

# INSURGENT WORKER

JULY, 1973

*this issue:*

**Broadview Harvester Strike  
Letter From El Paso**

**Attention Workingmen!**

**MASS-MEETING**

**TO-NIGHT, at 7.30 o'clock,**

**HAYMARKET, Randolph St., Bet. Desplaines and Halsted.**

Good Speakers will be present to denounce the latest atrocious act of the police, the shooting of our fellow-workmen yesterday afternoon.

**Workingmen Arm Yourselves and Appear in Full Force!**

**COPY OF ORIGINAL HAYMARKET LEAFLET**

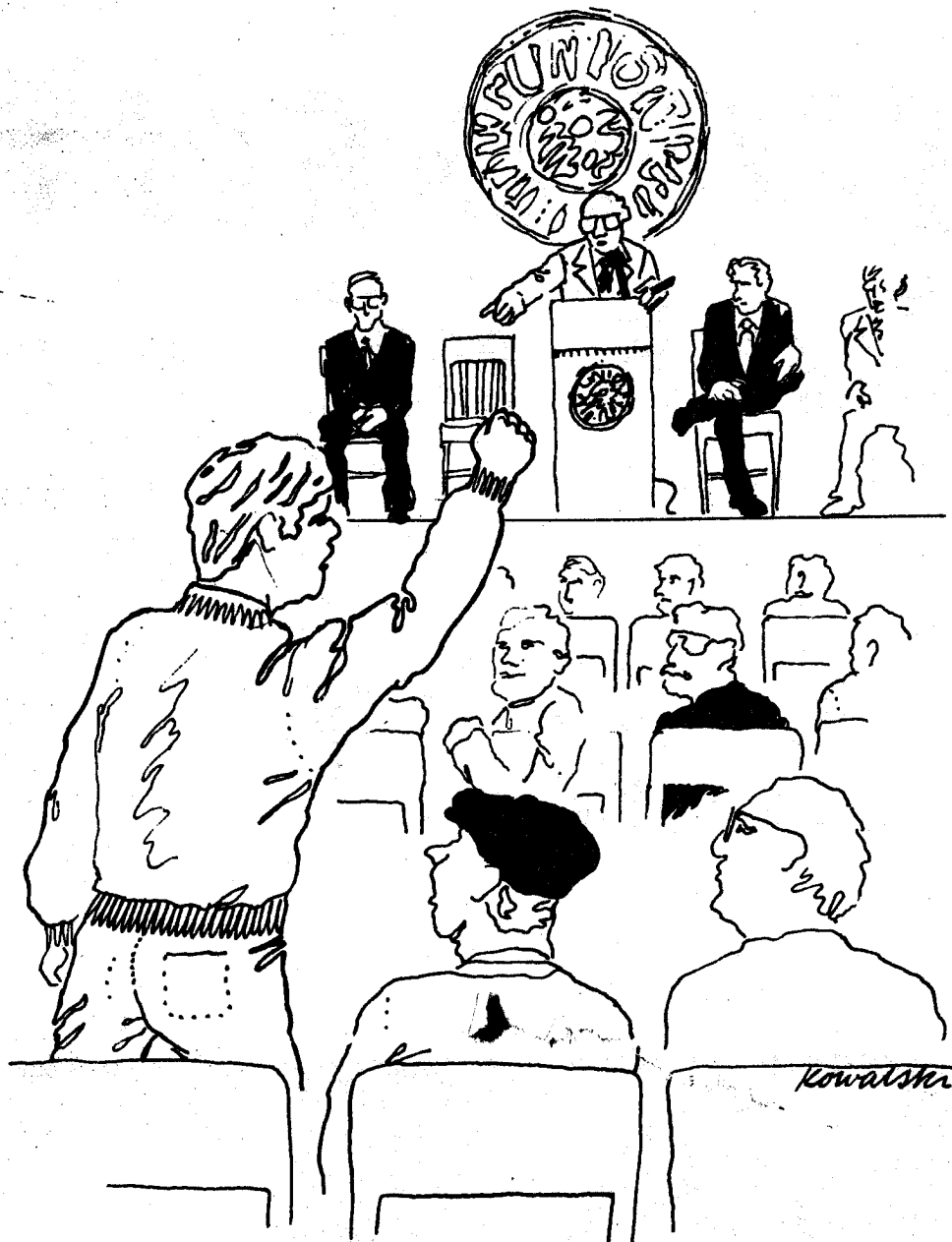
Also...

*Legal action against discrimination.*

*How to research a corporation.*

*Sit-down strike at Emerson Electric (St. Louis in 1937).*

**25¢**



## Whose Union Is This?

### **Our Goals**

The INSURGENT WORKER wants to contribute to the militant currents within the working class as it becomes aware of its depth, width, and revolutionary character.

Through this publication, we will try to provide information useful to the development and strengthening of the workers movement. In particular, we will try to report about the struggles that workers are waging today, so that as many people as possible can profit from the lessons drawn from these experiences.

The INSURGENT WORKER is put out by members of the Sojourner Truth Organization, but it looks to becoming an instrument that will be used by many militant workers groups to communicate the ideas issued from their practice. We hope to contribute to the collective development of the working class movement.

