

DETROIT REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT RECORDS

BOX 7 OF 16

FOLDER 5

LABOR NEWSLETTER

A REPORT FROM MISSISSIPPI

By Michael Adelman, Detroit

Recently, I travelled to Central and Southern Mississippi to represent the Mississippi Poultry Workers Union before the National Labor Relations Board in Forest, Mississippi. Here are some observations.

The feeling in Mississippi is

that the Deep South is more open to an independent labor movement than any other part of the country.

I found ample evidence to support that statement, particularly with regard to the work of the Gulf-coast Pulpwood Association (GPA) and the Mississippi Poultry Workers Union (MPWU). (Continued p. 9)

Labor Newsletter

NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD NATIONAL LABOR COMMITTEE ISSUE #2 NOV. 1972

LOS ANGELES LABOR SCHOOL

[The Black Workers Congress of Los Angeles and the Bar Sinister collective planned and started a labor school which is presently being attended by workers and legal people. We are printing here portions of a letter from Carla Fortney of the Bar Sinister, describing the formation of the school and some of the problems they have had. The letter was written late in August, so some of the information may be dated. Also in this issue is a copy of the extensive syllabus put together by the Black Workers Congress and the Bar Sinister.]

Carla's Letter

At this point, there is a group of seven people planning and coordinating the classes, three from the Bar Sinister, three from the Black Workers Congress, and one white woman worker. This group evolved out of a prior group -- more of a study group -- which included a couple of people from La Raza Unida Labor Committee. At that point all of us were inexperienced in the labor field. We met and read together for a few months, educating ourselves in labor history and labor law and discussed practical problems in the work the different people were involved in. We read Labor's Untold Story, Organizing and the Law,

some things on Chicano history, and various articles and selections from Lenin. At some point the La Raza people dropped out for various reasons, primarily due to a lot of practical work and overextension. Also Neil Herring joined us and gave us a lot of help in the law field.

After a few months of meetings, we were successful in having developed good working relationships and in understanding enough about labor to have some idea about what a school should teach. At this point, there was some change in the people relating from the Congress to include a member who was a steward in the ILWU. So we developed the outline of the labor school, which is pretty much what we're working from today.

By this time, the Congress had enough contacts whereby they knew experienced people who could teach the classes. At first we couldn't find anyone to teach the labor history class -- someone with the experience or knowledge and the proper perspective. So we started doing a lot of reading ourselves, thinking we would teach the class. That didn't work too well -- it was hard to find a way to work out the research, preparation and teaching being done by all of us, and when you don't have (Continued p. //)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Dear Ms. Leeds:

This letter is sparked by the report in Guild Notes. Unfortunately I received notice of the Detroit meeting less than two weeks before it was held and was able to make neither the time nor the money available for that trip on such short notice. I would like to give some thoughts.

The present historical situation is quite unlike the thirties, except in the South. Although the established unions are not growing, they occupy the principal positions. Thus the main problem is not organizing the unorganized; certainly not in the New York area.

The capitalist system is like a balloon. If you punch in one side, it simply expands (compensates) in other directions. We organized the unorganized; the system accommodated by co-opting the unions through a mass reactionary political drive (redbaiting and now even liberal baiting), bureaucratizing the unions, pie cardism, graft and corruption.

This process in turn stopped organization. What is the point of joining a union and supporting a bunch of parasites who won't handle grievances when there will be no substantial change in your wages or working conditions.

I view the preeminent need today as to establish a center for the various rank and file groups which, for one reason or another are resisting the process. The Guild could provide a start by providing some channel for exchange of information. By affirmative action, not passive. From this something else might grow.

There are quite a few groups which are organizing around this situation. WDL, ACTU, even PL (with all its wildness). In addition there are many rank-and-file groups across the country, whose lawyers could best be reached by taking their names from the law reporter.

My own situation is illustrative. I am presently involved in a case with District Council 9 of the painters union. There the principal collective bargaining officer of the painters is chosen

by a referendum vote of all Council members, including non painters. This undemocratic situation permitted corruption to perpetuate itself in office. Now there is a good chance we will change the system by our law suit. But I am working almost totally isolated. Obviously some kind of basic organizational structure would help my work. How many rank-and-file groups don't know where to go for legal help?

Obviously, lawyers are not going to provide the main impetus for labor reform and revitalization. What we can do is smooth the way of those groups which can bring it about. I view that as the function of the National Labor Committee.

Best regards,

Sincerely,

Basil R. Pollitt
Attorney at Law
Brooklyn, New York

(Ed. Note: We appreciated the above letter and wish to thank everyone who has taken the time to write to us. Please feel free to drop us a line - even if you have no formal news or cases to report. We are interested in publishing our readers' views on various labor law issues.)

UNION DEMOCRACY REVIEW

Mr. Pollitt also called our attention to a new publication, the "Union Democracy Review", published by The Association for Union Democracy, 23 East 16 St., New York, N.Y. 10003. "The Association was formed to promote the principles and practices of internal union democracy in the American labor movement." (Review, p. 1).

The stated purposes of the Association (Review, p.2) include: establishing a source of information about developments in the area of union democracy; reporting on current cases and providing research information for lawyers active in the field; reporting on activities in various unions which involve issues of union democracy; scheduling conferences and seminars; and others. A subscription to the Review, published quarterly, costs \$5.00/year. WL

WORKMANS COMPENSATION

BY Gordon Gaines, Berkeley

Under California law, injuries and illnesses which result from the job are compensable. We all know that benefits (in most cases, grossly inadequate) will be furnished with little or no resistance for the more obvious, traumatic injuries. However, benefits are also payable for more subtle problems.

