alternative. Inside FIAT the unions don't count for anything, and everyone's well aware of where they stand. But at the moment they are the only organization with a voice, they are the only ones that can say anything when it comes to dealing with management. So what's really necessary at the moment is that we begin to create inside the factory agitational nuclei, or revolutionary committees, that are so strong and so well-rooted among the workers that they are an alternative to the internal commissions and the delegates that the unions have set up. Thus we can begin to create a point of reference in the factory to which the less politicized workers can look, so that they can escape from the control of the unions, can talk together, and can politicize themselves further. That is exactly what we're engaged in at the moment: to form nuclei, to come to some agreement among ourselves, to study and understand the situation, and to provide inside the factory a focal point. These agitational nuclei are composed of normal workers inside the factory, but the best of them — the activists. It must be said that these nuclei are being formed not only from members of Lotta Continua, but also from workers who are not members but who have understood this need and who come along with us because of that.

Q. What are your aims with these agitational nuclei inside of the factories?

LUIGI. With the nuclei, and with the revolutionary committees if we manage to create them, we are trying, not to be another union, but to provide a political, revolutionary perspective for the workers. We must not fall into economism, into parochialism. We must not say "Look, we must fight for five lire more, or for ten lire more, or to work one or two hours less." We are fighting — and of course we are not going to achieve it tomorrow — for power, because the working class without power isn't worth a thing. Of course we won't dissociate ourselves from the economic struggles, because for most workers the economic struggles are the beginning. However, the economic struggles must go hand in hand with a revolutionary development of understanding, of politicization, of awareness on the part of the mass of workers. Only thus can we hope for the taking of power, because that's what we're aiming at. The point is to take the factory, because it's the factory that creates value, and it's us that should have it, and not them.



THE REVOLUTION WORKS METHUENICALLY (Karl Marx)

I have been in this factory for twenty years now, and I've seen people make so many mistakes. All the time fighting for handfuls of rice, you know. And it's never done us a scrap of good. But now they are starting to understand that it's no good fighting for scraps, that the struggle now is to have everything. In the factory either you have everything or you have nothing. There can't be any half measures.

New Literature from RA

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- (5) RA with Selected Political Writings of Rosa Luxemburg, edited and introduced by Dick Howard, published by Monthly Review: \$11.50 (saving of \$5.50)

AGREEMENT

between

RANK - AND - FILE, USWA

THE CALUMET COMMUNITY

and

UNITED STATES STEEL CORPORATION

INLAND STEEL COMPANY

BETHLEHEM STEEL CORPORATION

REPUBLIC STEEL CORPORATION

ET CETERA

August 1, 1971

(The two items which follow relate to the recently-concluded contract negotiations in the steel industry. The first is an imaginary contract, based in part on the demands of existing rank-and-file caucuses. It was published in May by the Writers' Workshop in Gary. The second is an appraisal of the contract that was actually negotiated. It is by Staughton Lynd, a member of the Writers' Workshop, and largely drawn from interviews with steelworkers in the Gary area.)

INTRODUCTION

What should be in the new steel contract? This pamphlet is an answer in the form of an imaginary agreement.

Basically, we're on the side of the union. The chief negotiator for the steel industry is a man named R. Heath Larry who is the Vice Chairman of the Board for US Steel and gets \$225,000 a year. Starting hourly wages in steel mills are still under \$3, which comes to about \$6,000 a year. That's all the reason anyone should need for choosing the side of the union.

But when we say we're on the side of the union, we mean the union rank and file.

The union bureaucracy is out of touch with the feelings of the rank and file in the mills. The first part of the following contract (Articles 1-6) is based on the demands of rank-and-file steelworkers. Most of the articles in this part of the contract have been demanded by one or more of the following groups:

District 29 (Michigan-Toledo Region) Convention, March 1970
Local 65 (US Steel South Works, South Chicago)
Concerned Steelworkers, Local 65
Cost of Living Ticket, Local 1033 (Republic Steel, South Chicago)
Rank And File Caucus, Local 1010 (Inland Steel, Chicago, Indiana)
Trade And Crafts, Local 1010
Local 1014 (US Steel Gary Works)
Local 1066 (Sheet and Tin Mill, US Steel Gary Works)
Local 6787 (Bethlehem Steel, Burns Harbor, Indiana)
Rank and File Team (Youngstown, Ohio)
National Steelworkers Rank And File Committee

We have used footnotes to show which articles were proposed by each of these groups.

Some of the things in this part of the contract are taken from the contracts of other groups of workers in the Calumet Region. For instance, the UAW local at the Budd plant in Gary is free to strike over local grievances after a national contract has been signed.

The second part of the contract (Articles 7-12) deals with community problems. It proposes solutions to problems like the mills' pollution of air and water, the high prices and taxes which eat up increases in wages, and the way industries threaten to leave when the community demands that they stop polluting or pay their fair share of taxes.

This part of the contract is based on experiences such as the strike at the Du Pont plant in East Chicago last year. One of the demands of the union was that the company stop polluting the Calumet River and let the union have a say in the company's decisions about pollution abatement. (The Wall Street Journal, April 19, 1971, states that the

Du Pont union was one of only two in the country which went on strike in 1970 "in part over pollution controls".)

A community group called the Citizens League to Upgrade the Environment backed up the strikers. Finally the company signed a pollution abatement agreement with the CLUE which the union has helped to enforce through its grievance machinery.

We'd like to see the same kind of alliance between rank-and-file steelworkers and community organizations.

If there is a strike this summer, community organizations can help by demanding that:

1. For the duration of the strike there should be a moratorium on the collection of debts and taxes, no evictions or foreclosures, and no shut-offs of gas or electric service.

2. The right to mass picketing and other First Amendment rights should be upheld.

3. Unemployment compensation should be available to workers on strike, as in some other states.

In the long run, rank-and-file steelworkers and community groups working with them could dream bigger dreams. The other day, Ken Tucker, secretary of the Du Pont union and president of the Calumet Community Congress, suggested that the CCC buy Inland Steel Harbor Works for the figure which Inland Steel reports to the North Township tax assessor as the value of its mill. Tucker said that the first thing the CCC would do if it owned the mill was to grant the demands of the union rank and file. Then there would be no need for a steel strike, he went on.

We think that's not a bad idea. We think the steel mills should be run democratically. That means, it seems to us, that the people who make decisions ought to be elected by the people whom the decisions affect. Why should J. David Carr be superintendent of US Steel Gary Works just because he is the son-in-law of Edwin Gott, Chairman of the Board of US Steel? Why shouldn't the members of Local 1014 and Local 1066, along with the people of Gary, elect the superintendent of Gary Works?

Look at it this way: Abraham Lincoln said that a house divided could not stand, that the nation could not exist permanently half slave and half free. But when most of us go to work we take orders from people whom we have no say in choosing, as if we were still in school or in the army. Some day that may seem as silly as letting our government be run by George III.

This is an imaginary contract. But it doesn't have to stay imaginary.

May 1971

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ARTICLE 1. DRAFTING AND APPROVING THE CONTRACT

Section 1. Contract demands. Contract demands shall be presented at local union meetings before the opening of negotiations.

Section 2. Strike vote. A strike is the ultimate weapon of the union and requires a conscious decision to endure sacrifice on the part of the membership. The membership has a democratic right to make that decision. Therefore, no strike shall be called unless first authorized by a majority of members, present and voting, at local union meetings called especially for the purpose of conducting a strike vote.

Section 3. Ratification of the contract. The membership has a right to know all the provisions of a new contract and to decide on the acceptability of any new agreement. Therefore, no new contract may be signed unless approved by a majority of the members present and voting at local union meetings called especially for the purpose of considering the approval of the new agreement.

Section 4. Local working conditions. Signing a national agreement does not in itself resolve local disputes. The membership of each local union retain at all times the right to bargain over local conditions and to enforce their demands with strike action if necessary, in the manner described in Article 2.

Section 5. Duration. The duration of this contract shall be one year.*

* The language of Sections 1-3 is taken from convention resolutions adopted by Local 1014. The demand for rank-and-file ratification goes back at least to Donald Rarick's Organization for Membership Rights in 1960, and is very widespread. As for Section 5, the National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee suggests a two-year contract, but a one-year contract seems to us most democratic.

ARTICLE 2. ADJUSTMENT OF GRIEVANCES

Section 1. Right to strike on local issues. The present grievance procedure has resulted in a jam-up of unresolved grievances. (According to the Gary Post - Tribune, May 6, 1971, Local 1066 alone had 1,007 grievances pending at the beginning of the year.) Moreover, the majority of grievances appealed to arbitration have been decided in the company's favor. From now on there shall be a 30-day limit on collective bargaining to settle local grievances, and after 30 days from the time the grievance was filed the local union may strike if it wishes.

Section 2. More grievance representatives. Stalling on grievances must be ended, and supervisors must be authorized and encouraged to settle grievances when and where they arise. To help settle grievances rapidly there shall be one grievance representative for every 25 workers, elected by the workers concerned. These representatives shall have the right to leave their work at any time to carry on legitimate union business.*

*The demand for the right to strike over local issues is also very widespread. Among the groups which advocate it are Local 65, Local 1014, Local 6787, the Cost of Living Ticket of Local 1033, the Rank and File Caucus of Local 1010, the District 29 Convention of March 1970, and the National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee. Local 6787 has resolved that no contract be signed unless it includes "the right to strike on grievances and health and safety if 21 days of collective bargaining fails to produce a satisfactory settlement" (Post - Tribune, May 6, 1971). Section 2 is taken from the demand of the National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee to "strengthen the power and unity of the union on the job (by) a powerful steward system (one steward for every 25 workers) with real muscle to defend job security, enforce safety, and curb arbitrary company disciplines."

ARTICLE 3. WAGES

Section 1. Substantial wage increase. The steel companies have raised their prices 6-7% this year to make up for high costs in 1970, and threaten to raise them again if steelworkers win a wage increase in the new contract. Steelworkers, too, need a wage increase of close to \$1 an hour to make up for increases in the cost of living since the present three-year contract went into effect, as well as a substantial wage increase for the future. There shall be an across-the-board wage increase of \$2 an hour.

Section 2. Cost of Living Clause. Wage increases are of little value if eaten up by price increases. This is what has happened during the past three years. As in the can industry, there shall be an increase of one cent an hour for each increase of .4 of 1% in the Consumer Price

Index of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Cost of living increases are to be unlimited, and computed every three months.*

*Needless to say the desire for a substantial wage increase is unanimous. The \$2 an hour figure has been put forward by Local 6787, the National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee, and the Rank and File Team. Clearly rank-and-file groups think that the \$1.10 an hour increase in the can industry contract is inadequate.

ARTICLE 4. HOURS

Section 1. Normal work pattern. Technical improvements combined with automation make possible a shorter work week. A shorter work week will also provide jobs for as many persons as possible during a period of high unemployment. Therefore the normal work pattern shall be either five consecutive days of six hours or four consecutive days of seven and a half hours. Local bargaining shall determine which of these two patterns is preferred. In either case the normal work week will be 30 hours. During the transition from the 40-hour week to the 30-hour week there shall be no decrease in average weekly wages.

Section 2. Overtime. Time and a half shall be paid for any days or hours which deviate from a worker's normal work pattern, regardless of the reason. All overtime shall be voluntary.*

*Groups proposing "40 for 30" include Rarick's Organization for Membership Rights in 1960, Concerned Steelworkers, and Locals 65 and 1014. The Cost of Living Ticket at Local 1033 supports both parts of Section 2.

ARTICLE 5. VACATIONS AND PENSIONS

Section 1. Vacations. In addition to vacation time provided under the present agreement, every member shall have the right to 30 days leave of absence on request with the option to extend the leave to 60 days once every three years. All vacations shall be scheduled between May and October unless an individual requests otherwise.

Section 2. Pensions. After 25 years of work every worker shall be eligible for retirement regardless of age at \$500 a month. Pensions shall increase as the cost of living increases, in the manner provided in Article 3, Section 2.*

*Although there are differences as to how many years should qualify a worker for a pension, and how much the monthly sum paid should be, most rank-and-file programs propose improvements in both respects. The Rank And File Team, among others, insists that the cost of living clause apply to pensions as well as wages.

ARTICLE 6. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Section 1. Extra pay. There shall be extra pay for dirty, hard, unsafe, and unhealthy jobs, such as in coke plants, in basic oxygen furnaces, and in foundries.