# ON STRIKE!

## nt'l Harvester - Broadview Plant

### WHAT BEGAN

In January, the company posted a list of 14 new work rules aimed at tightening production. These included a whole set of rules about coffee breaks, which were enforced to the degree of hiding foremen behind coffee machines and having them jump out at the end of breaks, order men back to work, and make them pour out their coffee if they weren't finished.

Workers became angry at this kind of treatment and went to the union,

The company began to retaliate by imposing their own production standards on jobs and transferring people when they couldn't meet them. Using an additional harassing tactic, they issued a memo to all supervisors, tightening the screws on medical excuses so that a worker either has to have a letter containing very specific information from his family doctor every time he is absent or else he has to see the company doctor EVERY DAY HE IS ABSENT!! This information wasn't even released to the workers; they found out only when someone obtained a foreman's memo.

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★ UNION: UAW local 688

★ WORKERS: About 700 in warehouse, engaged in receiving, storing, and distributing truck, tractor, and construction equipment parts; about 300 non-union office workers, some of whom were made to perform warehouse jobs during strike.

★ RACIAL/ETHNIC BREAKDOWN: Blacks, 15-20%; Latins, 7-8%; Polish-Americans, 10-15%; other white, 60-70%; (2 women in warehouse; office workers 90% white, 80% women).

★ WORK: Warehouse work is not physically difficult and pay is high (\$4.75-\$5.10/hour), but there is a great deal of discontent. Among the causes are: no upward mobility; no sense of accomplishment (average job learned in 2-3 minutes); frequent harassment by alienated foremen; lack of a viable grievance program; absolutely no discretion concerning performance of job; boredom.

★ \*\*\*\*\*

which supported the breaking of work rules by 2 union officials so that they would get suspended and the International could be brought in. The union officials backed down, but over a period of time 77 men got 3-day suspensions for breaking the rules. They were getting more and more angry and disruptive activities were becoming more common. Over a period of about 6 weeks, production slowly came back to a standstill.

### THE STRIKE

All this led, in March, to a strike vote, and, after some reluctance, the International authorized a walk-out for April 5. Due to the no-strike clause, which allows striking only over health and safety issues, the union insisted on replacing the real issues with a series of health and safety demands, the exact nature of which none of the workers has been able to learn.

The real issues not only include removing the work rules, but also the non-existent grievance procedure, the removal of the 3-day suspensions from the records of the 77 workers, an end to laying off of probational employees, and the re-hiring of Hassan Baker and Len Wirtel. Baker, an outspoken Black was fired for allegedly possessing liquor--he was holding a can of beer, but often picks up beer cans in his janitorial role. Wirtel was fired for hitting a foreman's car after the foreman tried to run him over.

### SOME PROBLEMS

One of the problems facing the strikers was that production never really came to a stand-still. The reasons for this included the fact that many of the clerical workers were forced to work in the warehouse and the strikers were never able to effectively organize against this clerical-scabbing. Further adding to the problem, the foremen were carrying work out in the trunks of their cars. Finally, IH was shipping up to 30 box cars per week from Broadview and receiving a similar number. The orders were taken to the Grane Trucking Co., where the freight was shipped out to customers and depots. The Chicago Haulage co. also participated in this. To complete the work, Harvester foremen worked at the Grane docks right under the noses of the UAW local and International and the Teamsters, none of whom did a thing to stop it. When the strikers realized that business was going on as usual, they organized a phone campaign against Grane, designed to disrupt their "business as usual" efficiency regarding the Broadview strikers.

In the first settlement offered, scheduled by the union for Mother's Day, the terms were: handling of safety issues at some future date; 2-3 minutes more for coffee breaks if the machine is broken or coffee too hot to drink, as long as workers use the time to take their coffee back to where they work, (this can't be done within a half hour of start, lunch, or end of shift); 77 suspensions stay on record; re-hiring of Wirtel (Baker

work/medical rules. Needless to say, the workers voted down the settlement 2-1.

### STEP-UP IN ACTIVITIES

After the workers voted 2-1 against ratification, the WORKERS VOICE Committee stepped-up its activities. A food and money collection was arranged through the Melrose Park WORKERS VOICE Committee which had the official sanction of the Melrose Park Union's Executive Board, but which at first was not endorsed by the Broadview Union. An edition of the WV paper was distributed, the campaign against the Grane Trucking Co. heightened, a leaflet was distributed at the Melrose Park gates asking for an overtime ban and informing them of the collection, and a petition addressed to Pat Greenhouse (head, farm equipment division, UAW) was circulated among Broadview workers.



the petition was circulated at the regular Friday meetings at which striker benefits were paid, just five days after the ratification vote. The petition was not under the banner of the WORKERS VOICE Committee although it was circulated by members and supporters. There were 10 de-

demands appearing in the WV newspaper. It was signed by 316 workers out of approximately 500 who had been approached. Interestingly, all but one black worker signed the petition (a recently hired Black woman declined). About 55% of the white workers approached signed it. Even the outgoing local President signed it, although no other local officer signed it.