With the economy in the state it is, including high unemployment and the institution of speed-up in an attempt to increase productivity, the worker will suffer even more. In addition to the increasing number of physical injuries related to the competitiveness and exploitation rampant under speed-up, effects on the mind are going to become more prevalent and more disabling.

The neurotic components of disabilities must be recognized and, if proven, compensated. The California courts have recently held that a case of "cardiac neurosis" was compensable as if there were a true physical heart defect. (See Baker v. Workmans Compensation Appeals Board, 18 Cal.App.3d 859, 96 Cal.Rptr. 279, 36 CCC 431.) It has also been held that psychiatric problems which produce ulcer symptoms are compensable. These psychiatric problems may be the result of and part of the disability resulting from a traumatic physical injury, such as what is often diagnosed as "conversion reaction". Such may also be the result of the employment situation, per se, without any other physical involvement. In either event, the worker is entitled to compensation benefits.

People involved with the health and safety of workers must be alert to the various manifestations of psychiatric disabilities and the connection between the disability and the work-place. The insurance company doctor who says "the problem is all in the head" may be absolutely correct, but the head problem may be fully compensable.

Currently, we are hearing much about ecology and the environment. We are being told that many of our diseases and illnesses are related to the air we breathe, the chemicals in which we immerse our bodies, etc. The environment of the work-place may also be a large factor in many (continued p. 4)

HEALTH AND SAFETY

by John Mendeloff, Berkeley

[Note: this article is a description of the work of the Industrial Health and Safety Project of Urban Planning Aid, an OEO-funded program in Cambridge, Massachusetts.]

The four full-time staff were primarily interested in (1) improving health and safety conditions, (2) using the issue to sharpen the sense of conflict between profits and human values, and (3) involving more rank and file workers in this kind of activity.

It wanted to train workers to be "their own health and safety inspectors" and to work with union locals to plan corrective strategies. It confined its scope initially to industrial locals in eastern Massachusetts. Our method was generally to call up a local or the union number in the phone book (often an official of the international union) and to ask whether they were interested in talking about health and safety problems. The criterion for working with a local was that we would have access to workers in the plant. During the first two years, we worked with the UE, IUE, UAW, Steel Workers, Meatcutters, Teamsters, and several others.

A scenario for a multi-local situation ran like this. The union staff set up a one-day training session for which we prepared by distributing questionnaires to all the locals several weeks beforehand and by examining the records of state health and safety inspections for the relevant plants. From the questionnaires, we were able to direct our training to problems relevant to those workers; knowledge of state inspections and their results was often unknown to the workers and provided a possible opening for union action.

The training session might include:

1. a discussion of workers' experience with state and federal enforcement and of workers' rights under the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) and state law;
2. a discussion of toxic substances used in their plants, medical dangers, safe levels, and methods of controlling the hazard;
3. a similar (continued p. 4)

WORKMANS COMP (cont'd)

illnesses which have not been identified as work-connected. Many types of cancer have been attributed to work with various metals and chemicals. Recently, the press described how an epidemic of cancers among people who worked in various shipyards during World War II is now to be anticipated. It is now recognized that asbestos is a cause of cancer and not merely some transitory upper-respiratory problem. Hospital workers are targets for all manner of disease for which they are entitled to workmens compensation benefits.

We all know that the use of various soaps may produce skin problems, but it recently has been disclosed that the workers in the soap and detergent factories may be developing respiratory problems because of inhaling the ingredients.

It seems to me that law people can join the struggle for safe working places by processing workmens compensation claims and being innovative and creative in doing so. If workers are desirous of organizing around health and safety issues, we can assist in helping identify the problems, publicizing the causes through and with compensation claims, and persisting with medical and environmental investigations.

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HEALTH AND SAFETY (cont'd)

discussion focussing on noise and dermatitis, the two most widespread hazards in that area;

- 4. how to use testing equipment;
- 5. factors influencing accidents;
- 6. how to use the above information to inspect your plant;
- 7. strategies for change (government inspections, information to workers, contract and grievance procedure, worker action, etc.).

At the end of the session, we would ask which locals wanted to have a follow-up meeting. Usually over one-half did, but we found that the initiative had to come from us. At the first of these meetings (usually with a group of stewards, health and safety committee, or local officers) we would educate ourselves about exactly what happened in the production process, identify information which they or we needed to procure,

discuss ways of informing other workers of conditions and ways of putting pressure on management.

Often the people we talked with thought that people in their shops would be reluctant to take any action; many of them had gotten used to the hazards. Leaflets sometimes effectively combatted that mood. The leaflet would spell out the medical dangers of the substance, give specific instructions about its safe use and what the laws prescribed, and suggest alternative actions the members could take.

If the union decided to call for an inspection, we stressed the importance of preparing for it by letting the members know it would happen, collecting a list of all the conditions people were concerned about, and making sure that the inspector saw them all in their usual condition. After the inspection, the union should get a summary of all the violations from the inspector before he or she leaves. It should also get a copy of all test results of air sampling or noise surveys (not simply accepting "safe" or "non-safe" answers), demand swift and full enforcement of the law (like repeated or willful violations) and monitor the company's enforcement effort to ensure it complies with abatement deadlines.