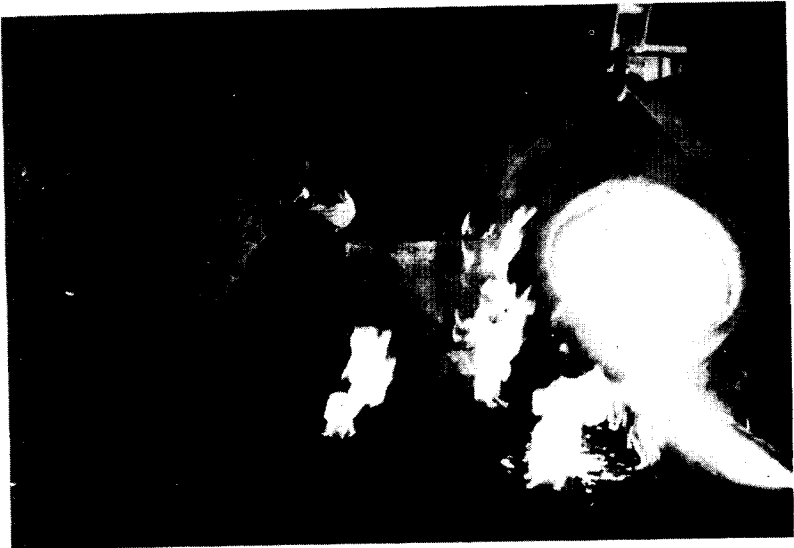
Section 2. Right to refuse work considered unsafe or unhealthy. Any worker or group of workers may refuse to do work considered unsafe or unhealthy. It is not necessary that the person or group be personally injured by the work in question if in his, her, or their judgment the work is damaging to others in the mill or the community. When this article is invoked there shall be no loss of earnings, and no loss of the right to return to the job once the dispute is resolved.*

*Section 1 is from the "big six demands" of National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee. The program of the Cost of Living Ticket of Local 1033 states, in regard to Section 2: "Employees shall not lose time when they invoke Article Twelve of the Contract over unsafe or unhealthful conditions."

ARTICLE 7. PLANT MANAGEMENT

Section 1. The company does not have the exclusive right to manage the business and plants and to direct the working forces. This right is limited by this agreement and by the general welfare.

Section 2. Freedom of expression. The management shall make no regulation restricting the rights protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. These rights include but are not limited to the right to distribute literature, the right to post notices, the right



to petition for redress of grievances, the right to assemble peacefully.

Section 3. Discipline. A worker must have union representation whenever summoned by a supervisor to discuss alleged misconduct or possible disciplinary action. Under no circumstances shall strike action in itself be cause for dismissal. The right to refuse obedience to injustice is an inherent and inalienable natural right, which the law and industrial management must recognize.

Section 4. Discrimination. Discrimination against any person in hiring, promotion, work assignment, or otherwise, for reason of race, sex, age, dress, national origin, religious or political belief, act, or affiliation, or any behavior off the job, shall be grounds for immediate dismissal of the supervisory personnel responsible.

Section 5. Election of supervisors. All supervisory personnel up to and including the department heads shall be elected by the workers concerned. Elections shall take place at the same times as elections to local union office. Supervisory personnel thus elected shall report to their constituents in writing and in person at least once every six months, and shall be subject to recall at any time.

ARTICLE 8. PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Section 1. Like individuals, industry has the responsibility to pass on the environment to our children in a condition as good as or better than that in which we received it. This responsibility exists even when state and federal laws are inadequate.

Section 2. Land use and development. The steel companies of the Calumet Region must restore to the people of the community a portion of the lakefront adequate for recreational purposes. The details of this process shall be negotiated between the companies, the union, and the community, in connection with the provision of adequate, safe, rapid transportation to and from the mills, and adequate parking space at the mills.

Section 3. Waste emissions. The right to life is the most basic of all rights, and the complete elimination of air and water pollution naturally concerns both workers in the mills and community residents who live near them. In addition to the right to refuse work considered unsafe or unhealthy (Article 6, Section 2), workers shall have the right to request immediate testing by union representatives of air or water believed to exceed agreed-on levels of pollution. Representatives of the proper community authorities shall have the right to immediate access to the mills for the purpose of testing and inspection authorized by law. When air or water is found by either union or community representatives to exceed agreed-on levels of pollution, the facility shall be closed down until the condition is corrected. If management refuses to take the necessary corrective measures, the community

shall undertake them and make the cost a first charge upon company profits.

ARTICLE 9. PLANT LOCATION

Section 1. Location of new plants. The location of new plants should be decided on better grounds than the availability of low wages and local tax breaks. Union and community representatives, local and national, shall participate in decisions about the location of new plants. They shall take into account the need for additional jobs in the area, plans to utilize natural resources consistent with our best knowledge of conservation, and the overall economic plans of the region and the nation.

Section 2. The decision to leave. A company should not be able to use a community's labor, pollute a community's air, and (in the case of the Calumet Region) destroy a community's lakefront and beaches and then leave for its own reasons of profit and loss. After a certain number of years in a community, a company becomes an integral part of the life of the community. In some degree it comes to belong to that community in a more immediate way than to distant stockholders or to company officers who live outside the area affected by the mills' land use and pollution. Therefore, should any question of a plant's leaving the community arise, no final decision will be made without agreement both by the local union and by representatives of the community. The union and the community also reserve the right to require a company to close should its operation be considered harmful to general welfare, because of the products it makes or because of consistent violation of health or safety, or the excessive exploitation of human or natural resources.

ARTICLE 10. TAXES

Section 1. All income of the company is produced by labor. The union has as much interest in the portion of that income paid by the company to the community in the form of taxes for the provision of schools and other public services as in wages paid by the company to workers as individuals.

Section 2. Equal assessment. If the companies in a community fail to pay their full share of local property taxes, their workers must make up the difference. Therefore, whether the company is paying its fair share of local taxes shall be a legitimate subject for bargaining, and the union shall have the right to inspect company as well as public records pertaining to tax questions.

Section 3. Peace and conversion fund. The industry, the union, and the community recognize the common purpose of ending all production

for war purposes, if this can be done without undue economic hardship. To bring this about, an agreed-on portion of the industry's earnings shall be set aside in a special Peace And Conversion Fund (PACF), jointly administered by the companies, the union, and the community. This fund shall provide employment for those who may be temporarily laid off in the process of conversion to peace-related production. Priority shall be given to projects which enhance the value of the community, such as improving public transportation systems, building overpasses over railroad crossings, and developing recreational areas and facilities.

ARTICLE 11. PRICES

Section 1. Higher prices and taxes are eating up increases in wages. Moreover, substantial wage increases and more equitable business property taxes, if achieved, are usually passed on to the consumer in the form of higher prices which are a burden for all working people. For these reasons it is essential that the community and the union interest themselves in business decisions about prices, and when necessary regulate those decisions in the general welfare.

Section 2. Wage reopener. The cost of living clause in this contract (Article 3, Section 2) acts as a deterrent against price increases in the steel industry, and indirectly against general price increases. As an additional deterrent, the union shall be free to reopen collective bargaining with respect to wages within 30 days of any increase in the prices of steel products.

ARTICLE 12. COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

Section 1. Those who work in the mills and live in the area which surrounds them have intimate knowledge of the problems and needs of the steel industry, and are greatly affected by that industry's development. They should participate in all major policy decisions concerning the industry. Community ownership is one way of making sure that this participation is real.

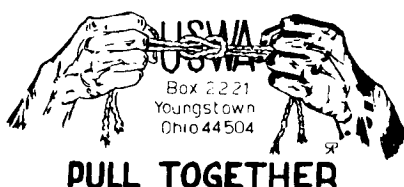
Section 2. Absentee ownership and unearned income. Today 1.6% of the population own 80% of the corporate stock and 90% of the corporate bonds held personally in the United States. These large holdings yield unearned income to persons who make no direct contribution to the industry. They also place control of industry in the hands of persons who do not work in the mills or live near them and who are not elected. During the next 10 years all stock holdings in excess of \$1,000 shall be transferred to representatives of the local union and local community.

Section 3. National community control fund. So as to make possible at least partial compensation for the property transferred to union and community ownership under Section 2 there shall be federally financed

and chartered a National Community Control Fund (NCCF). The NCCF would purchase existing corporations and corporate divisions, or the stocks and bonds thereof, and sell them to union and community organizations where the corporations are located. Payment shall be made at reduced prices and/or financed by the NCCF with long-term, low-interest loans.

Section 4. Democratic decision-making. Industrial facilities owned by the union and/or community should be administered democratically. Decision-makers should be elected, their decisions should be preceded by public hearings, and the most basic decisions should be referred by referendum to the union rank and file and the community at large.

RAFT



Dear Fellow Steelworker :

We know you are interested in the Rank And File Team and we now need your help. Sunday, January 17, the Ohio and New York Committee met in the Youngstown area with approximately 75 people present. They discussed and instructed us to mail out a petition which is enclosed. Many issues are of importance to the rank-and-file steelworker, but mainly we must be able to ratify all contracts. Without ratification we will continue to have the International Union and the steel companies negotiate agreements that are not necessarily in the best interests of the dues-paying member. By demanding ratification we put both the companies and the union negotiators on notice that they must come up with an honest contract that meets today's needs or we will reject it.

The petition contains some of the vital issues we must have ratified and negotiated. Now to make these petitions meaningful, please have them signed and returned to the RAFT headquarters so that they can be assembled and publicized when they are presented to International officers. Please mail these petitions back so that they are in our hands by March 31.

Yours truly,

William Litch, National Chairman
RAFT (Rank And File Team)

This letter is from a national rank-and-file organization, the Rank And File Team, based in Youngstown, Ohio. On March 29, 1971, RAFT picketed a meeting of United Steelworkers' Steel Industry Conference, demanding that the contract "be ratified by all rank-and-filers, not just the conference" (Wall Street Journal, March 30, 1971).

EPILOGUE

Staughton Lynd

Late in the evening of August 1, 1971 the United Steelworkers of America and the nine largest steel corporations announced that they had negotiated a new three-year contract.

The previous contract expired at midnight July 31. At the request of Secretary of Labor Hodgson international union president I. W. Abel obtained approval for a 24-hour extension of the negotiations from the 600 local union presidents assembled in Washington to give guidance to the USWA negotiators. It appears from testimony of participants that a majority of the local presidents may have opposed the extension, but, in the style traditional at gatherings of the steelworkers' union, Abel announced the results of a voice vote as favorable to himself and then adjourned the meeting.

Between midnight July 31 and midnight August 1 an expected strike was transformed into a new contract. The local union presidents, many of whom had booed Abel when he requested an extension of negotiations the night before, unanimously and apparently enthusiastically ratified the new agreement.

In the USWA, nothing further is required to make a contract legal. The individual member of the union has no opportunity to vote directly on contract provisions either before or after the conclusion of a new agreement. If a local union president refuses to sign the contract (as John Sargent, president of the 18,000-member local union at Inland Steel, did in 1965), the contract is put into effect anyway.

What does the new contract mean? Was it a victory or a defeat? To what extent did it satisfy demands of rank-and-file steelworkers? The simplest way to answer these questions is to say that the content of the contract faithfully reflected the undemocratic way it was drawn up in the first place.

During the week of July 18 the international union encouraged its locals to conduct "strike votes". In the Calumet area most locals set up polling places where members voted for or against a strike without first meeting together to discuss the issues. Local 1014 at US Steel Gary Works, the largest mill in the area, held a strike vote meeting attended by at least 400 of the local's 18,000 members. Whether they voted at a polling place or in a meeting, rank-and-file steelworkers regarded the procedure as a farce. No report was given to them as to the progress of contract negotiations. In effect they were asked to give the international union's negotiators a blank check to call a strike if the negotiators decided that a strike was necessary.

A worker at Inland Steel stated: "The other day as I was walking into the mill we received a flyer that stated that tonight (July 22) we were supposed to have a strike vote. One of the puzzling things is that we know the international union is the one that's going to call the strike and we can't really understand what good the strike vote is going to do when we don't know the issues. We don't know what the local has settled on, we don't know what the international has settled on. We just know what the argument is: We know what we want but we don't know what the company has offered us. But yet they want us to vote for a strike."

A worker at Gary works described the strike vote meeting of Local 1014: "From the beginning it seemed a very chaotic meeting. Things didn't make sense. It seemed to me that that was done on purpose. That the meeting was carefully planned so that things wouldn't come out into the open, but there would be a strike vote. There were all those people there and sooner or later they had to do something. They would get sick and tired of being there. Sooner or later there'd be a strike vote."

The way that happened, this young steelworker went on, "was that the president (of the local) opened the meeting by saying that he was going to give everyone the results of the negotiations that had been going on about the steel contract. And everyone said: 'Yeah, yeah, we want to hear that stuff.' There was an atmosphere of hostility toward the union leadership. The president would say something and people would yell. They'd yell that they wanted to hear about the negotiations and there'd be a hostile tone. Person after person after person would be yelling."

The people at the meeting tried to get the local president to tell them about negotiations. He responded by reading the text of the proposals which the union had submitted to the companies. "Number 1. Terms of the Agreement. (He says, talking tough.) Number 2. Scope of the Agreement. And so on." What the president read was merely a string of unintelligible hereafters and whereases. "The guys start talking with each other and there's nothing happening. He reads all of them and there's nothing there. And he says: 'Now you know what it's about. I don't think anyone in this union is satisfied with this. So what we're here to do tonight is decide whether or not we're going to strike.'"

Still the rank-and-file members tried to find out what they would be striking for: "Guys are yelling, and there are hands up. People are yelling 'Call on some of the brothers.' 'What's going on here?'"

Finally the president began to call on people whose hands were up. After a delay because the only floor microphone was not turned on, the first man recognized began to speak:

"He says: 'I don't know what all this stuff is about scope. I don't know whether to vote to strike or not to strike. And I want to decide according to what the company's offering and what we're demanding and what we want to get. I want to know things: I mean, I need more money, I want to get more money. Are we going to get more money? That's what I want to know.' And everyone goes: 'Yay, yay.' Then someone else gets up and says: 'Me and a lot of the men want to know about pensions. All the stuff you said about the company and everything, Mr. President: Brother, there's nothing about pensions in there.' Then another guy stands up and says: 'Everyone thinks we ought to get a cost-of-living clause. Are we going to get it, or aren't we going to get it? I want to decide whether to vote for a strike, but I don't know what I'm voting on, because I don't know: Are we going to get it, or are we not going to get it?' A whole lot of guys get up and say this stuff."