### THE SETTLEMENT

At a meeting held on the same Friday, in response to a demand from a WORKERS VOICE Committee member, the head of the local grievance committee agreed that the negotiations should now be wide open and that all grievances, and specifically the one regarding the fired Black worker, would be placed on the table. He was lying, knowing that the company and the International Union had been in contact by phone on that day regarding a new settlement offer. The offer differed from the previous offer in only two respects: the 77 workers who had been suspended and all other workers who had been disciplined in

any way would have clean records, and secondly, the local and International Union representatives must argue in favor of ratification prior to the vote. Toward the end of the second Friday meeting (there were 2 each Friday), the local union alluded to a phone call between the company and the International but left the impression that nothing was imminent.

It now appears that it was the strategy of the local and International unions to disperse the Friday meeting before announcing the new offer. In that way a special effort could be made to get pro-agreement workers. After the meeting had ended, the new Union President began to call from a mailing list that included only the 150 top seniority workers. He claimed that the full membership list had been lost. In addition, garbled messages went out over TV and radio. The result was that only 298 members attended the meeting to vote on the agreement. The International representatives and the new and old local union officers argued vigorously for acceptance. Only the outgoing President who had signed the petition did not argue for it, although he admit-

UAW, IN  
OUR WAY  
AGAIN...



... agreeing to the terms of the offer. The vote was 191 to go back to work and 107 against. Two days earlier 316 workers had signed the petition demanding a much tougher settlement. Few Black or young white workers attended the ratification.

There was no hurry to ratify because the company did not want the workers to return until Tuesday, although the union tried desperately to talk the company into letting us come back on Monday so as to justify the hurried ratification vote. When the workers returned on Tuesday, it was evident that the company wished to avoid any incidents. There has not been a re-remand in two weeks, and production has been at a very low level.

Comments from workers indicate that the ratification would have been defeated or at least a very close vote if there had been proper notification Blacks, an number of Appalachians and young whites expressed anger at being sold out. There were very few remarks lamenting loss of pay, although



it is clear that older workers were understandably concerned about that issue. There was a great deal of complaining about the way the union handled the distribution of food and money collected at Melrose Park. The newly elected President had taken over that function...

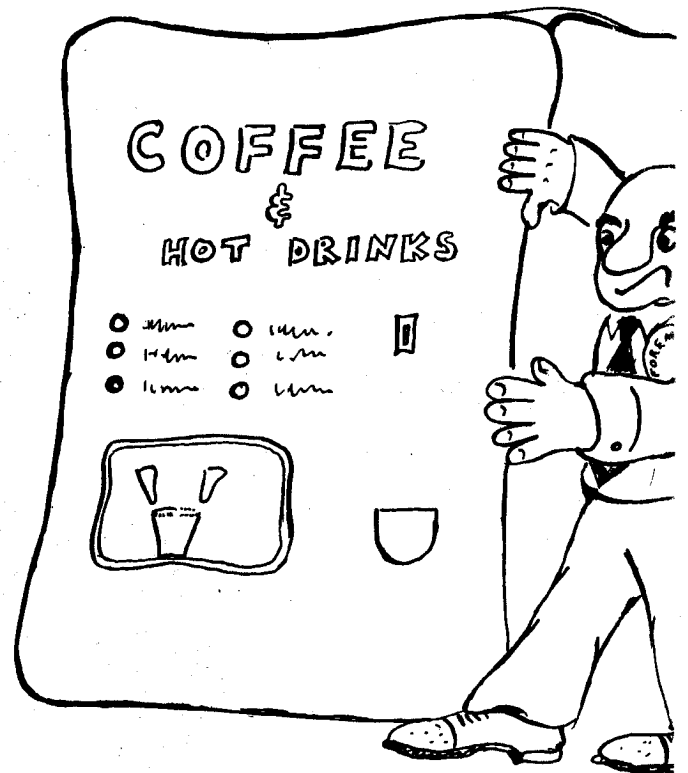
credit for the distribution and he bungled it badly.

Postscript: The International representative who handles grievance negotiations appeared at the regular scheduled union meeting after the strike and explained how "nobody won a strike."

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This information was written by a small but active representative group of workers known as the WORKERS VOICE Committee. The first section consists of information about the strike as it progressed; the second is one of the leaflets circulated by the committee. It was felt that there was a need of an analysis of the strike that would explain why workers were striking for one set of reasons and why the strike was being conducted by UAW reps over different issues. Finally, the third section is a play which demonstrates yet another problem the strikers had....

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# Workers Voice

## UPPORT THE STRIKE

Support the strike, but it would be inexcusable, if we did not address ourselves to the inspection of the rest of the iceberg. There are many, many equally compelling reasons for striking. Certainly the changes in work rules which Harvester paints as "reasonable," an outright attempt to degrade us and reduce us to nothingness, provide a reason to strike. The company's intent was made clear through its gleeful and sadistic enforcement measures. One man was disciplined for having a few orange peels on his work shirt, others for staying seconds too long in the break area. The company delighted in making workers dump out unfinished coffee at the table even though they worked through the first part of the break or had to stand in line for over half the period. We know that seventy-seven workers responded by violating the unfair rules 462 times. Other workers also violating the rules thousands of times, stopped just short of suspensions. Still others literally tore the place apart...in indignation, justifiable rage.

Another strike issue is the attempt to make us conform to production standards that do not even exist. Demands were received for failure to go along with that farce, and men were transferred and moved around like so much baggage for failure to buckle under.