The pace of action in the local and the number and seriousness of its problems determined the number and frequency of future meetings. At the extremes, some plants were one-shot visits and one 10,000 worker factory took up over one day a week.

Another major activity of the staff was the preparation of pamphlets for wide distribution among workers. We distributed (sold) several thousand copies of "A Unionists Guide to OSHA" (25¢) and "Noise and Your Job" (15¢). Also available is "How to Inspect Your Workplace".

I should note that the work could be very frustrating; workers with severe problems would be unwilling to take action. Given a limited corps of active members, local unions often had higher priority issues (e.g. layoffs, fights over production rates). Sometimes leaders were less willing to act than the rank and file; sometimes the opposite. Government agencies often used the exceptions to the Freedom of Information Act to suppress inspection information.

I think, however, that some fulfillment of the three goals was

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HOUSEHOLD WORKERS ORGANIZATION, INC.
& DETROIT GUILD WOMENS CAUCUS UNITE
TO FIGHT OPPRESSION OF WOMEN

By Eileen Nowikowski,
Detroit

Slavery is alive and well and living in Detroit. Each day hundreds of women - predominantly black and poor - are taken to the suburbs by domestic service companies to clean house. In exchange for their backbreaking labor, they earn nine to eleven dollars from which social security is deducted. The workers receive no sick or vacation pay; they do not get Workmen's Compensation; they have no say about working conditions, hours or fringe benefits; there is no grievance machinery to handle their complaints against the employer. After a nine or ten hour work day, spent cleaning two or three large, suburban houses, the workers return to Detroit with often no more than nine dollars in their pocket, and no assurance that they will have a job tomorrow.

HWO, the Household Workers Organization, is out to change this oppressive picture. Geared to upgrading the working conditions of household technicians, HWO has been organizing workers in the Detroit area for three years. This summer the Guild Womens Caucus joined HWO to provide legal assistance and to launch a concerted attack on the Michigan Labor Mediation Act (MLA) which excludes from its coverage workers in the employ of a family and migrants. The patently discriminatory nature of these exclusions, which effectively deny Black women and Chicano farm workers the right to collectively bargain, will be attacked as part of the effort to gain recognition for HWO as the bargaining agent for Dial-a-Maid, one of the domestic service companies in Detroit.

HWO is concentrating its organizing efforts on these companies which charge households \$25 or more for one day's work while paying the technician eleven dollars or less. The difference is pocketed by the company's owner resulting in a profit of sixty to seventy thousand dollars per year when 20 workers are employed. HWO has secured enough employees' signatures to require an election to be held under MLA to determine the

bargaining agent for the employees of one such company.

A successful legal challenge of the discriminatory MLA exclusions coupled with the election of HWO as the bargaining agent may signal the demise of one of the most onerous forms of slavery that exists today in Detroit.

(Ed. note: After receipt of this article, we received further word that the Michigan Employment Relations Commission has ordered an election. The time, place, and date are to be determined at a conference between the parties on October 20, 1972.)

REPORT ON THE WASHINGTON NEB

by Pat Korth, Detroit

The Labor Committee section met during the recent National Executive Board meetings in Washington, D.C. (Oct. 21-22, 1972). Several new members signed up for work in the Committee and Pat Korth from Detroit gave a report on the Committee's ongoing projects -- the newsletter, the Mississippi project, the possibility of labor schools, and a tightening of the Committee's structure.

Again, interest in a labor school, either on a national or a regional basis, was expressed. People expressed their desire that the format of a labor school be established at the national convention to be held in Austin, Texas, in February, 1973.

A report on the Labor Committee's activities was also presented to the full NEB.

Hopefully, as many people as possible from the Labor Committee will attend the national convention. It will be a good time both to review the committee's work and to implement a stronger, more structured set of goals.

Please see page 15 for more on the convention, and all the work we need to do in preparation for it.

Thanks to Mike Adelman and Pat Korth for seeing to it that the NEB labor committee was covered.

SEATTLE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

By the Seattle NLG

In Seattle a three year fight continues over the hiring of minority workers in the construction industry. Leading the fight is the United Construction Workers Association - a group of minority workers.

The basis of the dispute is a two year order by Federal Judge William Lindberg which calls for a total of 483 minority trainees to be placed on the job. In the same two year period since the federal court order was handed down only 95 minority trainees have been hired.

The Federal Agencies haven't enforced fair hiring in spite of the fact that fair hiring is part of every federal contract, and contractors insist that they can't hire minorities due to the high level of unemployment in Seattle.

In a statement by Tyree Scott who heads the UCWA, he points out the frustrations of dealing with the Federal Court:

"We had the solution to the problem two years ago and were not given the chance to do things our way. One year later when things were not working we again asked for an opportunity to do the job our way and were denied that chance. This year for the third time we have raised the issue of minority worker dispatch which is the only effective way to insure fair treatment to minority workers.

"36 days have gone by and nothing has happened. The Courts have delayed the issue which we think is an attempt to cool us off. We hear the excuse that the law is slow, yet we see the Democratic Party fight over the California delegates has gone through from the District Court of Appeals to the Supreme Court level all in one week. Yet, in 36 days we haven't had a hearing

at the District Court level except for the purpose of enjoining us from using the one tool we have.

"Tomorrow at noon we are going to have the first in a series of rallies to inform people in our community about the issue of control over the construction jobs. If on Friday we do not have the kind of relief we expect either from the courts, the contractors, or the labor unions, we will once again start closing construction sites. This time with the demand that they will remain closed until we are given the control we requested."