No one knew how to vote because no one knew what they were voting on. And as the meeting dragged along the mood began to grow that there was nothing which could be accomplished there, so why not get the vote over and go home? The president began to call on ex-union officials and staff men for the international.

"Most of these guys start out by insulting the people at the meeting. They say: 'I'm very disappointed that this group of people who've been coming to labor meetings for a while doesn't seem to understand how the collective bargaining process works. There's things you can do and there's things you can't do. I don't understand why you guys don't seem to understand all this.' And there was a lot of quiet there. People were disturbed and thinking maybe they were being stupid. One (international representative) got up and said: 'Brothers. Sometimes it's hard to call you brothers.' And then he explains how everyone's dumb and they're asking for the impossible."

A dogged rank-and-file member responded: "The only way it makes sense to me to do this is, once there's a contract you tell us what the contract is and we'll vote whether we like it or not. If we don't like it we'll go out on strike. If we like it, we won't go out on strike." And everyone says: "Yeah, yeah. We'll ratify the contract if it's a good contract. If it isn't, we won't. That's how we'll decide."

"And then another one of these union guys will stand up and in a very patient voice, as though everyone else there were pretty dumb, he explains how there are these rules and the rules say 'It's written right down' that we can't ratify the contract. 'No one seems to understand that we don't have the right to ratify the contract.'"

Before long those who tried to keep asking questions began to become scapegoats for the general frustration, in place of the local union president who had been isolated to begin with. The strike vote was taken by standing in place so that stubborn dissenters felt pressured to "make it unanimous".

Most of this young man's fellow workers in the merchant mill had voted by staying away from the meeting. "Nobody knew about it, and nobody was particularly interested. Everybody said: 'Whether we strike or whether we don't strike, they're going to do what they want to anyway.' Meaning both the union and the company."

In the end, "they" signed a contract without having a strike. Down to the last moment the tens of thousands of union members whose lives would be affected by this decision could only wait passively, like any other television viewer or newspaper reader, to see what would be done to them.

The evening of July 31 men gathered at the halls of the two largest locals in the area, 1010 (Inland) and 1014 (US Steel Gary Works). The officials of the two local unions convened meetings which repeated in miniature the pattern of the strike vote meeting of Local 1014. A third young steelworker described what happened at Local 1010:

"I got to the meeting late. It was crowded. There was an auditorium seating about 200 people, with another 50 or 75 standing in the back. Two men were seated on an elevated stage in the front and apparently were running the meeting. There seemed to be talk as soon as I walked in that some men wanted to go out at that time. This was quickly rejected by the man who was running the meeting, who I later learned was the vice president of Local 1010."

The men running the meeting kept saying there were encouraging reports from Washington, although what was encouraging they could not specify. "The meeting finally ended when one guy was talking from the floor, and three guys had their hands raised, and Hernandez, who was running the meeting, just gaveled the meeting to an end. As we all shuffled out I heard the fellow in back of me say: 'Well, I'll just watch the eleven o'clock news tonight. We won't find out anything here.'"

• The new contract meets at least in part rank-and-file demands for a large wage increase, improved pensions, and reinstatement of the unlimited cost-of-living clause (surrendered in the negotiations which ended the last strike in the steel industry in 1959).

The new contract achieves almost nothing by way of rank-and-file control over conditions of work. There are minor changes in the grievance and arbitration procedure intended to make it work more rapidly. For instance, the first and second steps of the grievance process will no longer require written complaints. But not one word is said about the local right to strike, nor about the right to stop work considered by the worker to be unsafe or unhealthy.

Thus the new steel contract conforms perfectly to Andre Gorz's

characterization of the trade union movement; it provides large quantitative benefits to the individual worker, but no qualitative increase in the collective power of workers over the production process.

Indeed the contract may represent a significant step backward in respect to workers' control. It includes a provision for establishing a joint advisory Committee on Productivity in every steel mill. Union representatives on this committee are to include the president of the local union and the chairman of the local union's grievance committee, together with two other union members. Four comparable officers of the company will serve on the committee. The committee's function (in the words of the summary the USWA distributed to its members) "shall be to advise with plant management concerning ways and means of: (a) Improving productivity. (b) Promote orderly and peaceful relations with employees and achieve uninterrupted operations in the plant. (My italics. SL) (c) Promote the use of domestic steel. This reflects the union's concern regarding imported steel. (d) Achieve the desired prosperity and progress of the company and its employees. (e) Review matters of special concern consistent with the purposes of the Committee and provisions of the collective bargaining agreement."

Steelworkers skeptical of past contracts initially announced by the international union as "the best contract ever" naturally ask of the new contract: What did we give up for all those money benefits? The provision for productivity committees is the obvious answer. The union's own summary of the purposes of these committees says in so many words that they are intended to speed up production and prevent work stoppages.

This fear seemed the more realistic when conclusion of the contract negotiations was immediately followed by huge layoffs. In the Calumet area as of the date of this writing (August 7) the following layoffs have been announced: US Steel Gary Works, 18,900 (70%) of its 27,000 employees; Inland Steel, 8,000 (34%) of its 24,500 employees; Republic Steel, 7,500 employees; Bethlehem Steel, 1,400 employees. Companies refuse to say how long the layoffs will last.



In steel centers less accessible to water transportation, such as Youngstown, Ohio, whole mills have been shut down and may never be reopened. Here the fear is different: that as local mills gradually resume production, fewer men will do it, and some men will never be called back. As one young steelworker puts it: "I kept asking myself what we gave up. Suddenly I realized. It was our jobs."

Company and union sources reinforce this fear. The Wall Street Journal's assessment of the contract (August 3) stated that one result would be "a long-term reduction...in the industry's employment.... 'You're going to see one hell of a reduction in manpower over a period of time,' predicts one man in the industry." Victor Riesel quoted USWA secretary-treasurer Walter Burke, speaking to the steel conference which ratified the contract: "We have got to do everything possible to make certain this industry operates efficiently...." (Gary Post-Trib, August 5)

The same evening that Riesel's column appeared in the local paper, a group of young and old steelworkers assembled at the storefront of the Gary Writers' Workshop to talk over the new contract. Disagreeing about many things, all agreed in predicting a long-term reduction in the work force at local mills under cover of the productivity clause in the new contract. This appraisal will close with extracts from that discussion.

There was consensus among young workers that in most departments of the mills the pace of work is slow enough that the companies could, in fact, easily eliminate many jobs.

S: "One of the things that struck me strongest when I came into the mill was something I didn't expect at all. I expected that people were really going to be breaking their backs, that they just couldn't stand it because they were working so hard. It's just incredible how far the opposite is true. Many days I've worked two hours out of eight. No one is surprised by that at all. You walk up and down the aisle in the part of the mill where I work, and all over the place you see guys sitting around doing nothing. You can't read a newspaper. You can't seem to be enjoying yourself."

J: "I've worked in every part of the mill and every part is somewhat similar to what he said."

M: "Even though I've never worked for the mills, I've worked in every mill from the North Side of Chicago to Bailly Town because of my own field of construction. I've been in most of the departments at one time or another. It's just a grind waiting for the day to end."

H.: "One way it's broken down is along production and maintenance lines. What you have in all the mills — my experience is in rolling mills — you have about an equal number of production and maintenance people. The maintenance crew, you got welders and millwrights and boilermakers and pipefitters, and all like that. If you're working the day turn, which is the easiest turn for maintenance, you just have to

do routine maintenance, you walk around and you can take it easy. If you're on production, the only time you're there is when the mill's rolling, you've got to work there eight hours a day and work the whole time. A lot of times you don't have a lunch break and a lot of times it's real hard work. I think it's different if you're on maintenance in the night turn. They have real small crews, they have responsibility to take care of the whole thing. And so they're working their ass off."

The generally slow pace of the mills, these workers argued, is "the result of a lot of organization". Not through the union, but through spontaneous collective direct action on the shop floor, steelworkers have controlled the speed of production.

S: "I would like to give an example. Where I work, when summer people came in immediately there was a big problem. Production was doubled or tripled before anyone knew what was happening. What that meant was that you had to go around and talk to all these guys and explain to them that you weren't supposed to make all that steel. There is a lot of co-operation in people slowing down. The general attitude is "screw the company", like Joe says. I've noticed that one time when people work hard and do conscientious work is cleaning up. They may spend 45 minutes at it. Part of the reason that they work so hard at that is that they know it's not doing the company any good but it's going to help the next guy on the next turn. If one crane man does too much work, people will move up their cranes on both sides of him so he can't do anything. Or the maintenance man will come by and say: 'You want some time off? I'll break your machine for you. Just tell me how much time you want.'"

N: "One more thing about the intensity of work. My observation is that it's more or less the way people described it. But I haven't heard people in the mill make any kind of reference to how easy it is. Maybe where Steve works, where it's mostly young people who are out of the Army or see themselves passing through for a year, it's that way. But where I am, I guess if you pushed someone up against the wall they'd have to admit that it's easier than an auto plant, for example. I know myself, I don't mind admitting how easy it is; but if my wife or somebody else starts to make a joke about it, I get mad."

Working in a steel mill seems hard, everyone agreed, because the general conditions of work are so unpleasant. Heat, dirty shower water, noise, dull colors . . . and danger.

J: "You often hear references to how safe it is to work in a steel mill. The company is always putting out big propaganda. I have a safety meeting every week. Nothing ever gets accomplished. I worked in the rail mill, in the soaking pits, last year. And I had one job where I had to go down and change thermal couples. There were many times it was so hot in this spot it took your breath away. Yet you were expected to do this job. And we complained about this job, because it was in an area about three feet high; you had to squat; there was no lighting; and

there was dust piled on the floor so thick that when you walked you'd gag on it. I complained about it for the year I worked on it and guys had been complaining for four or five years before that. Nothing was ever done until a couple of months ago when a guy went down there and started to change the thermal couple and a big blast of flame came out of a hole and he got third-degree burns and ended up in the hospital. Then it was blamed on him. You find this all the time. When something goes wrong with safety, nine times out of ten they find a way to blame it on the individual (He was violating some rule.) rather than putting out the money to make conditions safe. I'm pretty sure, that's one thing that's general throughout the mills. What they say is, the safety rules are written in blood."

E: "I've never worked in production, but I've worked around the mills as an ironworker. And I think the same thing applies there. A little technical thing is impossible to do because it's not up to the men who are actually doing the work. That thermal couple could undoubtedly have been routed out in the open where it could have been done with safety and inspected often."

H: "One accident that happened in our department is a good example of how things go in the mills. A young guy who had just started went up on a crane with a millwright to do some work. It was late at night, and there was no lighting at all. One of the safety rules is that any time you go up on a crane you have to use a safety belt. This young guy tied his belt to a shaft which turns when the power is on. He couldn't see what he was doing. And when the crane started up he was killed. What they said at the safety meeting was that this guy tied his safety line to the wrong place. The fact of the matter was that there weren't any guard rails, there wasn't any other place to tie it. That's the second person killed on the cranes in our department within two years."

The new contract, then, threatens to do away with the moderate pace of work which (in the perception of this group of steelworkers) "makes up" at present for other things, such as unnecessary danger. They fear that organization on the shop floor cannot counter the company's power to call men back to work gradually and make them work harder as they resume their jobs.

The young workers especially have no faith that the union can help them:

H: "Ninety per cent of the people in the mill, just common ordinary guys, will say that they think the union is bullshit — that they're just a bunch of corrupt assholes who steal money; also that their union dues are higher than their incentive and stuff like that. They know the score. It's not just the younger guys, but everybody in there. You can hardly find anybody who supports the union. As a matter of fact, if you say you went to a union meeting they'll say 'That guy wants to be a foreman.' They won't talk to you. I mean that's really true. It's my experience. Out of a few hundred maybe one or two guys will go to a union meeting,

and everybody thinks they just want to become officers of the local. Everybody agrees on that."

"On the other hand," this man continued, "people are very defeatist in a lot of ways. Steelworkers have been through a whole lot. Every day, going through that whole experience, just having it pounded into you that there's nothing you can do. Over and over, year after year. Older guys especially have just gotten so fed up they give in, try to get by any way they can. I guess it's a lot like if you've been in jail for a long time and you kind of give up and look for any way to survive. People find individual solutions. They say, I have such and such hiding places, I can get away with such and such with a particular guard. The millwright that I worked with one time, one day he sat down and said: 'I was on turn work as a millwright for 18 years. Now I'm just going to take it easy until I pension out. I'm not going to do anything and collect some of the back pay that they owe me.'" Everybody's trying to figure out their own little way to get out of it. I think that's good in a lot of ways. But it makes it hard to get together, and stick together, and really change things."

S: "My experience agrees in some ways and not in others. I agree about what people think of the union. Sometimes people will say, when they've been bad-mouthing the union: 'You know, I believe in the labor movement.' People aren't interested in forming a rank-and-file caucus to take over the union, and that's probably smart, because they've seen that happen a lot of times and nothing seems to come of it. But in a lot of areas they aren't defeatist. A good example is that where I work the cranemen got together a couple of times and the whole mill went on a slow-down, sit-down strike. One time a black craneman wasn't given the job he should have been. A white guy was given the job. Black guys went around and talked to the white guys, who agreed that they were right. Another time they slowed down the cranes for a long time about lousy incentive pay and stuff. Those guys will say: 'You're so stupid that you went to a union meeting?' But that doesn't mean that they're defeatist."