Forgetting just safety grievances for a moment, Harvester's arrogant attitude and behavior concerning all other grievances would be adequate reason to strike back. Grievances are automatically rejected...on the spot, out of hand...with no consideration. Everyone is considered guilty. The company carries this policy to the point where foremen are allowed to threaten and curse at us knowing full well that the company sanctions it.

The company also sanctions racism in its most open form. Its summer hiring practices and the open use of racial and ethnic insults by the supervisors are merely two examples. A look at the higher paying jobs at Broadview and throughout the company will reveal a conscious policy of discrimination against women, blacks, Latins, most ethnic groups and people from the south...in an attempt to divide workers.

It is important to see these developments as more than business as usual. Broadview workers have been singled out for the initial trial of a policy that is designed to crush and destroy even the idea that workers have rights and that they should exercise control over their own lives. So far, not one other Harvester location has been humiliated by the introduction of similar rules about breaks or absences from work. As we predicted at an earlier time, the attempt to break us is coming at a time when profits are at an all time peak...a time when the lust for even greater profits is stimulated. It is the policy of the company to use us to line the pockets of the big shots and to discard us when we show signs of wearing out. A terrifying example of this was a 38 year employee who admitted being afraid to speak out in his last week before retirement for fear that he would lose his pension if he "stepped out of line." The company intends to crush all its workers.



"We are not listening to your demands until you agree to accept what we offer."

## SOME BACKGROUND

In view of the above conditions, some questions are in order. Why did it take three months to strike. Why was it necessary to learn from the company what the strike issues are? The union denies that those are the issues, but failed to disclose what the specific issues are. We all know that there are many more severe safety hazards that should have been included. Why, when there were so many more equally important and more emotional issues which could unify the workers, was it necessary to strike over issues comprising only the tip of the iceberg? We will attempt to analyze this curious state of affairs.

NOTE: The leaflet here explains in some detail the growth of the union, the coming to power of the large union bureaucracy, and the subsequent deals that had to be made with companies in order to maintain the power of that bureaucracy. Probably the most significant of these for this article was the no strike clause.


## WHAT'S THE ANSWER

The obvious answer is what the companies and unions fear the most.... taking control back in our own hands. A large dose of democracy is necessary to break the firm grip that they have on us.

We waited three months to strike because the strike is not in our hands. It is not even in the hands of the local. It is because of the fear of workers exercising control that there has been no membership meeting. Neither the International nor the union (Local) wanted the workers to decide what the issues would be, what demands should be made, or when the strike should be called. Just recently, we have summoned to a strike education meeting under the threat of cutting off our strike benefits. The meeting should be to educate the union officials. If we are the "highest authority", what are we doing walking a picket line in total ignorance of what the bureaucrats are doing, and what are they doing conducting a strike in total ignorance of

**ATTEND YOUR  
UNION MEETING**  
AGENDA

- 1 Roll Call of Officers
- 2 Mr. BIG WHEEL, guest speaker
- 3 Election of the Election Committee
- 4 Election Of Delegates
- 5 President's Report
- 6 Bylaws
- 7 Communications
- 8 Old Business
- 9 New Business
- 10 WORKERS GRIEVANCES (IF THERE IS TIME)



"Looks Like a Good Day for Work Around the House"

our wishes and instructions.

Why is it impossible to strike over the work rules that the company sees as the real issue? Because the company and the International imposed no-strike clauses and complicated grievance procedure that makes it illegal. The same is true in regard to grievances over production standards, and racial, ethnic and sex discrimination. We can't strike over personal and physical abuse because the companies and union have fixed it that way. We can't strike over suspensions and back pay because that is outlawed also. Those acts are all illegal not because the acts have any legality or illegality in and of themselves, but because we were sold out. Why did Matlock and Hazelett try their damndest to prevent us from violating the new rules, especially after they had advocated that course of action in the beginning? Because they were informed by the International that they would be accused of an illegality. The company and union lawyers had already agreed on that. Wildcat strikes, which are the most democratic expression of the will of the workers... are illegal. Democracy is illegal. The sad truth is that our present union officers understand this, but are too enmeshed to fight it.

Control of the strike must be put in the hands of the workers so that we



going back months and months, must be cleared up.

7. Racial and sex discriminations must be stopped.

8. Hassan Baker and Len Wirtel must be reinstated with back pay. Herman Leigh and Marcus Green must be given clean records and back pay.

9. On-going committees (with teeth) should be established to deal with safety, contract changes, and discrimination.

10. The company should agree not to violate the spirit of this agreement as evidenced by the harassment of the last three months and its failure to abide by an agreement to assign the same workers to outside duty in Zone 9.

an make the decisions about matters concerning us. A meeting should be called immediately for all workers so that we can find out what has been happening and instruct negotiators, men who have not even deemed it necessary to show their faces. We need to establish committees to carry on every aspect of the fight...a fight that must be won. We must not let our interests be bargained away by men who go back to Detroit and forget us. If they want to help, let them meet with other locals and encourage those locals to stop work. Let them put all the unions resources at our disposal.

Again, we state that the strike deserves our full support, but that it must be broadened and strengthened so that we are not to have struck in vain. Accordingly, we suggest the following as being minimal demands for settling the strike. The demands are aimed at the company and the union.

That must be decided by the workers after they have all the necessary facts, but we suggest the following which has been suggested before.

The recently imposed coffee break rules which are intended to degrade must be withdrawn.