Over time, the UCWA has gained much community support, and with this support actions have become more militant. All in all, this past summer, UCWA closed down over \$100 million worth of construction sites and were accused of inflicting thousands of dollars of damage to sites which refused to hire the proper quota of minority workers.

The conditions for cessation of job closures by UCWA are:

1. That UCWA be given direct responsibility for all minority job referrals;

2. That the full number of regular and special apprentices be indentured as called for in the court order, and that the full number of operating engineer trainees be put to work

as provided in the consent decree;

3. That the imposed Seattle Plan be fully implemented with 12.6% minority representation rather than in gradual increments; and

4. That the unions covered by the court order (electricians, plumbers, ironworkers and sheet metal workers) no longer be excepted from the Seattle imposed plan.

UCWA is run by all of its members who elect a Board of Directors. The Board oversees the staff.

PHILCO WORKERS REFUSE DOD OVERTIME

Reprinted from Pamoja Venceremos
October 1972

[Note: This article concerns one of the many electronics firms which constitute the economic base of the San Francisco Peninsula.]

One of the worst things about working at Philco-Ford is the assembly-line monotony of the jobs and the way we're all treated like dummies. So it's an important victory that recently some of us won the right to more training and to move around from job to job, so we don't get stuck anymore doing the same 3 motions all day long.

The only reason we won this is because Philco workers have struggled for a long time over many issues. A group of us calling ourselves the Sierra Liberation Band put out leaflets exposing Philco's involvement in war production and its imperialist expansion overseas, where it exploits Asian women, and also its racist and favoritist promotion practices right here in the Bay Area. Many workers got involved in fighting the union to get another shop steward for our department. We've called in health and safety inspectors over some of our working conditions, and we've slowed down production when they've tried to speed us up. We've raised a lot of protest against the company every time they've unfairly promoted one of their favorite company women. Once we even shut down an entire line for over an hour while we all confronted the bosses about another unfair promotion. We've exposed our lead lady at every possible point and made her job as hard for her as possible, because she acts for the bosses instead of the workers she's supposed to represent.

Though sometimes we've lost our struggles, and what victories we've had have seldom been clear-cut, over the last year we've managed to build a base of workers power against our bosses and against the union bureaucrats too (I.B.E.W.)

Recently when a position for assistant lead lady came up, the company had to promote the person most qualified for the job, instead of the person who kissed ass the most, or else face another storm of protest. The person they were forced to pick was a Third

World woman willing to fight in the interests of workers on her line. Then, when she faced down the head lead lady and insisted on the workers' rights to more training and job mobility, the union was forced to back her up 100% or else face another wave of grievances.

We won that fight. Now Philco is trying to make overtime work and even shift changes mandatory in order to meet deadlines on government war contracts. Men and women here aren't submitting to that kind of fascism. Almost the entire plant signed a petition refusing to agree to these new regulations. The union (IBEW) has agreed to fight for anyone refusing to work. Management has agreed to be "lenient" and to continue asking for volunteers, but they won't take down the new regulations from the bulletin boards because they don't "want to lose face." We think that's just a tricky way of continuing to intimidate people into working, and we will fight them until they completely retract these new regulations. We're organized, we have a base of power, and we'll fight them in the community as well as in the factory. We're confident that again we will win.

Philco Workers

Note: One effective tactic used in the anti-overtime struggle was a stickering campaign. Simultaneously, all over the plant, stickers reading "No forced overtime" were put up. The stickers stick well and are very hard to remove.

Legal note: If it is the past practice of a plant not to require compulsory overtime, they cannot legally institute a policy of compulsory overtime unilaterally. It must be bargained over with the union.

On the next page, we have printed one of the leaflets that was distributed during the campaign against forced overtime.

Wini

WE REFUSE FORCED OVERTIME

THE FORTY HOUR WEEK

Working people won the eight-hour day, forty hour week only after years of hard fighting against the business owners who used cops, national guardsmen, and other forms of violence to keep them under a 10 to 16 hour day.

U.S. workers began demanding an 8-hour day in the 1860s. In 1886, on May 1, 190,000 men and women went on strike and marched for an 8-hour day all across the country. In Chicago alone 80,000 walked off the job for shorter hours. To retaliate, the Chicago ruling class sent 180 club wielding cops into a peaceful rally at Haymarket Square, causing a riot; four leaders of the labor movement were hung.

In 1890 European labor leaders appointed the day May 1 as international 8-hour day in solidarity with the U.S. workers' struggles.

For many years industries such as steel, railways, and mining continued to oppose the 8-hour day, but workers finally won because they fought back in a series of strikes in which many of them lost their lives. Many others were imprisoned. Finally in the 1930s an 8-hour day and 40 hour week was ruled for employees of firms holding government contracts. The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 set the work week at 40 hours for those employed by firms engaged in interstate commerce.

FIGHT FORCED OVERTIME

And now big monopoly corporations like Philco want to take back some of these hard won rights. That's because they are losing in Indochina, the war is an economic disaster, and people all over the world are forcing U.S. business out of their countries. To make up for their losses the monopolies are turning against U.S. workers. It is cheaper for them to work us overtime and speed us up, rather than hire more labor. Our working conditions get worse and worse and the unemployment rate goes up. What they give us in overtime pay they take out in taxes, and it all goes back into Philco's pocket through fat war contracts. These contracts they are rushing to fill are for weapons and communications systems to be used against working people and peasants in Indochina and across the globe.