N: "One thing people say around the mill is: 'There are two things that will serve to make a good union man into an ass. One is to become a foreman, the other to become a union griever.' I've heard a lot of people say that. It's not that bad people make the union bad. It's that the union makes good people into bad."

At this point in the discussion a young man came in who had been at the Local 1010 (Inland) meeting where the contents of the contract were supposed to be reported to all the union members. "What happened?" everyone asked.

J: "It's still going on. They've got some guys up there explaining about the incentives and doing a lot of arithmetic. There were about 300 people there to start, and there's about a third of that now. They're going through a lot of technical, boring stuff. They're reading a lot.

They say: 'This is in front of you, but we want to read the whole shmeer.' And so they read for 15 minutes, and 30 people leave."

Then Jim read the clause about productivity committees, from a summary of the contract handed out at the meeting. "From what people were saying," he added, "they've had these joint plant committees in the past, but they were of the opinion that this was one which would meet regularly."

If the companies take advantage of the productivity committees and the layoffs to cut their work force and speed up the pace of work, then resistance at the point of production will increase. Job action and shop floor militancy might then become sufficiently widespread to offer a real alternative to the union.

STEELWORKERS



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isn't worth a damn...
when we're
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"—and in times like these we must all make sacrifices, gentlemen—let's lay off 11,200 more."

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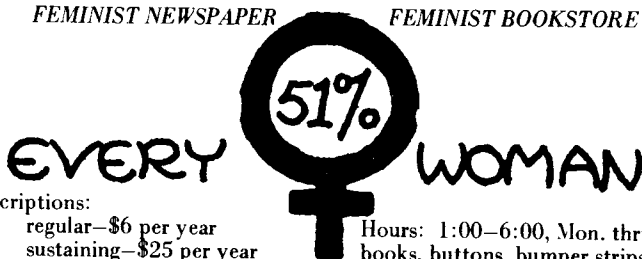
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Their Time and Ours

David Schanoes

... They're up there. Watching. They say they need them to keep us from stealing, but they're really up there so that just, just when the mail starts to disappear from the horizon of our sight, just when we think we can breathe again, and somebody cracks a joke and we all turn to laugh and trade grins, and sure enough the laugh slips loose and dances naked for us; then, just then, they throw their goddamn switch and with a wheeze like a dead man in a whorehouse the mail starts to fall and hits us with rage and glee until we back away from each other and the mist of smiles shudders and dies. The sacks start to build at our feet and pile quickly to our knees, hips, waists, shoulders until we are lost in a canvas blizzard. The air squeezes from our lungs in slow plastic gasps (punishment for promiscuous laughing), and they call for the tractors to keep everything neat. Now we have to shovel our way back to the beginning and wonder if there ever really was a beginning, an end, or just once a laugh not crushed dead at our feet. They're up there, cackling in a buzzard's dream. They're up there. I know it.

To the east, the lake tosses upon a curved horizon with a sheet's edge of fog holding the early darkness to itself. The wind's talons lift huge blankets of water toward a sheltered moon only to, with a raccoon grin, drop the blankets head down on the concrete. (Even the buildings wince.) And the water runs bleeding and sore through the street, across the spider lips of a sewer, and weeps desperately back to the lake. This game of sleep tag lasts until the darkness moans with the muffled silence of cricket wings and the lake pauses, feigns defeat,

and suddenly springs cobra fashion at the wind, striking with the cut glass tongue of blood and fish scales and laughing at the dawn writhing behind it.

This laugh catches an echo of the green arteries of the city's womb. Subways scratch along the rails, blue sparks licking fur tongued at the night. The echo changes to the short shriek of bats as the train hustles against the spine of a curve and then snaps itself straight. Inside each car is a fish net of electricity, thigh locked in the air, sparks eating away happily at eyes and ears and sometimes leaping at a carelessly exposed throat. The smells of ozone and hair, the dead smell of liquor and tobacco, and overall the taste of pennies — the copper taste of storm. Occasionally a passenger will slump to the floor and the fishnet will buzz hungrily until the body is ash. Sometimes, just enough electricity touches the temples, and for a second the eyes will turn a ghost blue and then fade, and the tumblers behind a wrench tight skull start to click off like a Las Vegas jackpot and the secrets start pouring out. But in such chaos and jumble as to make no sense. But they keep coming, and the person doesn't stop until some sense is made. An infinite number of monkeys at an infinite number of typewriters....

The train moves on, hunting shadows, tucked neatly in the empty roar of a feather darkness.

This, comrades, is Chicago. Straddling the chest of the United States, Chicago is the knot that laces east to west and back again. Everything within 200 miles is pulled off balance and sucked to the grinning hands of this madman set free. Chicago is the hip pocket of America. The hip pocket, for wallets and blackjacks.

This city used to have a river. It used to have a lot of things, but the river is special because someone, someone with both feet stuck in the future, took a look at that river and took a look at that lake and saw that everything going anywhere would be going through here, and decided that the river is to be turned around. Completely around. Either that river gets turned around or the shit a city throws out every day floats into Lake Michigan and turns that lake into the biggest cesspool, the sweetest breeding ground for the biggest rats this side of City Hall and the Chicago Housing Authority ever. Either that river gets rechristened as a sanitary canal or you are going to spend the rest of your life wishing that goddam wind would please blow the other way, the jesuschrist stench! So they turned the river around and killed it. Choked it to death with mud and garbage and anyone with the audacity to complain about the reproduction of daily life in this, the pivot of America. Turn your petitions in to the carp and the turtles and decompose in quiet. And after they turned it around and dumped the first body in, the people of Chicago grinned and gave themselves a motto. "I will," they said. And someone, the first archbishop or the first thief (history has not chosen between the two), added, "and I got a razor to make sure of it."

Six months after the Paris Commune, an unknown Chicagoan thinking only of his city's place in history chuckled "I will" and torched the whole goddamn city. And instead of the fires of proletarian dictatorship Chicago blazed merrily away just for fun. And what a boon that fire was, for Chicago neatly tap danced its way across a very personal hell and hasn't stopped dancing since. When the orgy was over, everybody sobered up and stopped slopping the coal oil in the streets and rebuilt the city. And kept right on building, all the time thinking, "Oh damn, the next time she goes up she'll take half the fucking city with her." And they've been building ever since. And waiting.

Squat dead over the Eisenhower Expressway and hunched up to the ex-river is the Chicago Post Office. "Biggest in the world," says da Mayor, jowls quivering like a hog in heat. And it is the world's largest Post Office. The Main Post Office is a top heavy building of standard government gray, fed by the continuous advance of trucks and trains that lead deep into the bowels of the building and disgorge mail from the rest of the world. This post office is the notion, the essence, the concrete universal, the nodal point for all other post offices, not only through its size, but because of its methods of discipline. The Chicago Post Office draws its labor from the huge black pools that spread across the South and West Sides of Chicago with an angry radianoe. Eighty-five per cent of the 22,000 employees are black, and of these the overwhelming majority are women. This is indeed a precarious position for the world's most important Post Office and the government has undertaken a massive drive to replace these black workers with white men, in order to exercise greater control and experience less resistance.

From the very moment a new worker enters the Post Office, he or she is attacked by the total mobilization of the postal bureaucracy. This attack has the single purpose of encroaching totally upon the consciousness of the worker and preventing workers from articulating any needs or desires outside the scope of postal authority. Two initial orientation sessions of four hours each are planned for new employees, and the tentacle fungus of absorption stretches with the beginnings of the government litany. The job is the focus of all attention. The job demands one's complete complicity with the situation as it is. The job demands the realm of the future, and encroaches beyond the eight-hour work day. Attitude (the ability to tolerate agony) becomes the crucial factor in determining the "quality of employees".

These sessions are conducted by the 20-year staff of loyalty and devotion. It is a sad sight to hear these "trainers" recite with the monotone flatness of a machine the benefits available through continued service to the Post Office. If for the next 20 years the worker jumps and breathes in accordance with postal regulation, and trudges through the ruts of advancement, there will be a secure position, a pension,

a vacation with pay. But the ruts of advancement necessitate the disintegration of the future. Time is consumed and exists only in the confines of the Postal Service. The historical timelessness of advanced capitalism is purchased only through the ceaseless destruction of time. The worker faces the task of submission or resistance, of destroying the instinctive hostility that work provokes, or destroying the structure of encroachment every day of work.

The methods of encroachment are all aimed at preventing workers from expressing, individually and therefore collectively, their own aspirations as somehow outside the realm and therefore opposed to the postal system of labor. The tactics of encroachment are discipline and paternalism, punishment and reward, and the tactics of reducing a worker to the state of a helpless infant, a kindergarten pupil, and thereby facilitate the stealing of the candy from the baby. The Post Office designs programs for recreation and education, for child care and entertainment, for psychiatric counseling and beauty contests. All of this is done to absorb need, and to prevent the development of consciousness.

The postal orientation period lasts long enough to stress the notion that the postal worker is not just a regular worker, but a full-time piece of government property. With that characteristic clumsiness of the bureaucratic mentality that takes pride in its own bankruptcy, the Post Office stresses its similarity to the Army or the Navy, and warns that even off the job a worker's conduct is subject to governmental scrutiny. Of course for those who like the situation....

She tells us about herself with a tight-lipped grin. She tells us about working for 27 years — 27 years! And she's so proud that she can't even hear us groaning in the back. Listen to her — telling how during the summer she goes to school, postal school, in Oklahoma — all expenses paid, thank you — so she can move up higher in the lap of postal authority. And, she has 480 hours of sick leave. "Fancy that," someone says, but she can't hear.... And 240 hours of annual leave — the maximum allowable. And she has never failed a scheme test! Never. "Now all you people are subclerks and have to learn a scheme," she says, "and my advice to you is to learn it as soon as possible." Behind me a woman is crying: "That's the saddest story I ever heard." But she can't hear the crying and goes on about how good the Post Office has been and next summer in Oklahoma until some black man stands up and says, "I bet you even dream about this place." and sits right down. And she hears that, and marks him down for attitude. Personally, I don't think she dreams at all....

And the cushion chains of a padded slavery range from insurance and medical plans to free circus tickets for the children and sports teams. There is an alcoholics' club, but no junkie or cocaine club, unfortunately. And if there is a dispute, file it in the ooze swamp of the Equal Employment Office and wait.

But this bureaucratic mobilization is not a mere cancerous growth nor the elaborately constructed conspiracy of the Government. The growth and function of this bureaucracy has its roots in the mode of labor itself, and is in fact the administrative refraction of production. The intense capitalist rationalization of production entails the overall fragmentation of the total process into a series of isolated acts of permanent repetition. These acts are linked together only by the continuous movement, not of labor, but of the object, the commodity. Any continuity is established by the conveyor belt. This very same rationalization that provides the initial division of labor and the life blood of capitalism necessarily creates specialization, fragmentation of knowledge that corresponds to fragmentation of labor, but moreover limits each task to a perpetual repetition and therefore creates the separate function of accounting for each isolated act. This specialization in ignorance of the whole demands the creation of a bureaucracy to reconstruct and account for the total labor process. However, since bureaucracy's own labor is necessarily rationalized, a true accounting for the process can only be constructed in the very machines that should replace the need for human labor in the productive process. The true totality of advanced capitalism is represented by the conveyor belt and the computer.

Moreover, this mode of intensely rationalized production, permanent repetition of oppression, has reduced human labor to the level of a "dumb brute force". The conditions of labor have transformed human labor into its opposite. The dumb brute force is devoid of consciousness and therefore unable to transform the conditions of existence. The mode of production now demands the exclusion of need and desire from the realm of human labor, but in this very exclusion it allows an area for consciousness to penetrate and perceive the instinctive disgust with the conditions of labor. The unity of consciousness and activity is disintegrated, but consciousness is not yet absorbed into the forms of mental toil, habit, and passivity. The octopus programs of the Post Office, all growing organically from the mode of production, are the mental extension of the transformation of labor to "dumb brute force" into the realm of consciousness and desire. These programs make need itself the perpetuation of submission and the continuum destruction. In this situation, opportunity, advancement, growth, progress are all the transformation of human aspirations into toil.

The onslaught against new workers attempts to act as the buffer to the intolerable conditions of work. Although the starting wage is \$3.51 an hour, the rules of work and its constant boredom and stupidity provoke instant frustration. Lunch is only 30 minutes, which leaves no time for anything more than a sandwich or a slow bottle of whiskey. There are no breaks given in the Post Office, but a worker is allowed two trips to the washroom, 15 minutes each. And timed. Supervisors keep records of elapsed urinating time. These rules of course are

generally violated but also generally enforced. The result is increasing violence against the supervisors as the work week wears on, and even occasional direct physical assault....

.... There are signs screaming like empty trumpets in entrances. "All employees are required to show their photo badges." "Leave all packages at the check desk." Over on the side wall beneath the lights and next to the vomit green paint is the slogan of the month. Program Reduction in Distribution Errors. On the workroom floors, there are blackboards printed with the maggot slogans of team spirit, and "We need each other." Recently, no supervisor has had the nerve or the intelligence to write anything on the blackboards. On the other wall is the suggestion box with its quadruplicate form. Someone has scrawled the words "black power" across the box, and everybody gets a small laugh.