All disciplinary action taken for violation of those rules should be removed from the records and workers could get back pay for suspensions.

Medical excuse rules which virtually outlaw medical excuses should be withdrawn.

The attempt to hold workers to production schedules that were never agreed upon and unknown to the workers must be discontinued and disciplinary action must be wiped from the records.

All safety hazards must be eliminated.

The backlog of regular grievances



# ***An International Tragedy***

## A TWO ACT PLAY

The play takes place in Sokol Hall. At the front of the hall a makeshift office has been set-up on the right side. In the middle is a microphone, and at the far right of the hall, along the front of the bar are signs with ranges of timecard numbers on them.

As the curtain goes up on the first act, a pompous UAW International Rep. is addressing the workers. It is 1:45 pm, April 20, 1973, 15 days after the beginning of a strike. It is a beautiful day and the workers are in good spirits despite the fact that the rep. has just ordered them to be quiet in a manner that clearly showed his contempt for the workers.

### Scene 1

Joe Skwatt: Remember, this is your meeting. This is your union! Now, you have to.....(he is interrupted by a worker)

Worker: Where did you say food stamps....

Skwatt: (Cutting worker off in mid-sentence) You can ask questions at the office next week. No questions today! No questions!!

Another worker: What time will.....

Skwatt: No questions!

Worker: But....

(curtain comes down)

### Scene 2

Another UAW Rep named Shoemaker addresses group. Shoemaker is old, cranky, and bossy and is obviously impatient to get back to his office in Detroit.

Shoemaker: Let me make something dear. If any of you go to work during this strike, you are going to have to give 1/2 your pay to the union or you will be given a withdrawal card until the strike ends.

Workers: Stunned silence

Shoemaker: And next meeting there will be a Sergeant-at-Arms at the back door, and he will stop anybody trying to leave and take their names so they won't get strike benefits.

Worker: What happens if.....

Shoemaker: We told you, no questions.

Worker: (Whispering to fellow worker) And this is OUR MEETING?  
I'd hate to attend one that was THEIR meeting.  
(curtain comes down)

## ACT II, Scene 1

The setting is the same as the scene opens with Local President, Lonzo, about to wrap matters up by instructing the workers to line up for their strike pay. Before he speaks, a lone worker approaches the microphone and turns toward the workers:

Lone worker: (Pointedly addressing the workers and not the union bureaucrats) I'd like the membership's permission to address this meeting for 5 minutes.

Skwatt: (Leaping for the mike) Nobody can address this meeting!

Lone worker: I am not asking you. I am asking permission from the workers. They are the "highest authority" in the union, so certainly they should be able to make their own decision, shouldn't they?

Worker: (calls out) Let him speak! Let him speak!

Skwatt: NOBODY SPEAKS! THIS IS OUR MEETING, THE INTERNATIONAL'S.

Another worker: Lets vote on it. Its our union!

Other workers: (Shouting together) Who pays your salary? Let him talk

Skwatt and Shoemaker: (Aside to Local union bureaucrats who have suddenly become very busy with make believe office work) Cut the microphone. (Turning back toward the workers) Line up for your money or you won't get paid.

(curtain comes down as workers resentfully line up for strike pay  
Scene 2

Workers are filing out of hall talking to each other.

1st worker: Who do they think the union belongs to?

2nd worker: Who do you think the union belongs to? Thats what counts.

1st worker: We better start getting ourselves together.

2nd worker: Where've you been? We're already getting ourselves together. Why in the hell do you think they wouldn't let the man speak?

Author's Note: Dear readers: Nobody would have believed the above story if it had not unfolded before our eyes, proving once more the old saying, "Truth is stranger than fiction."

# Letter From El Paso

NOTE: The Farah Co., with 8 plants in Texas and New Mexico, is a large manufacturer of pants. They employ over 10,000 workers, mostly Mexican-Americans. Like many plants in the Southwest, they are non-unionized and low-paying, but the lack of jobs makes it a take-it-or-leave-it situation. In 1969, however, workers contacted the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACWA) and in late 1970, elections were held and the union

was voted in. Farah immediately put off unionization by taking the decision to court. After 8 workers were fired for union activities, the San Antonio plant woked out in May, 1972 to be followed by the other plants. Since that time, Farah workers have been on strike, although many have been forced--by financial necessity--to return and work from the inside. This letter was written by a woman working with the strikers in El Paso.

Dear Comrades,

I hope everthing is going well. We are trying to maintain contact with as many strikers as possible. Many of them already knew \_\_\_\_\_ even though he was here only for a few days on his first trip.

It seems like El Paso and surrounding areas are being hit by countless strikes by Chicano workers and other places are about to explode. Textile seems to be the major industry. The impact of the Farah strike has shaken the industry--no place will hire a striker or a striker's relative--they are on the alert; they don't intend to lose. Farah has launched a campaign exposing the union's budget (the campaign started during the height of the strike) and the salaries of the big shots and little shots to show the workers where their dues would go (which we appreciate). At the same time, they attack the workers. The strike against Farah is going on at the 4 plants here plus Las Cruces, Albuquerque, San Antonio, and Victoria, Texas. Here in El Paso there are two other plants--Hortex--recently bought by Farah (before the strike) and Levi's--small plant of 800 workers who also went out on strike for 3 weeks to bring in the ACWA. The strike was very militant, the union got in and sold them out from the gitgo. The story is that the union rep. went to Calif. and came back with the contract already settled somewhere along the way.