We must act in the spirit of the U.S. working people who struggled so long and so hard for a 40 hour week, and in the spirit of the Vietnamese liberation forces who have struggled for 15 years for a country free of U.S. domination.

THE UNION MUST FIGHT ALL THE WAY AGAINST THE NEW HOURLY OVERTIME AND SHIFT ASSIGNMENT REGULATIONS. NO COMPROMISES!

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LABOR COMMITTEE FINANCIAL REPORT

<u>Receipts (donations)</u>		<u>Other expenditures</u>	
From Detroit NEB	\$62.00	Postage (2 mailings)	\$ 10.36
Since Detroit	45.00	Travel (Wini, Palo Alto - SF)	4.50
TOTAL	\$107.00	Phone (including calls to Fla. & Mich. re pulpwood workers)	31.24
<u>Expenditures</u>		TOTAL	\$ 46.10
First issue of Newsletter		GRAND TOTAL-expenses	\$78.07
Supplies	\$ 15.81	BALANCE	\$28.93
Mimec	10.00		
Postage	6.16		
TOTAL	\$ 31.97		

AS YOU CAN SEE, WE NEED MONEY IMMEDIATELY TO COVER THIS ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER, WHICH IS LARGER AND MORE WIDELY DISTRIBUTED THAN THE LAST, AND ALSO FOR ONE MORE ISSUE BEFORE THE CONVENTION. PLEASE, PLEASE HELP.

REPORT FROM MISSISSIPPI (cont'd.)

GPA, with its central office in Estabuchie, Mississippi, near Laurel, Mississippi, has eight active chapters in Mississippi and four in southwestern Alabama. Woodcutters, or woodhaulers, are "sharecroppers on wheels". They cut and haul timber which is eventually manufactured into pulpwood for paper and plywood. However, in most instances, the woodcutters are not allowed to sell directly to the manufacturing companies. They must sell to dealers, money-making middlemen.

The dealer system is at the heart of the exploitation of the woodcutters.

The dealers are not only unnecessary middlemen, who contribute neither labor or capital, but they sell parts and equipment to the woodcutters at exorbitant profits. For example, saw chains, which woodcutters buy approximately every two weeks, are sold by the dealers at a 200% profit mark-up. These parts are sold on credit, so that a woodcutter, like the sharecroppers, can never get ahead.

In both Mississippi and Alabama, woodcutters are illegally taxed. Both States have a severance or privilege tax for the felling or cutting of timber. In Alabama the state statute was designed to levy the severance tax on the manufacturer and in Mississippi on the landowner or grower. However, in both states the tax is paid by the woodcutter on each load of hardwood or pine which he sells.

Woodcutters are denied protection under federal labor laws as well as state workmen's compensation and unemployment compensation laws. Woodcutters who own their trucks are classified as "independent contractors" while helpers, who do not own trucks or equipment, are classified as "agricultural laborers".

GPA is in the process of organizing a co-operative which will sell saws, saw chains, bars, sprockets and other parts at prices slightly above cost. The co-operative will be a direct challenge to the exploitative dealer system and will serve a three-fold purpose:

1. Lower prices: which will allow woodhaulers to spend less on parts and equipment.

2. Increased membership: only GPA members will be able to buy through the Co-op. Furthermore, parts and equipment will be shipped to each local and distributed to the individual members by the local leadership.

3. Lowering dealer prices: as one person, not a GPA member and probably a political conservative, said "What we need is a little competition."

GPA supports the Mississippi Poultry Workers Union (MPWU). Both organizations emerged out of strikes; the GPA was formed during the 1971 strike against Masonite Corporation in Laurel, Mississippi. During that strike woodcutters refused to cut and haul timber to Masonite. MPWU was a direct result of a recent strike in Forest, Mississippi, about 45 miles north of Laurel.

On May 10, 1972, more than sixty black workers in Forest, walked off their jobs at Poultry Packers. The strike lasted six weeks. The key issue, and it remains a key issue, was pay for breakdown time. At Poultry Packers, the workers are not paid for the time when the chicken processing line breaks down. They are required to remain on their jobs until the line is repaired and then put in a full eight hours while the line is actually running. This means that on some days they are on the line ten or twelve hours and receive only eight hours pay.

The poultry workers strike won a \$.10 wage increase (from \$1.60 to \$1.70 per hour) and, most importantly, brought black and white workers together in a common struggle. This is an important feature of the independent labor movement in the South. It is a coalition of poor people, black and white. There are no unions in Forest, or Scott County, other than the GPA and MPWU. The woodcutters strike in the fall of 1971 and the poultry workers strike in 1972 are the first strikes ever to occur in this part of Mississippi. There is a strong

(continued p. 10)

REPORT FROM MISSISSIPPI (cont'd.)

feeling that the bosses and money-men can only be beaten if the people, all of the people, get together to struggle. There is also a strong feeling that only an indigenous, independent labor movement, functioning outside of the bureaucracy established by existing International unions and the AFL-CIO, can do the job. The Amalgamated Meat Cutters, AFL-CIO, attempted but failed to organize the workers at Poultry Packers, Inc.

The MPWU is now seeking formal recognition as the collective bargaining agent for the workers at Poultry Packers. A Petition for Election was filed with the New Orleans Region of the National Labor Relations Board and an election hearing was held in Forest, Mississippi, on September 20, 1972.