Elevators and then the inevitably slow walk into the work area itself. A timeless regularity looms against memory, and it could be yesterday or tomorrow or no day at all.

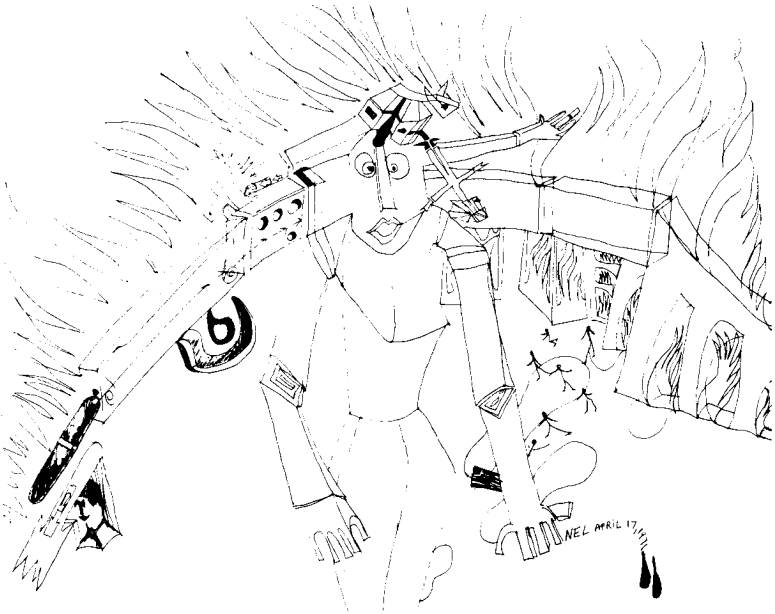
Below the empty clatter of the machines there is the human noise. After several weeks, it is sensed more than heard. Matches being struck, coffee steaming, and spice flower smell of a woman. On the floor is an alcohol whorl that tells everyone today is Friday. Alcohol lubricates the path to the weekend.

There are clocks everywhere, slicing off bits of the day and chewing at the roots of the night and always stuck just where we don't want to see them. The regulars are already at work throwing the bundles of letters into sacks marked SCF 600 and through to SCF 629. When the sacks are full they are tagged out (labeled and locked) and dumped onto a conveyor that takes them downstairs to the trucks. When the clock cuts off the air, we have to go to work. The trick is to be late on purpose. Just sit and pay no attention until they hand you a form, and then scratch your head and grin politely and say "Am I late again?"

The Post Office is concerned with theft by the workers. There are stories of workers walking out with TVs and stereos. More frequently, rings and watches disappear from the mails. This is called theft. The fact that the Postmaster accepts money from Sears, Montgomery Ward, Aldens, and the other mail-order companies is called "gratuities for excellent service". There you have it.

But extortion, practiced with the subtle hand of a meat cleaver, is not unknown to the ruling administration. The Post Office offers a life insurance plan to each employee. This plan can be rejected, but on the form for rejection it states that the employee has 30 days to file his or her notice. However, it is not written that if the form is not returned within the first week of work, money for the insurance plan will be deducted from the first two paychecks. Let's see...hmmm...that's \$6 from each employee, with a turnover of 10,000 employees a year — \$60,000. All of this is protected, of course, by a sign that states: "Assaulting a government employee while on duty is a federal offense."

The rationalization of production brings with it a corresponding rationalization and fragmentation of time. This destruction of real time is accompanied by the elevation of the destroying force to the level of "real time". Measurement replaces motion, so that all things are measured not by the time they create, the permanence of access to human pleasure, but by the time they use. Time is parceled out with a guillotine's efficiency, dragging away the life of workers and chaining it to production. Time in short is production, and it is money. Death becomes the medium of exchange and takes its crystallized form in the materials of guilt, money and credit. Blind necessity replaces need



as the system of perpetual misery is sustained through expropriation of labor and time from human self-conscious activity. The supervisors, although not conscious of the full nature of this destruction, are quite aware of the necessity of maintaining the inflexible barriers of prison clocks. They scurry from minute hand to minute hand, berating those workers not sufficiently impressed to regard each breath away from their work as a transgression upon the very foundations of state capitalism itself. The notion of time, appearing in full measure only in this complete over-rationalization of production, provides the pivot for the struggles between workers and production and between workers and supervisors.

The Post Office employs more supervisors than any other industrial network in the country. (Biggest in the world, echoes the grunts of the city's prime hack.) The ratio is from three workers per supervisor to eight workers per supervisor. These supervisors are recruited from the workers themselves and usually advance from union steward to supervisor. The union, which was recently formed by the merging of five separate unions, is very democratic — so democratic that the supervisors are allowed to retain their union membership and are even given certain honorary status. But the union is the direct manifestation of bureaucracy at the point of production, and it is absolutely inevitable that union and supervisors should be so closely meshed.

Each supervisor is picked and cleaned and strained and trained by the Post Office. They are schooled in special courses and taught to enforce discipline, maintain production, and judge attitudes. They are armed with a teacher's weapons, those of humiliation and paternalist scolding, coupled with threats of firing. Above all they enforce. They become the personified authority of the destruction of time....

....Zallno, the supervisor, calls over Donna and explains to her that 16 1/2 minutes is entirely too long for a washroom break. At first she thinks it's some sort of joke and cracks an ivory smile, replying: "16 1/2 minutes? Who's gonna count that?" But Zallno, being a postal supervisor, becomes the most serious about the most innocent, the most threatened by the most natural, and pulls out his rule book....

"Now, Miss Temple, do you know how many people work here? Well, just imagine if everyone took an extra 90 seconds. That would amount to 500 man hours lost.

"What a pity," says Donna. "Wouldn't that be terrible. Why pretty soon people would be taking 17, 18, or even 20 minutes. Imagine that!"

"That's right!" says Zallno.

"That's right!" says Donna.

Zallno had his jaw broken in three places a couple years back. He tried to take a worker off the clock and send him home. The worker had been on a 20-minute break. Zallno's jaw flapped like a broken shutter in a summer breeze. Three places! And it took the worker less than a minute!

There is extreme sensitivity to this notion of time among workers. Extra breaks, calling in sick, leaving early, reporting in late, all of these are efforts to regain control over what is forbidden — time! The fundamental vehicle for human expression.

It is heartwarming to note the extreme distaste for supervisors — a distaste that goes far beyond simple anger. In this distaste there are strong elements of disgust and contempt, for the workers realize that the supervisor's job is in fact dependent on them. The false master is a real slave. And the workers are confident of their survival without him, but know he could not survive without them. The supervisor in one sense has less freedom than the workers, for having embraced as

his own the demands of production, the supervisor has no choice but to obey the rules. The workers, however, are free to resist and reject every rule.

Outside, a rust iron night scratches the street and raises the smell of an oil wind. It is winter and the streets bleed white from the salt and the snow and the dry death of frozen air. Stuck in one doorway is a drunk, his nose shot through with the extra blood vessels of an alcohol drowning. Across the street is another drunk. They scream at each other in rhythmic harmony, the unintelligible words sliding off into the night.

"Nyaah, nyaah," says the first drunk.

"Yyaah, yyaah," replies the second.

And they go on like this, in a delirium of fever, serenading each other and the cement until the cops come out and push them to the next block.

Maybe it was my imagination, but an arm came out of that night and took my elbow and pressed its panic to my ear with words dying away as soon as they formed.

"Listen, I only do it for the money. You understand. I don't like being a supervisor. It's the money. You have to believe me. Three kids and I have a wife. You're young, you got no one but yourself. You can afford to hate it. But I have kids, and they want to go to college. It's the money and the kids. Not me."

But the words get coughed away and swallowed in the wind before I smell them, or see the face, or even allow myself to believe that the arm was on my elbow.

There are stories of violence, stories an absolute delight to hear. Once, a worker decided to have a heart-to-heart with his supervisor. They argued awhile until the worker saw that he was getting nowhere, so he picked the supervisor up and threw him out the window. Seven stories. And what a splash he made—teeth and brains and blood. Everybody gathered around the worker and shook his hand, and when the guards came they created so much noise and confusion the worker escaped.

Or the time another worker figured that starting at the bottom was no way to solve things at the top. So pocketing his .45 he walked into the Postmaster's office and shot a hole in the fat leather chair that the Postmaster called his favorite. Unfortunately, the boss wasn't there. When he did return, he found a large hole in the front of his chair and a note: "This could have been you." Now they have a special electronic guard door. And if these stories are not true, they still represent the desires of the workers and never fail to evoke laughs and whistles of admiration, and the smirks of delightful violence.

But there are other stories. Outside the Post Office flows the blood

of Chicago, that garbage canal, once river. Every week, rumor has it, somebody comes out of work with that look of empty desperation and jumps from a bridge into the floating swamp. Without even a scream. In the spring, along the lake, the smelt start running and the fishermen string their nets under the surface. The nets allow a smelt's head to pass through, but not the body, and so the fish are trapped, suspended by a nylon filament....

.... Sometimes they jump in pairs, silent and leaden. Every week. And every week, the guards fish them out. The big ones get cleaned and shuffled to the hospital, dosed full of thiorazine, and sent back to work. The little ones are cleaned and eaten on the spot.

A deeper examination of time and its destruction shows that the fragmentation of time is accompanied by its compression. Time is compressed into the product as value and now becomes the physical measure of performance, making activity into calibrated agony. Time becomes space, but the expropriated space.

In a similar way, all time is compressed into working time. Free time exists only in its relation to labor time and is dependent upon the flow of production for its very existence. In this sense free time inevitably focuses back on the chains that bind it to its unfree origins. With this compression of time into space, workers, like the character in Poe's story, can be forced toward the pit that in fact has become the pendulum.

Regular clerks experience the situation somewhat differently, both milder and more permanent in form. Substitute clerks have no regular working days and can be worked as little as two hours per day, but inevitably work weekends. This is part of a discipline process for new workers. Regular clerks have set days, set hours, and a guaranteed salary (which accounts for their political intransigence), but all this is attained through submission to the postal discipline.

For both regular and substitute workers, the incredible rate of absence, tardiness, et cetera is more than a refusal to participate in the labor process, but the instinctive hostility to the compression of time.... The supervisor calls us over for a meeting. These little revival sessions, full of scoldings, praises, and the ceaseless vomit of production goals, are a source of no little humor. And this humor, the spontaneous resistance to the false seriousness of "production", is the organ of a counterattack on the work routine. The humor contains the double edge of convulsive disdain for the supervisor and the ability to maintain the fundamental delight in living against the work rules. We all snicker and grin and wisecrack through the supervisor's mechanical whinings, doing a fair job of disrupting his format. This time, the Post Office has a new program for employees, "The Postal Employees Personal Assistance and Emotional Guidance Program". Somebody whistles; somebody else moans; everybody looks around and smiles.

"Now if any of the employees are having personal difficulties, and you find that it is interfering with your work performance, please come tell me and I'll arrange an interview for you with a qualified counselor. The program is free and for your benefit."

Spears, a black man just back from Vietnam, and my partner in hysteria, gouges me so hard that my eyes turn gray. "Hey," he says, "tell him about your emotional difficulty."

"What emotional difficulty?" I ask.

"The one you keep dreaming about."

"Spears, I can't tell him I want to kill him. It will spoil all of the surprise."

Spears thinks it out for a minute and then decides to tell about his own difficulties.

"Hey Zallno," he says. "If I got a medical problem, will the PO take care of that too?"

"Why yes," replies the messenger fool.

"OK," says Spears, "I got a case of hemorrhoids, so get somebody down here to kiss my ass."

And we all laugh and congratulate Spears.

There was one attempt at concerted resistance. The Post Office had decided that if a worker forgot his or her badge he or she could not be admitted without first being questioned by a supervisor, who in turn would issue a temporary pass if convinced of "sufficient reason". If there was not evidence of "sufficient reason" the employee would be sent home.

You could hear the anger among the workers. Skulls refusing to swallow this bit of metal shit. The regulars laughed and shrugged it off, but the substitute clerks demanded that they be given the power to pass judgment on the "sufficient reason". There was talk of deliberate slowdown of work and perhaps a semi-wildcat, but as time wore on and the new rule disappeared into the forest of the old rules, the nucleus of agitation shrank to one or two people. Outrage had succumbed to avoidance, and in part the Post Office has forestalled a serious united threat by the workers (until last year) by allowing for avoidance; by not enforcing its own rules very strongly and thereby preventing any class-numerous confrontation. The disputes as to rules mostly follow the individual pattern of one worker versus the supervisor for one specific incident.

The treatment of women is of special interest. Although women are the majority of the work force and perform all the secretarial work, there are few women supervisors, and almost no women among the upper ranks of the postal bureaucracy. Moreover, despite the smoke screen of "indistinction" between men and women that the Post Office asserts, women are treated to extra exploitation. The most tedious tasks, the tasks that isolate workers from each other, the tasks that

enforce a pattern of absolute rigid toil, like housekeeping, rewrapping torn parcels, even the sorting of first-class letters, those tasks that in fact duplicate the isolation of women in the family and reinforce the slavery of women to tasks of "cleaning" are always assigned to women workers.