Needles to say, the workers are pissed and sorry that they put down their bricks and 2x4s. (The union got in but the strike lost.)

Let me lay out some other things that I think are important for you all to know about. EP, first of all, is a powderkeg in terms of workers. The fact that it is 70% Chicano may have a lot to do with it. Anyway, the Farah strike seems to have lit the fuse and there is no telling where it can go. There seems to be no visible white working class except in the oil refineries (mixed) and in positions of overseers. It looks that way in sales downtown and in the telephone Co., too. This situation is also found in the fire department and police department, which are 85% Chicano. It makes for a very interesting situation. Consider this--two years ago the police and fire depts. went on strike for more wages and better conditions. There seems to be no visible graft among the rank and file cops or so the stories go. They finally confronted the mayor, who refused to grant their demands. They took their case to the people of El Paso (Chicanos) in the form of a petition, took it back to the mayor, and got their demands (like all Southwest Chicano towns, they all grew up together and the family ties are endless; I suppose this is also true in the deep south).

When the Farah strike broke out and up to Ash Wednesday, the cops seemed to be working against the officials

in terms of how to deal with the strikers, to the point that Farah only wants the police dept. to send white cops ( a very small minority). Here's why: During the first walkout and the militant activity that followed, the cops were there mostly looking the other way while the strikers tore up everything in sight, having a good time. Then Farah called the police officials who came and ordered mass arrests. The cops would wait for the officials to point out individuals for arrest, load up their cars, and take them away--not to jail as they were ordered, but to unload them at the union hall! Due to some white cops or dutiful Chicano cops, they still wound up with 113 people in jail, even then the cops worked till all hours in the early AM to find union reps (who couldn't be found and even now have unlisted numbers), strike leaders ( the visible one was in NY talking to the union Pres.), Priests, ministers, etc., to come for the strikers before the judge came in the AM. (We've heard this from a number of sources.)

They wanted to get out as many as possible without having to let them out of the cells openly. The latest thing was Ash Wednesday last month. Father \_\_\_\_\_ announced that he would hold Ash services at the main Farah plant (at shift change). Hundreds of people turned up (its right off the expressway with all exits leading to Farah). Anyway, all hell broke loose after the services (no pun intended). They decided (?) to demonstrate on the expressway, to stop the incoming shift and the shift letting out, which had to use the expressway to leave. They stopped everything and then began breaking windows on cars and pulling out wires under the hood and even beating up on the scabs plus any anglos who happened to be on the expressway at that time. There were no arrests. The cops just went around saying in Spanish, "Hey, thats enough, not so many.", and mainly looking for husbands, fathers, or sons to control a little the wives, mothers, and daughters who were hard to restrain. A friend told us that when his friend (a cop) found him, he told him to hurry up and come with him because he had 2 strikers hold-

ing his mother back (she had taken off a shoe to use as a weapon and she was still swinging when he got there). He said many of the women were doing the same thing. More info Many of the cops have worked at Farah at one time or another and some of



them are part time cops, that is, they moonlight as cops. Example: there is a carnival on a lake. Its a big, real nice, open evening on weekends, a place that has something for the whole family--rides, dance pavillion, lover's lane, and room enough for rallies on the parking lot. Anyway, the cops who work there are strikers who moonlight. The place used to be frequented by Happys (SCABS), but the strikers used to challenge them to fights or debates (with the cops on their side, of course) until they stopped coming there. There are many stories of what the strikers used to do all over EP. The ACWA has had a hell of a time putting a harness on this.

THE UNION. I'll try to be brief because we know them so well. I'll only say that no time has the union wanted to strike as a means of getting in. What has happened to the ACWA in the southwest is that it has not been able to come up with a means of controlling "These damn Mexicans who want to HUELGA all the time."



The union has had to give in on two things which seem to be unheard of in the "glorious history of this union." The distress fund controlled by strikers, yet!, and the right to travel for strikers.

You can imagine that the group who controls the distress funds is loaded by the union, and they seem to find it necessary to send people to the same cities where strikers are speaking (i.e., west coast).

Here in EP, they have come up against having to find a way to destroy (not openly of course) the monster they have created--the rank and file leadership, which won't be possible, through the usual 'commie' or 'Farah agent' scare. The undermining of their leadership was working to some extent before we came back; this is changing now.

The last meeting we went to (we go every week), the union started the meeting by handing out diplomas for their leadership classes. 8 out of 10 were young women. The 2 guys did not show up. Another thing they do at all the meetings is have a lot of big shots (flown in) to sit up on

hour of how great the union is before they get their checks. Half of the people stay outside until they give out the checks.

As I said before, the union has managed to undermine the rank and file leadership and render them inactive through formal and informal restrictions which all boil down to the question of power. Who is the leadership? The union or the rank and file? Everything they have done indicates this--they are caught between wanting and needing to denounce them and not being able to do it openly. Needless to say how they feel about us!! At this point they can't attack us either effectively.