This hearing was to determine whether or not the NLRB will agree to supervise and hold an election to decide if a majority of the workers at Poultry Packers want the MPWU to be their bargaining agent. The only issue raised by the company at the hearing, in opposition to an election, was a challenge that MPWU is not a "labor organization" under the Act.

However, the Courts and NLRB have established a relatively loose definition of a "labor organization": (1) it must be a structured organization in which employees participate, (2) whose purpose is, at least in part to deal with employee grievances, wages, hours and other working conditions.

If the NLRB orders an election, and if MPWU wins the election, then the Union will be certified as the bargaining agent for all the production and maintenance workers at Poultry Packers. The employer, in turn, will be obligated to bargain with MPWU in good faith to negotiate a contract, or face another possible strike.

Like the GPA, the MPWU was created in direct response to the actual needs of workers, namely the poultry workers in Forest, Mississippi. It is an independent union seeking to represent black and white workers, men and women. While the racial composition at Poultry Packers is approximately 50-50, the plant employs approximately 60% women on

its production lines. The President of MPWU is a woman, Merle Barber.

For the Guild, an independent labor movement is a new challenge. In many ways, it brings into reality many of the ideas which were explored during the recent Labor Conference in Detroit. During the conference, it was agreed that the Guild, through the National Labor Committee, would send a lawyer to work with the woodcutters and poultry workers on a semi-permanent basis (e.g. one week per month). While this goal has not been realized, I did get a chance to meet with several lawyers and law students while in Mississippi. We discussed the possibility of lawyers from Mississippi working with the woodcutters and the poultry workers and the establishment of a Guild chapter in Mississippi.

The lawyers and law students expressed interest in both projects. In fact, there was a meeting between representatives of the GPA and MPWU and members of the leading black law firm in Jackson, Mississippi. The discussion concerned the legal needs of the two organizations and their members as well as funding possibilities.

(Ed. Note: In latest developments, the NLRB has ordered an election; employee lists (Excelsior lists) are due October 18, 1972 - time, date, and place of election still to be determined.)

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HEALTH AND SAFETY (cont'd)

achieved and aspects of the Urban Planning Aid experience could be fruitfully adopted by other groups interested in working on health and safety issues.

For additional information or material, contact

Industrial Health & Safety
Project
Urban Planning Aid
639 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Mass. 02139

Telephone: (617) 661-9220

a fairly well worked out perspective, the subject is just too broad. Anyway, we finally found some people to teach the class. We still aren't entirely satisfied. I think the whole subject needs a lot more studying and a new approach so we can learn a lot more from history and apply it better to today's situations. In a lot of ways we are being presented with facts rather than analysis. However this is a problem that will take some time to deal with.

There were problems with some of the other classes in that the emphasis was too much on the practical rather than the political.

However, this whole first series is seen as a test run. Right now, the whole Black Workers Congress, the whole Bar Sinister, and a few workers who relate to us are attending. Some workers from Laborers Local 300 have made it sporadically, and some Longshoremen from District 65 regularly. The emphasis this time is on trying to get a sense of whether the speakers are good, whether the classes are too many, whether understandable, interesting, etc.

There will be some changes in classes -- speakers, emphasis, etc. -- next time. So far we think the school is not too long, although we may change our minds by the time we get through it. Some other questions to be discussed are who else besides people the Black Workers Congress is working with should attend the labor school next time around -- i.e. Guild people, Asians, Chicanos, whites, etc. This is still really open at this time and will probably be largely dependant upon the state of organization within those groups and our time commitment to recruit people.

One of the best parts of the school is the materials we are developing out of it. We have collected a notebook with about 200 pages worth of pamphlets and things, mostly relating to the practical aspects of each of the classes. We are in the process of transcribing the lectures from our tapes of the classes and expanding upon the classes. These transcriptions will be included in the notebook and will supply the orientation and analysis for the rest of the materials. I think it's going to be a really fine notebook -- everyone in the class will have one. The whole

This school is looked upon as a possible model for a national program of labor schools by the Black Workers Congress. Everywhere they are organizing they find an incredible lack of knowledge, experience and resources. That's why we want the notebook to be pretty complete. In some areas it's impossible to find the kind of instructors we've been able to get here in Los Angeles -- and we've really had problems.

I really feel positive about the school. I know that I've really learned a lot from it so far and the other Bar Sinister people feel the same. The reactions of the Longshore and Local 300 people have been very encouraging -- most of the questions and discussion has come from them which I think is really important. However, we haven't been totally successful at integrating the political and the practical knowledge. Most of the discussion, particularly from the non-Black Workers Congress workers, is around the practical questions rather than the general analysis or framework. This also leads to another thing not totally resolved. Some of the classes (political education on the job, teaching political economy) seem to be designed for people who are at a certain place. Many of the people who are and will be coming are workers who are beginning to move in that direction. This is something that will have to be worked out.

The relationship that has developed between the Black Workers Congress and the Bar Sinister through the class has also been really important. Between those of us working on the classes there is a very close, open relationship. We disagree and challenge and question each other a lot which I think is really helpful -- being able to do that.

I've enclosed a copy of the schedule of classes which also contains some description of the contents of each class. We're a little behind schedule in that we've found we've had to expand even more -- it's already pretty long. We've had two sessions on labor history instead of the scheduled one. The second was taught by Len DeCaux (he wrote Labor Radical). We've also had three sessions on labor law instead of the scheduled two -- all taught by Neil Herring.

(See p. 12 for Syllabus.)