There is also a special dress code for women, and they must endure the humiliating and thoroughly contemptible advances of the male supervisors. Such advances are qualitatively different from the mutual eroticism and the fluid sexuality of relationships between the workers. The overtures of the supervisors are always accompanied by the tacit authority of a "superior position", and at times there are direct threats to women to either comply or suffer the consequences at work. On the other hand, the directly erotic relationships of the workers maintain an area of human desire against the encroachment of work and establish a sort of equality at their root although women are still victim to the notions of male superiority.

The workers do not make many attempts at reorganizing the work except that unconscious organization that exists in all work: "Feel good, work good; feel bad, work bad." But the nature of overrationalized and directly inefficient production, creating as it does fragmentation of the process, acts against such reorganization. The workers' resistance is based implicitly on the notion that this rationalization, inefficient as it is, is ample evidence that human toil is indeed inessential and is maintained only through such rationalization. Their resistance regards activity as being channeled not into reorganization of labor, but the freeing of labor for the more pleasurable tasks of the imagination.

Resistance takes first form in the continuous battle with the authority of the productive process as personalized in the supervisor. He is humiliated, ignored, and challenged. But there is also the implicit resistance that the workers mount in the day-to-day maintenance of their own life and own living qualities....

Garbage trucks work at night in this city. They station themselves in alleys. Like this. An old man walks across the headlight beams and the alarm goes off. Two men spring from the truck and grab him and lift him off the ground.

"Got him," says one.

"Wowieboy, is he old?" asks the other.

"He sure is," replies the first.

"Put me down," says the man.

"No luck, pops. We're not trash collectors, you know. This is just a disguise. We're part of the city health board, and we're cashing you in. In your state you're an ecological disaster!"

They empty his pockets and collect the money. Then they throw him into the back and set the jaws of the machine grinding. The machine

swallows the man, and a small red stream begins to leak from the bottom of the truck.

A black woman crosses the headlights, and the alarm strikes again.

"Another one!"

"Goddamn, a woman, too. Feel her tits."

"Old, old, but nice."

"Hot damn," says Number Two. "Throw her in."

And more blood flows through the gills of the truck, and a small stream heads east to the lake and across the water where it crosses the horizon, and there, glowing like ore from a furnace, scalds the eyes of a dead sun. And the Mayor awakens refreshed and comments on the beauty of Chicago sunrises. The only problem is, the drinking water in this city tastes funny.

The Post Office is in the midst of a huge reorganization plan. The plan pretends to make the Post Office into a government-independent corporation that must pay its own way. This means in reality increased work discipline and de-urbanization of the Post Office in order to fire the blacks and give the jobs to white workers. Black workers are fired at an incredible rate, while most white workers are secure. In one week, the San Francisco Post Office fired 600 workers, and the union, being democratic, did nothing.

The union occupies a desperate situation. It is under increasing pressure from the workers to strike against the postal management, and it faces an intractable authority in the Post Office rulers. The unions merged in order to fight the reorganization and protect the workers, and settle the contract dispute that still remains from the last postal strike. But to do so forces the unions to contribute to a strike which will undermine their authority with workers and with the postal management. The union is suspended between the necessary, to fight the management, and the impossible, supporting a workers' strike that will inevitably surpass the union itself. In such situations, control institutions commit suicide in their immobility.

The most effective resistance to the work process, more effective than even direct physical violence, is the resistance of play. On a good day, games of football, basketball, and hockey abound. Packages and letters sail through the air accompanied by smiles, bets, and the disapproval of the supervisor. Play, of course, is the refusal to submit to the brutal "rationality" of work, but the latent content of play holds even more revolutionary implications.

Once an open jar of 20,000 government pure methamphetamines came rolling down the belt. What a sight that was — 50 people stuffing those pink neon capsules in pockets and underpants and shoveling handfuls of electricity into their groins. For the next few days, everyone talked a lot more and cracked platinum smiles and had the strangest glow

behind their eyes and twitched. You would have thought the place had gone nuts — arms and legs shooting all over the place.

The play response performs the crucial function of extracting time from the parcel-compression of performative space, re-establishing it as the fluid movement of human pleasure. Play both liberates and masters time by reclaiming the sphere of human activity as the area for happiness. Play also materializes the human personality in its permanent capacity for enjoyment and in the infinitude of resources for overcoming the boundaries of toil. The pleasure experienced in play demands that time be given not to the commodity, but to the human development of the producer, and therefore the introduction of play destroys the very existence of the commodity and the division of labor.

Time can no longer stand as the disintegrative element in human experience, but rather must become an area open to human innovation and the permanent unity of activity and pleasure. Physical requirements of play bring into motion the physical grace of the body and smash the separation of the workers from one another. The latent experiences of childhood, the use of imagination, all are re-formed, as being timefully significant in the play response. It achieves the harmonious interaction of desire and activity, of a notion that the period of pleasure does not belong to a forgotten past that is to be devoured by the demands of "efficiency", but that activity itself must be the pathway to sensuous enjoyment.

Black Studies

C.L.R. James

I have to make certain things clear from the beginning. I do not recognize any distinctive nature of black studies — not today, 1969. However, the history of the United States being what it has been and what it still is, there is a serious struggle going on between the advocates of one lot of black studies and the advocates of another lot. And, therefore, I am compelled for the time being to take sides; but for myself, I do not believe that there is any such thing as black studies. There are studies in which black people and black history, so long neglected, can now get some of the attention they deserve. But when you look at what is taking place under the guise of black studies in the United States today, you realize what a fundamental position ought to be.

I am going to give you some idea of the kind of struggle that is taking place. That's the world that we live in; and there is a conflict over black studies and we have to know of that conflict and know what are our basic ideas. Then I shall give you my own fundamental view of the way in which the question ought to be approached. Then I will take up two great historical episodes in the past — I may have said some of this before, but it is necessary to say some of it again. Having done that, I will then take up some concrete examples in recent history, recent personalities, recent persons in American history and American life with whom we can seriously approach the question of the role Negroes have played and the influence American society has had upon them. I will be able to do that after we have a view of what can only be approached as a fundamental question.

Now, first of all, I am going to take what is going on. I have my own views. But I want to take what is going on because we cannot come with

views and say, "Oh, look at this," and wave a flag, with other people talking about other things and people talking about them seriously. There is one serious person — they have him down here in the New York Times Magazine as W. Arthur Lewis, but at the bottom they tell you what is his real title; he is Sir Arthur Lewis. He is a very able man. He used to be Principal of the University of the West Indies, and when the West Indian Federation broke up, Lewis left. He is now at Princeton and he has been knighted by the Queen for his services to scholarship. Now he has written that "The Road to the Top Is Through Higher Education — Not Black Studies." (1) I want to go into some detail about Arthur Lewis, who is a very distinguished black scholar.

He says that there is no clear line and that a great deal of error is also inevitable; and then he goes on to say,

America is really not a melting pot, but a welding shop. It is a country in which many different groups of people live and work together side by side, without coalescing. There are Poles, and Irish, and Chinese, and Jews, and Germans, and many other ethnic groups. (2)

Now Lewis is an extremely able man with a lot of experience and yet he says there are Poles, Irish, Chinese, Jews, Germans, and many other ethnic groups — so he takes black people and he puts them among those. How a man can do that, with all honesty, I can't understand.

But their way of living together is set by the clock; there is integration between 7 o'clock in the morning and 5 o'clock at night, where all mingle and work together in the center of the city, in the banks and factories, department stores and universities.

Now how long have all been working together and mingling in the banks, department stores and universities?

But, after 5 o'clock each ethnic group returns to its own neighborhood. There it has its own separate social life. There Poles do not marry Italians, even though they are both white Catholics....But in the meantime this voluntary self-segregation...

They live by themselves voluntarily.

...shelters those who are not yet ready to lose themselves completely in the American mainstream. (3)

So you see, that's what is happening to the Negro. He lives by himself

because he is not ready to lose himself completely in the American mainstream.

An American neighborhood is not a ghetto. A ghetto is an area where members of an ethnic group are forced by law to live, and from which it is a criminal offense to emerge without the license of the oppressing power. That is what apartheid means in the Union of South Africa. An American neighborhood is not a place where members of an ethnic group are required by law to live....(4)

So these people are living in the ghetto because they like it, or they're getting ready to plunge into the diversity of American life. They're sheltering there, but when they get stronger they will go.

I know this man. He says that you have apartheid in South Africa, but not here. He says that at this minute we Negroes have 11% of the population. Our minimum objective must be to capture 11% of the jobs in the middle and 11% of the jobs at the top. That must be the aim and objective of black people in the United States — to get 11% of the jobs in the middle and 11% of the jobs at the top, corresponding to the 11% of the population. Rising from the bottom to the middle or the top in the face of stiff white competition, prejudice, and so on, takes everything that a man can give to it. And those are the people who should be praised. The road to the top in the great American corporations and other institutions is followed how? Through higher education. That's all we have to do to get to the top. Through higher education, scientists, research workers, engineers, accountants, lawyers, financial administrators, presidential advisors; all these are people recruited from the university. So if we want to be able to get to the top and get our 11%, we have to take advantage of the education that is offered to us. That is all that is wrong up till now. We haven't chosen the type of education which will get us to the top. And there are some people who are bitter enemies of the Negroes. "The trade unions are the black man's greatest enemy in the United States." (5) And our greatest task in terms of numbers is to conquer the middle, through better use of apprenticeships, of the high schools, and of technical colleges.

What can the good white college do for its black students that Howard or Lincoln or Fisk cannot do? It can open the road into the top jobs. It can do this only by giving our people the kinds of skills and the kind of polish which are looked for by people filling top jobs. (6)

They should go to the college where they can scrub a black man to make him white. That would be one skill that would be needed, if he could find a college to do that.

Any Afro-American who wishes to become a specialist in black studies should be absolutely free to do so. But I hope that the...proportion who want to specialize in black studies may...turn out to be rather small, in comparison with our scientists, or engineers, accountants, economists, or doctors. Another attitude which puzzles me is that which requires black students in the white colleges to mix only with each other, to have a dormitory to themselves, to eat at separate tables in the refectory, and so on....These colleges are the gateway to leadership positions in the integrated part of the economy, and that what they can best do for young blacks is to prepare them to capture our 11% share of the best jobs at the top — one of every nine ambassadorships, one of every nine General Motors vice-presidencies, one of every nine senior directors of engineering laboratories, and so on. (7)

So the black people will have to go to schools and learn that, and not bother with black studies, and they will get these positions. How does he think somebody is going to get some black man to become one of the nine vice-presidents of General Motors? It was the devil himself to get into the trade unions. And he actually says one out of every nine vice-presidencies of General Motors.

An Attorney General once said that in 50 years a black man could become President of the United States. Well, he meant well — that's all that we can say. But, we can say that in 25 years, one might become a vice-president of GM, and he will become a vice-president of GM not because of his passing examinations, but by the number of people who attack the offices of GM. They take one in and they say, "You be a vice-president. Now the rest of you go home. You see you can get on." I have known Lewis for many, many years, and that he has descended to this is completely beyond me because Lewis knows better than this. He has written this for a purpose.

How is one to be ambassador to Finland or Luxembourg — jobs which American Negroes have already held with distinction — if one is uncomfortable in white company? (8)

Please, I am not responsible, I am only reading it. I see in your face great distaste for it. Mine is equally great. He is a countryman of mine, so what is to be done? Nevertheless. So that is why we are not trained; that is why we do not have one job out of every nine ambassadorships.

No doubt a few Negroes, born with the special talents which success in a highly competitive business world demands, will succeed in establishing sizeable and highly competitive concerns. (9)

But they wouldn't.

President Nixon says he is for black power in black neighborhoods and he is for black capitalism. Yes, he will have some people who will make cloth — some small manufacturing. But steel, modern industry, engineering, big ships, and the like — no black people are going to have companies that deal with those. And do you think Lewis doesn't know that?

Neither is black America going to be saved by a Marxist revolution. Revolution takes power from one set of persons and gives it to another, but it does not change the hierarchical structure of the economy. Any kind of America that you can visualize, whether capitalist, Communist, Fascist, or any other kind of ist, is going to consist of large institutions like GM under one name or another. (10)

He is teaching political economy at Princeton.

Any kind of America that you can visualize, whether capitalist, Communist, Fascist, or any other kind of ist, is going to consist of large institutions like GM under one name or another. It will have people at the top, people in the middle and people at the bottom. Its leading engineers, doctors, scientists, and administrators... (11)

will be essentially the same. So the problem of the Negro is whether he is going to be mostly in the bottom job or whether he will also get his 11% share at the top and in the middle, in a Socialist or Communist or Fascist United States.

This is very mischievous indeed. I intend before this weekend is over to deal with what I have found out after having lived in the United States in a very crucial area for some weeks — that numbers of Negroes, important people, who are not committed to American bourgeois society, are extremely doubtful in the back of their minds whether a Socialist society can fundamentally change the position of black people in American society. And, in my opinion, they have a lot of justification for thinking so. Because the people who say they are Socialists, I don't wish to be rude, but SDS and all those people — what they put forward is nothing at all. A black man is entitled to say, "Well, what is that?" They tell me that SDS means, as far as they see, to make a better America. Some faults and mistakes — they want to correct those, but to change fundamentally the social structure, they don't see that, and that's why they say what Lewis is saying here. Whatever changes there are, black people are going to be at the bottom or have to fight to get to the top. And Lewis is encouraging them by

saying that whatever kind of society it is, whatever revolution takes place, it will consist of people at the top, in the middle, at the bottom, and the Negro will be at the bottom unless he goes to the schools and gets his best opportunity to go forward. This appears in The New York Times. I will inflict you no more with it. That is the kind of black studies that some of the schools are putting forward. They are saying, "Well, you want to study black studies; what you really need to do is to get the kind of education which will fit you for your 11% of the top jobs and your 11% of the middle jobs, too."