The question of power and who is to lead the workers had not been clear to the rank and file leadership so there was lots of confusion, trying to understand what the union was doing and what their role should be. We are helping to clarify all this. The union, of course, has been very clear on it, and has made certain that none of the rank and file leadership falls into any position of power within the union, because they would use it to help the workers. Everything they want or demand from the union contains all the seeds of "workers control" so they are a real threat to the union. The union's campaign to isolate the leadership has also failed because of who they are and where they came from. Anyway, they don't consider the union very important. In fact that is a very realistic view because they see it in terms of the movement for civil rights in the south, not a solution, but a necessary step.



## THE RANK AND FILE LEADERSHIP

You all know the stories of how the struggle developed up to the strike, but I want to tell you a few stories of what was going on inside the plants because it is the kind of thing we have had long discussions on. How we can start to organize inside the plants?

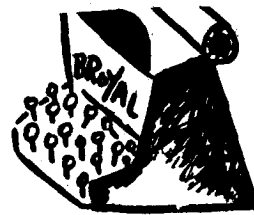
The organizing committee was very active the last year before the strike. They were in all the important departments--even in the cafeteria where 2 women got interested just by listening to them as they talked and the women served them. When the women got interested--since no one was organizing them--they became the look-outs to warn them if someone was coming, so they could change the subject. They used the code word AGUA and that became the watch word throughout the plant. (Agua was used in court to show that there was a conspiracy, eg. everyone yelled it to each other.) In the departments, they carried on a systematic program of signing people up for the union, expanding the organizing committee from 3 to 20, slowdowns (1 dept. was down to 50% production), sabotage (inventory was so fouled up that even the people who worked couldn't figure it out). The shipping department was canceling orders left and right, and losing orders, fouling up orders, etc. In the cutting room, everything that went wrong was somehow traced to be the fault of the scabs. Tools and materials were ruined daily and the production kept going down because the scabs would try to defend themselves to the supervisors and all the workers would stop to hear what they said, while the super would yell at the scab to shut up and go back to work so that everyone could go back to work. They had a system too of acting real friendly to (in front of the foreman and supers) the scabs (Happys) because they were forbidden to talk to the organizing committee. They talked to them in Spanish to get them in trouble. Many of the Happys got in trouble over this and got fired. The others found themselves caught in the middle, getting it from both sides.

They got pretty bold in their organizing drive, too. They used to all come in early to stand by the clock lined up against the wall with their union buttons on so that people coming in could see them; the foremen and supers would also be there early just to make sure that they didn't say anything to anyone. The organizing committee would just stand there and smile, driving them crazy. Then they would split up, going in different directions, knowing that they would be followed. They would take turns playing decoys while others signed up people. They had a real good work stoppage system that always worked. One of them would call the super, usually when they were sure that he was in another plant, tell him to come over because they had an emergency. When the guy got there, they would tell him that a foreman had told them this or that rumor or had scolded them or some shit like that, and that they didn't want no trouble, could he please straighten it out? You can imagine 5 or 6 guys standing around all hurt and sore, asking the super to please straighten it out because they don't want no trouble and all the super wants is for everybody to go back to work. Anyway, the only one he can take it out on is the foreman. According to them, this is what made it all worthwhile.

One guy was telling us that when he read the court records of the testimony and charges against them that all he could think of was that other departments were having more "fun" than he had imagined. Even the decision to walk out was made by them in opposition to the union, but in support of the San Antonio workers. You can see why after carrying the ball for so long, they would be a danger to the union who, by the way, played only a minor role in the whole organizing campaign. It is interesting to note that here in the south<sup>2</sup> west, the demand for a union is seen by the anglos as equal to an uprising rebellion, revolution because the workforce is non-white.

The rest of the letter, of a more personal nature, we will not print here.

# Investigating Your Plant



There are a number of good sources of information about companies which are available to the public, if you know where to look. Here's how to get some of it.

All libraries have a card catalogue. Look up the company and see if they have any books written about it. If it is a big one they might, and it will be listed by name of company as well as title.

Most big libraries have a section of reference books, newspapers, and books on business is some kind of business or commerce section. Here a person can find references containing information which the ruling class passes around about the economy. GOOD STUFF!!!!

There is first the Leasco Information Products File. This is a micro-film file of copies of all the annual reports submitted to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) by all publicly owned (i.e., stock issuing) companies. The report contains details on the company's financial condition (profits, sales, assets, debts, property values, taxes, etc) for the last 5 years. It also lists major products, names and salaries of executives, and more. In addition, if the company has issued new stock recently, it will have had to file a prospectus report with the SEC, which is even more detailed than the annual report. Leasco should also have this.

If your library does not have these reports they are also on file at the local SEC libraries. To see if your city has an SEC library, call the US Government Information phone number and ask. If there is no library, you can write to the SEC in Washington (Securities and Exchange Commission, Washington, D.C. is enough.) and ask how to get copies. It is all public information.

Back in the library, there should be copies of many magazines and newspapers--Forbes, Fortune, Business Week, Wall Street Journal and others--in which business news and analysis is carried. There are also magazines put out by particular industries. These might be in the business section of the library or in a general magazine section. Rather than search through all of them for your target, ask for an index--

there are several good ones--The Wall Street Journal Index, The New York Times Index, Business Periodicals Index, Funk and Scott Index of Corporations and Industries, and others. Ask the librarian for these.