BLACK WORKERS CONGRESS***LABOR SCHOOL

1972 Schedule

Subject and Reading List

I. HISTORY OF WORKING CLASS STRUGGLES

- A. Militant working class struggles
- B. Class nature of struggles
- C. Weapons used by ruling class:
 - 1. racism
 - 2. sexism
 - 3. patriotism, anti-communism, "foreign" element
 - 4. individualism and competition
 - 5. narcotics and alcohol
 - 6. religion
- D. Forms of labor organizing (present day and historically)
 - 1. craft unions
 - 2. industrial unions
 - 3. underground railroad, etc.
 - 4. military, prison

Instructor: Otis Hyde - June 17

Reading material: Labor's Untold Story by Boyer & Morais
The Negro and the American Labor Movement, ed. by Julius Jacobson

II. ORGANIZING THE UNORGANIZED

- A. Investigating a plant
 - 1. who owns it? conglomerate? etc.
 - 2. what is work force? racial composition, illegals, parolees, convict labor, skilled or non skilled, sex, age?
 - 3. what plant produces, what it sells for, etc.
- B. Plant work
 - 1. making plant contact, try to get a job there, meet someone who works there, strategy, shop committee, etc.
 - 2. rules on solicitation and distribution, etc., leaflets
 - 3. authorization cards, strategy for recognition, petitioning, decision to have an election
 - 4. election, recognition
- C. Role of management against organizing attempts
 - 1. bribes, beatings, spys, competition, promises, etc.
 - 2. fair and unfair labor practices
- D. Methods organizers and workers can fight back
 - 1. filing unfair labor practice charges
 - 2. mass action

Instructor: Peter Haberfield and Carl Kessler - June 24, July 1

Reading material: Organizing and the Law by S. Schlossberg
A Primer of Labor Relations - B.N.A. and leaflets

III. ORGANIZING AND THE LAW

- A. NLRA - its history, amendments, class struggle
- B. NLRB - who is on it, how appointed, how it works
- C. Taft-Hartley Law, Landrum-Griffin Act, etc.
- D. FLSA - minimum wage and others
- E. OSHA - health and safety
- F. 1964 Civil Rights law, equal employment opportunity legislation

Instructor: Neil Herring - July 8 and July 15

Reading Material: Organizing and the Law, labor laws themselves

(Continued p. 13)

LABOR SCHOOL SYLLABUS, cont'd

IV. STRUCTURE OF UNIONS

- A. Comparison of various union structures
 - 1. ILWU - rank and file constitution
 - 2. UE - rank and file constitution
 - 3. Teamsters
 - 4. AFL-CIO
- B. Documents
 - 1. international and local constitutions
 - 2. By-laws
 - 3. committees and functions
- C. Executive Boards
- D. Locals, structure, officers, stewards and committeemen
- E. Receivership
- F. Unions role in national and local politics
- G. Unions role in imperialism
- H. Methods of working within a union

Instructor: Billy Hudgging - July 22

Reading material: Various constitutions mentioned above

V. WAGES, PRICES AND PROFITS AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

- A. Theory of class struggle and exploitation
 - 1. wages
 - 2. profit (surplus value)
 - 3. taxes
 - 4. inflation
 - 5. depression
 - 6. wage-price freezes, cost of living, etc.
 - 7. class struggle under capitalism

Instructor: Otis Hyde - July 29

Reading material: Wage, Labor and Capital - Marx
Wages, Prices and Profits - Marx
Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism - Lenin
Wall Street Journal, Christian Science Monitor, etc.
Political Economy - Eaton

VI. CONTRACTS

- A. Definition and explanation
- B. Contract, class analysis
- C. Negotiation of a contract

Instructor: Earlie Barnett - August 5

Reading material: Guide to Contract Negotiations - UE
Material from ILWU on contracts
Various contracts

VII. GRIEVANCES AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE AND CONTRACT ENFORCEMENT

- A. Stewards on the job, role and responsibilities
- B. Types of grievances: contractual, safety and health, legal
- C. Grievances and grievance procedure
- D. Arbitration
- E. Rank and file - rights and participation

Instructor: Billy Hudgging, Luisa Gratz, Bill Bouldin - Aug. 12

Reading material: material from ILWU stewards class

VIII. RANK AND FILE ACTION ON THE JOB

- A. Working conditions
 - 1. safety and health
 - 2. speed-up

(Continued p. 14)

LABOR SCHOOL SYLLABUS - cont'd

3. discrimination
 4. harassment
 5. protective legislation
- B. Work stoppages, strikes
 - C. Building a caucus
 - D. Boycott and secondary boycott
 - E. Injunction - NLRB
 - F. Mass education on job

Instructor: Hershel Alexander - August 21
Reading material:

IX. HISTORY AND CONDITIONS OF LABOR IN LOS ANGELES

- A. Basic industries, terrain, organized and unorganized, skilled and non-skilled
- B. Composition of work force - economic, racial, sex, national origin
- C. Unions - history and development
- D. Political history
- E. Anti-union history, reaction against labor
- F. Special geographical problems

Instructor: Jeff Kooper, Hershel Alexander - Aug. 28, Sept. 9
Reading material: FEPC and County Commission on Human Relations

X. SOCIAL WELFARE LEGISLATION AND FRINGE BENEFITS (contract)

- A. Workmans compensation
- B. State disability insurance
- C. Unemployment
- D. Group health plans (insurance)
- E. Social security
- F. Pension and retirement plans
- G. Occupational Safety and Health Act - 1970
- H. Protective legislation - Dept. of Industrial Welfare
- I. Civil Rights Act
- J. Special legislation for women and minors

Instructor: Carry Williams - September 16
Reading material: actual laws, acts, health plans, etc.