Now, opposed to that is what is taking place at Federal City College. They have a view of black studies which is not mine. But I would be glad to go back there, and I would join the black studies faculty and do what they say. It is not for me to live in the Caribbean, to live in London for a couple of years, and to come here and to tell some black people what they should do for black studies. If in private they ask me, I will give them my opinion. But what they want to do, they will do. I will not interfere with that. Because they have ideas, they have experiences, they have lived from childhood, their parents and their grandparents have told them things, and they have a certain conception of the black man in this society. A man like Rap Brown says things that I cannot imagine my saying. But if anybody wants to criticize him, especially people in England, I tell them, "You shut up and leave him alone. What he says and what risks he chooses to run are his business, coming from his past and his experience of the people around him."....

I have to go into certain questions; first of all I have to tell you what is still my view, a view that I arrived at with my various socialist friends that I put forward at a meeting in 1948:

We need a careful, systematic building up of historical, economic, political, literary ideas, knowledge and information, on the Negro question inside the party. Because it is only where you have Bolshevik ideas, Marxist ideas, Marxist history, Marxist perspectives, that you are certain to drive out bourgeois ideas, bourgeois history, bourgeois perspectives which are so powerful on the question of the races in the United States. (12)

That is what I said in 1948, and I still believe it. I don't say so at all times — I don't gad about Federal City College and say this and that Marxism, but sitting on this platform, that is what I have said.

Let me repeat it:

It is only where you have Bolshevik ideas, Marxist ideas, Marxist knowledge, Marxist history, Marxist perspectives, that you are certain to drive out bourgeois ideas, bourgeois history, bourgeois perspectives which are so powerful on the

question of the races in the United States.

That's where we are. Now I am going to speak on some of the ideas. First of all — I think I may have said this before; it doesn't matter. There are certain things, and I have to repeat them. I follow Mr. Levi-Strauss. I am not a mad follower of human anthropology, but I like certain ideas that he has of history. And he says: from the time the Neolithic Period began when the Neolithic man began to cultivate the soil, to domesticate animals, to make pottery, and to live in a house with his wife and family, or his wives and families, he says civilization of a certain type began and to this day it has not changed. He says the cultivation of the soil, the domestication of animals, the making of pottery, and the living in a house with his family, he says they began then, and nothing has changed for the last 10,000 years. Now I know what he means. Some people challenge him but I know what he means.

However, he says that there is one period in history which offers some serious change from what began 10,000 years ago — the period known as the Industrial Revolution. He says that when man began to use power in industry, it created a change in the development of human history and society which had not taken place in the previous 9,000 years of human existence. He says it is possible that then a change took place. On the whole he is inclined to believe that there has been no change. But he thinks maybe the Industrial Revolution, the use of power instead of human energy, the use of steam and what came after it, really began to change human nature.

Now it didn't change only human life, humannature; it changed human society. I have said before, and I want you to understand, that it is no use talking about black studies unless you make it perfectly clear that the wealth which enabled the bourgeoisie to challenge those who were in charge of society and to institute the power-building industrial regime, came from slavery, the slave trade, and the industries which were based upon that. Now if you agree that the first serious change in the fundamental features of human society came with the Industrial Revolution; if you agree — because at times Levi-Strauss writes as if to say nothing has changed really, people act to this day no better, but if there is a change, it came with the Industrial Revolution — if you agree that the wealth which went toward the building up of the bourgeoisie so that they could challenge the ancient regime, came from the slave trade and slavery, then I wonder (if you accept that) if you realize that to be doing black studies is to be able to get that into your head and then teach that to all the people who listen to you: that the vast change in human society came from the slave trade and slavery. All the historians tell you that. Marx also. His Poverty of Philosophy has the section on slavery. (I didn't want to bring it here tonight.) It was slavery that built up the bourgeois society and enabled it to make what Levi-Strauss thinks is the only fundamental change in 10,000 years of human history. The black not only provided the wealth in the struggle

which began between the old society and the new bourgeois society; the black people were foremost in the struggle itself.

This struggle had two great examples. The first was the French Revolution; the second was the American Civil War. And, in both of those, not only did the wealth that enabled them to move to a new type of society come from slavery, but the slaves were in the very forefront of the battle. Now tonight I'm going to use a kind of proof that isn't often done. The French slaves, when they became free, formed an army and they fought and defeated some 50,000 Spaniards, about 60,000 Englishmen who tried to take over the colony, and another 60 or 70 thousand Frenchmen. They defeated them in battle. And Lemmonier-Delafose wrote some memoirs 40 years after, and I have quoted, in *The Black Jacobins*, what he said about these soldiers. To my astonishment, some years later I was reading *Black Reconstruction* by Du Bois and I found that they were able to say much the same sort of appreciation of the black soldiers in the Civil War. I want you to take note of that, please. The black soldiers fighting in the French Revolutionary War were of a similar type of the black soldiers fighting in the Civil War. I will give you the two passages, and you will see how peculiarly alike they are. This is Lemmonier-Delafose: "But what men these blacks are! How they fight and how they die!" (13) I am not boasting about black is beautiful. Please, I don't go in for that. If other people want to, that's their affair. If they say "Black is beautiful," "Black is ugly," black is whatever they like. I am concerned with historical facts.

...But what men these blacks are! How they fight and how they die! One has to make war against them to know their reckless courage in braving danger when they can no longer have recourse to stratagem. I have seen a solid column, torn by grapeshot from four pieces of cannon, advance without making a retrograde step. The more they fell, the greater seemed to be the courage of the rest.... Three times these brave men, arms in hand, advanced without firing a shot and each time repulsed, only retired after leaving the ground strewn with three-quarters of their troop. One must have seen this bravery to have any conception of it. French courage alone could resist it: Indeed large ditches, an excellent artillery, perfect soldiers gave us a great advantage — But for many a day that massed square which marched singing to its death lighted by a magnificent sun, remained in my thoughts, and even today after more than 40 years, this majestic and glorious spectacle still lives as vividly in my imagination as in the moments when I saw it. (14)

Good.

Now here is a description of black soldiers — also former slaves — in the Civil War by W. E. B. Du Bois :

The deeds of heroism performed by these colored men were such as the proudest white man might emulate. Their colors are torn to pieces by shot, and literally bespattered by blood and brains. The color sergeant of the 1st Louisiana, on being mortally wounded, hugged the colors to his breast, when a struggle ensued between the two color-corporals on each side of him, as to who should have the honor of bearing the sacred standard, and during this generous contention, one was seriously wounded. One black lieutenant actually mounted the enemy's works three or four times, and in one charge the assaulting party came within 50 paces of them. Indeed, if only ordinarily supported by artillery and reserve, no one can convince us that they would not have opened up a passage through the enemy's works. (15)

This is practically the same thing that Lemmonier-Delafosse is stating about the ex-slaves in the French Revolution. This is what happened in the Civil War. And, that is not because their skins are black, or any special bravery of blacks. It is that men who are fighting for freedom and to whom freedom is a reality fight much better than men to whom — well, it is important, but not so important. That is why they both fought this way. This is what I want you to bear in mind.

Number one: The wealth that enabled society to make the big transition was rooted in the slave trade, slavery, and the industries that came from it. And, secondly, in the struggle by which the bourgeois established the political and social structure of this new form in the very front line, fighting as well as anybody else and better than most, in France in the French Revolutionary War, and in the American Civil War, were the ex-slaves.

Now to talk to me about black studies as if it's something that concerned black people is an utter denial. This is the history of Western Civilization. I can't see it otherwise. This is the history that black people and white people and all serious students of modern history and the history of the world have to know. To say it's some kind of ethnic problem is a lot of nonsense.

Now I am going to switch over to some modern problems and some modern individuals. I can't stay to deal with French literature from 1820 to the present day, 1969, nearly 150 years of history. It is impossible to write the history of French literature without stage after stage noting the tremendous roles that West Indians in particular have played during that whole period. You cannot write the history of French literature without having to deal with some ten black men from the Caribbean. I'm not going to go into that tonight. Even if you try to force me, I wouldn't do it. It would give a wrong impression. But I want to

choose a few. I am going to choose one — Victor Hugo — because Hugo was not a man of the Caribbean, he was a white man. But he was the man of whom Andre Gide said, when they asked him who was the greatest poet of France, “Malheureux (Unfortunately), Victor Hugo.” Victor Hugo used to write a lot of liberal, revolutionary stuff, and they didn’t like it, but he was a fine poet. And Victor Hugo was the dominant figure in French literature from 1820 after Napoleon right up to about 1880. When Dumas died, Hugo said that one of the greatest men of the romantic movement was Alexander Dumas. This is what he wrote and I translate:

No popularity in this century has surpassed that of Alexander Dumas. His successes were more than successes; they were triumphs. They have the eclat of a fanfare of trumpets. The name of Alexander Dumas is more than French; it is European; it is universal.

And so on and so forth. That is one of the greatest figures in French literature.

I am in London and I see some of the students and I ask one of them: “What are you doing?” He says: “I am doing a study of T. S. Eliot.” I say: “Fine.” I ask another West Indian student: “What are you doing?” He says: “I am working for my PhD.” I say: “What are you doing?” He says: “I am studying D. H. Lawrence.” I say: “Very nice.” The most fantastic of them all is another fellow who tells me he is doing Joseph Conrad. Conrad is a Pole who wrote the English language and wrote very well indeed. But why should these West Indian students be doing D.H. Lawrence, Joseph Conrad, and T.S. Eliot when a man like Alexander Dumas, the father, is there? One of the most remarkable figures of the 19th century. He didn’t only write romantic novels. I suppose you know some of the novels, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Louise de la Valliere*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Twenty Years After*, *Chico the Jester*. Now I want to tell you what those novels did. After the French Revolution, Europe and the rest of the world broke out into what was known as the romantic period, which meant a tremendous expansion of the individual personality of the ordinary man. Previous to the French Revolution, men lived according to a certain discipline, a certain order. The French Revolution broke that and people began to live more individual, more experimental, more romantic lives — Personality. Among the forces which contributed to that were the romantic poets and novelists of the day. And not one of them stands higher in the popular field, in the expectation and understanding of the people of those days, than Alexander Dumas. He was translated into every language. *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *The Three Musketeers* and the collected novels are European and universal novels.

What I am saying is, not only did the black people contribute; not only

did they fight in the ranks; but in forging the kind of lives which people lived afterwards, one of the foremost men is a man from the Caribbean. How do I make that into black studies? I can't. No! I can understand some university saying: "We are going to study the lives and works of black men who have not been done before." That I understand, but to make it black studies! And I have asked: "Allow me to come into your black studies program." I am ready to go, but I can't do it in those terms at all.

Now, I want to take one or two other individuals. I want to take some men whom I know personally. I'll do that at once before I go back to some other men. I want to take Paul Robeson and Richard Wright. Those are two men whom I knew quite well. I knew Richard Wright very well indeed. Dick fancied himself as a cook. He would cook rice or chicken or something in some Southern way and say: "Come over, I'm going to cook today." One day I went to the country to spend a weekend with him. He had gone to the country to spend the summer. I came into the house and he showed me 25 books on a shelf. He said: "Look here, Nello, you see those books there? They are by Kierkegaard." I said: "Yes, he's very popular these days." He said: "I am not concerned about his popularity. I want to tell you something. Everything that he writes in those books, I knew before I had them." I never spoke to him about it after. I knew what he meant to tell me. Now Kierkegaard is one of the great writers of today. He is one of the men who, during the last 20 or 30 years, modern civilization has recognized as a man whose writings express the modern temperament and the modern personality. And Dick assured me that he was reading Kierkegaard because everything that he read in Kierkegaard he had known before. What he was telling me was that he was a black man in the United States, and that gave him an insight into what today is the universal opinion and attitude of the modern personality. I believe that is a matter that is not only black studies, but is white studies too. I believe that that is some form of study which is open to any university: Federal City College, Harvard, etc. It is not an ethnic matter.

I knew Wright well enough to know that he meant it. I didn't ask him much because I thought he meant me to understand something. And I understood it. I didn't have to ask him about that. What there was in Dick's life — what there was in the experience of a black man in the United States in the 30's that made him understand everything that Kierkegaard had written before he had read it, and the things that made Kierkegaard the famous writer that he is today. That is something that I believe has to be studied.

There is Paul Robeson. I knew Paul very well. He was a remarkable person. He wasn't only a singer and an actor, that was something else, but a personality. And you get some idea of the personality that he was because he took his profession, his fame, his money, and everything and he committed it completely to the Communist Party. That ruined him. But he wasn't alone, there were many who were ruined by it.

What I want you to note is the complete commitment to the idea that something that was organized in Moscow and that came from Moscow was the only thing that could change the lives of the black people in the United States. That is worth examination, you know. To know his life, what led him to that, what he turned away from, and he didn't sway, go to and come — he joined up and he went all the way.

I had a lot of fun with Paul. I always used to laugh at it. He was going to Moscow. I was going away from Moscow. But I liked him very much. He acted in my play, *Touissant L'Ouverture*. And I think he liked me too. We used to meet: "Hello, Paul." "Hello, James." "How are you?" "Are you living in the United States, too, and I haven't seen you?" "Look, I am going over to San Francisco, but when I come back I will get in touch with you and I will look forward to it." And he knew I wasn't going to do it, and I knew he wasn't going to do it, but we expressed some good feelings for the time being. There was too much between us politically, but, apart from that, he was a very fine person. And I believe that an examination should be made of what it was that drew Paul to the Communist Party and made him the man he was, break completely with his past, throw everything into the dustbin with the idea that there was only Communism that could save his black people in the United States from being what they were and where they were.

But you can't sit down and make it up as (Harold) Cruse has done, you know. Cruse finds that the problem of Negroes in the Communist Party was due to the Jews. The man does not understand that the Communists have a line that in Switzerland, in Albania, in India, in China, in Moscow, in London, in Paris, has nothing to do with Jews. That is the Stalinist line. And, therefore, you have to begin to explain what the Stalinists do in regard to the Negroes in the United States by means of the line. But to say it's the Jews, well, I mean! No, there was more to it; and I believe we will get a good understanding of what happened to an educated black man in the United States in the 30's, a man of great natural gifts, he didn't inherit money, a man of international fame, a man with world-wide contacts, a man loved and respected all over the world, that he would give it all up and commit himself to Moscow and the policies of Moscow. I believe that is worth examination. That will tell us much about black men in the United States; it will tell us much about the mental attitude of people in the '30s. It will tell us much about the impact white civilization made upon a very distinguished, splendid man. That I believe is worth examining, more than T.S. Eliot and D.H. Lawrence, much as I like both of them.

And now I have three more to do. I prefer to deal with them at the last because they are historical figures. They are three men of the 19th century, Wendell Phillips, Frederick Douglass, and Abraham Lincoln. Now Wendell Phillips is one of the most remarkable men of the 19th century. He was a man who received a first class education. He was a lawyer. He inherited a lot of money, but Phillips committed

himself to the abolition of Negro slavery in the United States and for 30 or 40 years was completely devoted to that. And the personality that he developed cannot be seen except from the connection of the highest classical education that the United States could give. He was a New England Brahmin; he inherited a lot of money; he was trained as a lawyer; he had a fine education at Harvard — and he committed himself completely to the abolition of Negro slavery. That I believe is something that has to be studied.

I read some biographies of Phillips — they are not aware of the kind of change that must have made in this man, this educated man, this man with all the wealth and all the prestige and all the power, intellectual power, of a New England Brahmin who gave it up and turned away and fought in the struggle for the abolition of slavery. By the way, he was a great revolutionary. I don't want to go into that, but he's a man who has to be studied. I believe, I may be wrong, that it is in a black university or a university by black people who are committed to the black struggle that Phillips helped start and which they have continued that they can really read about his life and work out what really was decisive. I believe that. I don't think that the Harvard professor or the Columbia professor or Lewis at Princeton would be able to do that. No, I think at Federal City College they would be able to do that in time. (They can't do that now; they don't do enough—and not at Howard either. I hear that Howard is a very peculiar kind of an institution.) But an institution that is concerned with the development of black studies can handle a man like Wendell Phillips. I think so. That, for me, is black studies. And Phillips was no black.

Another man who I believe is an important man of black studies is Frederick Douglass. I believe that there was a greater orator in the English language in the United States at the same time. That was Abraham Lincoln because during Lincoln's greatest speeches, especially during his Presidency, he outlined and explored ideas not then reached by philosophers, politicians, and other persons of the kind. Frederick Douglass didn't do that. There is nothing in Douglass like the Second Inaugural or the Gettysburg Speech by Lincoln. But, beyond that, within the limits of a man agitating and making propaganda, I do not know a finer handler of the English language than Frederick Douglass. He was a man of exceptional qualities of mind, and he learned to read begging little white boys in the street to teach him. Some of those speeches, to this day, I read them and I know nothing superior to them in the 19th century. Nothing. There is Abraham Lincoln, there is Demosthenes, there is Edmund Burke — they are in a category above. Edmund Burke on the American Independence. But just below, among the men who agitated and propagandized for a particular cause and did all that could be done within that cause, nobody stands higher than Frederick Douglass — nobody. And that is a matter for black studies and white studies too.

He was foremost among the propagandists for the abolition of slavery. And he was recognized as such, not only in America but in England. I remember, in particular, a statement by Mr. Higginson, an Army commander and New England Brahmin. Douglass it seems was a man over six feet, an extremely handsome man, a man who carried himself with great dignity and ease. Higginson, a New England Brahmin who had fought in the Civil War, said that he had walked down the road with a man whom one did not often meet, and have the opportunity to meet in public, that he had enjoyed it because it was an opportunity that he hadn't had before and didn't know when he would have again. This opportunity consisted in walking down the road with Frederick Douglass. I have repeatedly met that sort of thing in people who heard of Douglass and saw him. I think it is worth examining him properly. Foner has written four volumes of his speeches and so on, but Frederick Douglass, the particular man, who wrote in the middle of the 19th century — I haven't seen him stated anywhere. I believe a great deal can be gotten from a serious study of Frederick Douglass.

Before I touch Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States and a very interesting character, I want to say something else. Jaspers, the German philosopher, and Heidegger both agree: they say that there are many philosophers who go and write and get their doctorate on Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Leibniz, and such like, but they say that these fellows are merely writing books out of books, that unless a man is taking part in the philosophical struggles of the times in which he lives it is impossible for him to understand what Kant and Aristotle and Plato and these were doing, because when they were busy doing philosophy it was a part of them. And I know that unless you are busy actively taking part in politics, you read the history of these revolutions but you don't understand them. So people who are today taking part in the struggle, in the kind of struggle that Frederick Douglass and Wendell Phillips took part in, they will be able to write about them and they can understand. But the professor sitting down in his office and giving out his lectures two or three times a week and not involved in this kind of struggle, he cannot understand them. I know that from personal experience and I am sure that when Jaspers and Heidegger say that, they know what they're talking about. They say that all these people writing about philosophy — they don't know what they're saying. Because for them philosophy is something that they write from books; they read Kant and they read Plato and Aristotle and they write about it. They say that is nothing. And I know that can be applied to politics. And it is people in the midst of a struggle today who can write about Frederick Douglass and Wendell Phillips and really illuminate them. And that is not black studies. That is study of society. Now, the last man I want to speak about is Abraham Lincoln.

I'm getting into a lot of trouble at Federal City College over what I am saying about Lincoln. But they don't bother me. They like to say

that Lincoln fought the Civil War to keep the country united, and he said that if he could keep the country united and keep the blacks as slaves, he would do that too. Yes, he said so, undoubtedly. But I want to end this talk about black studies by telling you something that I have discovered about Abraham Lincoln. I sent it to a publisher in the United States. I gave him an outline of what I intended to say, and he said, no, he didn't want it. Publishers are a peculiar lot. I didn't bother with him. But I went to Jamaica some years later and I met a young woman there who knew him. She told me that he had told her that what James is saying about Abraham Lincoln, the American public is not yet ready for. And, it is certain, that Federal City College is not ready for it there. But meanwhile they take it from me — they know that I mean well.

Now Abraham Lincoln, sometime when he was a young man, some 30 odd years, wrote a letter to a friend of his saying that he was on board a boat going down South, and he saw on board some ten or twelve black slaves who were being sold to the South. One of them had been sold because he was too much concerned about his wife and he was not doing his work properly so they separated him from her and were sending him down South. In those days it meant that you were being sent to murder, prison, sickness, death of all kinds. What Lincoln noted was that these fellows were singing and dancing and behaving in a way that he could not understand — how people in that situation could behave in the way that they were behaving. He wrote this letter to his friend telling him exactly what he thought.

Now, sometime afterwards Lincoln was speaking to some young men somewhere in Michigan or Missouri and he told them what it meant in his mind to be an American citizen. Lincoln said that he and his generation knew the men and the children of the men who had fought in the American War of Independence. He said they were magnificent men. He said they had made a great historical experience and that had transformed their quality so that they were exceptional people. Lincoln implied that there were no such people in other parts of the world because none of them had had that great experience. Then he went on to say, what about those people who have come from foreign countries and come to the United States, the Germans in particular. He said the Declaration of Independence and what it states and the experience of living alongside those people who were descendants of those who had fought in the War of Independence — that was making the Germans into citizens worthy of being members of the great American Republic. You see, what he's saying is that to be an American citizen and part of the American democracy demands an exceptional type of person. He wasn't speaking about color. And when Lincoln was arguing with Stephen Douglas and he said he didn't think that blacks were the equal of white people, that is what he had in mind. He was saying the American citizen was a special kind of person who had had a special kind of experience,

and the blacks — he didn't think that they were up to it. It's difficult for me to get angry about that today. I understand his position because I understand his conception of what it was to be a citizen of the great American Republic. He had made that perfectly clear. To be that, you had to be descendants of those who had fought in the War of Independence and you had to be a part of that, and the Germans who came had to live with them and study the Declaration of Independence. They could become incorporated. But he said he didn't think the slaves could be.

Then the situation developed where Lincoln had to give black people a part in the war. Lincoln wrote another letter in which he said that the time will come when we shall see, we shall be celebrating, the preservation of the Republic, and there will be black men who, with rifle in hand and clenched teeth, helped to save it, while there will be white men who had fought against the democratic Republic. He changed his mind when he saw the black people fighting in the war; he felt that they, just as the people who had fought in the War of Independence, were now proving that they were perfectly able to be citizens of the Republic in the tradition which had been established by the men who had fought the War of Independence. And that is the reason for that famous sentence in Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address :

... Fondly do we hope — fervently do we pray — that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

Lincoln was not making a speech, he wasn't writing an article, he wasn't seeking votes. He was the President of the United States elected for a new term and he was making it clear that he was going to settle his business, and if I understand politics all right, he wasn't talking so to the South — he was telling people around him: Now I am going to settle it. And government of the people, by the people, for the people means, if it means anything, government of the people, including the black people; by the people, including black people; for the people, including the black people, because fore score and seven years ago without the black people it was okay. He understood that something important had been established. So the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural contains his new conception of what black people were and their fitness to become citizens of the famous Republic and his readiness to do all that he could to see that that was done. That's why, in my opinion, they shot him. There were some who knew that he meant what he said, that he had enormous power and prestige, and he was

making a declaration. He wrote a letter to somebody who wrote him and said: "I congratulate you on your Second Inaugural." And Lincoln said: "Yes, I think it's one of the best things that I've ever done, but a lot of people are not too sympathetic to it. But time will tell."

Frederick Douglass says that he was in Washington when Lincoln said that (and) he trembled at what he saw around him. I believe that is an important part of black studies. I cannot think of black studies in any other way. I will end by telling you two things. Before Lincoln took part in the election of '64, Lincoln suspected that he was going to lose. Lincoln called Douglass and told him: "I want you to go down to the South; I want you to get 25 men who can go into the South among the blacks. I will give you the money and we will raise the black slaves in revolt." The main idea of that is very unpleasant to certain people. He was prepared to send people down to raise the slaves in revolt because he says I'm going to lose the election and if I lose it, nobody is going to carry it through. But as he won the election, he made clear what his policy was going to be. And I believe that he would have managed it. He would have managed something. I will go so far as to say if anything could have been done, Lincoln could have done it. Nobody else could. That's why he was shot.

So, my friends, that's where I stand in regard to black studies. I do not know, as a Marxist, black studies as such. I only know the struggle of people against tyranny and oppression in a certain social and political setting and, particularly, during the last 200 years, it's impossible to me to separate black studies from white studies in any theoretical point of view. Nevertheless, there are certain things about black studies that need to be studied today. They have been ignored, we are beginning to see a certain concern about them. I believe also that certain of these studies are best done by black people, not by professors as such, but by the same people who are engaged in the struggle in which those people were engaged then. That will make them better understand them and illustrate them. And that is how I see black studies and how I am going to speak about black studies at the Socialist Scholars Conference, although I am ready to submit myself to the black studies department at Federal City College and do what they have to do. Life presents you with some strange difficulties and, at times, you have to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds.

FOOTNOTES

1. New York Times Magazine, May 11, 1969, Page 34ff.
2. Ibid., Page 35.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., Page 39.
5. Ibid., Page 44.

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., Page 50.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., Page 52.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. J. Meyer (CLR James): "The Revolutionary Answer to the Negro Problem in the United States", in Documents on the Negro Struggle (New York, Pioneer Publishers), Page 34.
13. Quoted in CLR James: The Black Jacobins (Second Edition, revised, New York, Vintage Books, 1963), Page 368.
14. Ibid., Pages 368-369.
15. W. E. B. Du Bois: Black Reconstruction (New York, Russell and Russell, 1935), Pages 107-108.
16. Abraham Lincoln: "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions: Address Before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois January 27, 1838", in Roy P. Basler (editor): Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings (New York, World Publishing Company, 1946), Page 84.



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Note: The review of THE EXPLOSION in the July-August issue was written by David Gross.

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