XI. POLITICAL EDUCATION ON THE JOB

- A. Leaflet writing, newsletters, newspapers, mimeographing
- B. Organizing a caucus and study groups
- C. How to raise and discuss problems on the job, class analysis
- D. Racism, political education

Instructor: Hershel Alexander - September 25
Reading materials: leaflets, newsletters, issues

XII. PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE FOR UNION MEETINGS

Instructor: Billy Huddgens and Luisa Gratz - October 7
Reading materials: Glendale College of Law, Summary of Motions
CIO pamphlet, Rules for Union Meetings

XIII. PROBLEMS FACING LABOR IN THE FUTURE

- A. Compulsory arbitration
 - B. Automation, speed-up, runaway shops, unemployment
 - C. Technology
 - D. Labor alliances
 - E. Labor-community alliances and action
 - F. Corporate mergers and conglomerates, monopolies
 - G. Repression of the State, political, economic, physical
 - H. Economic freezes and wage controls
 - I. Changing structure of the working class
- Reading materials: miscellaneous pamphlets, research materials
Instructor: (no name) - October 14

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

by Wini Leeds

NLG NATIONAL LABOR COMMITTEE

NEWSLETTER

c/o Wini Leeds, Diane Middleton
MIDDLETON & WILDORFF
98 Chenery Street
San Francisco, California
Tel: (415) 647-5008

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

Diane's new office (above). Wini has left Palo Alto, and plans to spend the month of November traveling with the grand jury tour to several mid-Western cities: Iowa City, St. Louis, Louisville, Chicago; and maybe also to other places in Kentucky, Southern Ohio and Illinois. From Thanksgiving-time till the convention, she will be at the national office, and can be reached c/o NLG, 23 Cornelia Street, New York, N.Y. 10014, or through Diane's office.

Please send us your name and address if you'd like to be on the mailing list.

THE CONVENTION

Austin, Texas

February 1973

The next national convention will be a time when many of us involved in labor work can get together, get organized, and develop new programs. In order to do this effectively, without wasting a lot of time and energy, we really ought to prepare in advance. Here (again) are some of the things that have to be discussed there.

1. National program: central communications functions; locating legal resources for rank and file groups; the newsletter and its uses; national focus on a specific subject area; affirmative action center to assist rank and file groups; coordinated national response to government attacks on working people; labor schools.

2. National structure: local and regional representatives; relationship to national NLG office; establishment of separate office like grand jury project.

3. Chapter programs: schools and courses, conferences, relationships with labor organizations.

These are suggestions that we have already received; they're certainly not exhaustive or exclusive.

That outline comes primarily from people who Diane and I have run into at meetings and parties. We need to know what the rest of you think the labor committee should be doing, and how it should be set up.

We think the convention will be more successful if a lot of the preliminary planning can be handled in advance of the actual meetings. In addition to topics for discussion, we should plan for panels, educational sessions, etc.- whatever is wanted and needed. What we want is for people all over the country to send us their ideas and proposals, and let us know who they are and what their experiences have been.

I will be working in the national office, helping plan the convention. Hopefully, based on your responses, we can get together a proposed agenda for the labor meetings and publish it in the next newsletter sometime in January. We should be specific about speakers, resource people, groups to be invited, and individuals and chapters that can take responsibility for organizing parts of the program.

It would be a shame to waste our little time together working out problems that can be taken care of in advance. Save yourself hours of tedium and frustration and endless meetings that go no place. Write a letter.

THE NEWSLETTER

Response to the newsletter has generally been favorable. People tell us they like it, and they sign onto the mailing list. But no specific criticism has been forthcoming, nor has any comment or debate been generated by specific articles. Somebody must disagree with something (besides the upside-down page and the obvious fact that we ran out of paper before the end).

A few people send us news articles voluntarily; but contributors are mainly those whose arms I can reach to twist. Which accounts for the emphasis on the West Coast, and Detroit where we get a lot of support from Michael Adelman. We'll continue to solicit specific articles, but that won't take care of getting news from around the country, receiving the benefit of people we don't know personally, branching out in new directions, etc.

(continued p. 16)

BUSINESS (cont'd)

So. Write an article.

Additionally, several lawyers from Philadelphia, Detroit and New York absolutely promised to send us analyses of legal decisions for each issue. Since the initial outpouring from Philadelphia, we have received nothing of the sort. Where are you all?

THE MONEY

What can we say. With each issue, the newsletter gets longer and we have to run more copies, to take care of our ever-growing mailing list plus distribution at national meetings, regional events, etc.

By using primitive methods of publication and shopping for sales, we do the job really cheaply, but we can't do it on nothing. In addition, there are other expenses, such as periodic mass mailings, correspondence, phone conversations, and odds and ends. We can steal just so much.

We have about \$30 left, and will probably need an additional \$20 to cover expenses through the mailing of this newsletter. In addition, we need money for the next issue, which will be out sometime in January. If a bunch of you send a few dollars each, we'll be in great shape. Otherwise, we'll have to waste money to call you up and nag.

SEND MONEY

Make checks payable to National Lawyers Guild, mark them for the newsletter, and send to Diane Middleton, 98 Chenery Street, San Francisco.

98 Chenery St.
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Mike Adelman
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