Finally, good libraries will also have a series of books--reference books, not indexes--which have useful information. Moodies Investment Service Series, and Standard and Poors Corporate Descriptions each has brief descriptions--history, financial condition, officers, credit rating etc.--of most companies. Poors Register of Corporations, Directors, and Executive, and Dun and Bradstreet's, gives a list of major executives and directors of big companies, and then the names of other companies they help run.

Combine this with Who's Who in America (larger libraries will also have Who's Who in the East, California, Commerce and Industry, etc.) and you will get a good picture of the lives and cross ties of the bosses. Who's Who gives a brief biographical picture of the person. The New York Times Index and Current Biographies also might have information about really big corporate execs.

To find out what all your company makes and where (if it is one of the 1000 largest in the country) use Fortune's Plant and Products Directory.

Other possibilities for finding our information are local college libraries, union research offices, and the company itself. You might be able to write a letter to the company saying you are an interested investor, but you are not likely to get anything really good out of it. These are all more remote possibilities.

The best information often comes from other workers. People who work for other companies which your company deals with will know about its local relationships. Workers in other plants will know about other things. If you combine all this information you should be able to develop a good file on the company you are interested in.



# Victory at Sparrows Point



The Labor department has ordered the huge Bethlehem steel mill at Sparrow's Point, Md., to change its seniority rules.

The company was told last month to institute plantwide seniority and get rid of the discriminatory departmental seniority in an effort to wipe out wages and practices that showed "a marked disparity which strongly favored white blue-collar workers."

Actually the order was given more than two years after a federal investigation found the company's nearly 8000 black workers were "locked" into the dirtiest, most hazardous, low paying, low skilled jobs in the plant. The order is also partly in response to the wildcat strikes and walkouts that have been staged here in the last several years.

The Labor Department has ordered the following measures to be taken: First, that workers who have never transferred out of mostly black departments must be informed in writing of the opportunity to do so. Second, transfers will be based on plantwide seniority. This means that a worker in a "white" department with only three years service will no longer be able to move to a better job before a black worker with more seniority who applies for the job. Finally, workers who transfer to better jobs will be "red-penciled"--which means they will keep the wage they reached through seniority in the "black" department even though the job in the white department pays less.

## DISCRIMINATION IN REVERSE?

The company and the union fought this ruling. Local US Steelworkers head Edward Plato called it "discrimination in reverse"--evidently preferring the up-front discrimination that has existed all along. He

shares the feeling of many white workers at the plant that an equal chance for black workers means discrimination against the whites. Interviews here showed many white workers believed the blacks were being "pushed ahead" of them while black workers were fully aware of the increase in friction that would result from the ruling.



But the order is limited. There are not enough "available permanent vacancies" to benefit immediately the black workers. No back pay was ordered for the years the blacks have been locked into the dirtiest jobs. Lack of on-the-job safety is still a crucial issue, workers in the most dangerous jobs don't get enough extra pay and finally, Bethlehem's discriminatory hiring policies have been left untouched.

# JOB DISCRIMINATION SUITS

## Some Questions and Answers

Legal challenges to job discrimination against black, Latin, and women workers have won some important victories over the past few years. For example, AT&T was forced to open up all jobs to women and to pay out millions of dollars in back wage to women who had been discriminated against. Bethlehem Steel and the United Steedworkers Union were forced to end 'divisional seniority,' a practice which had effectively prevented black workers from transferring to cleaner, safer, and better-paying jobs in other sections of the mills from the blast furnaces and coke plants where they were usually hired.

Though there have been victories, the problems with legal challenges must be recognized. They are slow--often taking years--and cost thousands of dollars, far more than most victims of discrimination can afford. Beyond this, it is easy to let legal approaches become a substitute for mass direct action. However, if they are not relied upon but are used as just one part of a general fight for equality on the job, they can help to expose the policies of the company and the union, and unify the workers around demands and activities which are a direct challenge to the methods used to keep them under control.

(In the following interview, a Chicago lawyer lays out some of the issues involved in filing a discrimination suit. We hope that the information will be useful. If there are further questions, contact:

I.W.  
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Chicago, Illinois 60680

Q. What laws are used in job discrimination cases?

A. Usually the law is Title 7, of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This

is the section which prohibits any company, union, or employment agency to discriminate in employment policies on grounds of race or sex. Some cases of racial discrimination can come under some of the laws passed just after the Civil War. These have the advantage of allowing the case to proceed much more rapidly into court than is possible with Title 7 however, Title 7 is the law which usually must be applied.

Q. Who can file a discrimination suit under Title 7?

A. Any worker who feels that he or she has been the victim of discrimination can file a complaint. The discrimination can take either or both of two forms. It can be a specific action directed against a specific worker. For example, a women worker might be told that certain jobs are only open to men; or a black job applicant might be told that there is no work available when white applicants are told that there is. Such examples would probably lead to individual cases. It is also possible for a worker or a group of workers to file a complaint against a company or a union policy which they think is discriminatory. This is called a class action complaint. There have been successful class actions directed against seniority systems which are intended to discriminate, and against any treatment of pregnancy that is different from the treatment of other medical questions (forcing women to quit at the 6th month, etc.) Though a class action is filed in behalf of a group of workers which may be large--hundreds or even thousands--only one worker who is representative of the group is needed to start the complaint.

Q. Do you have to exhaust the union grievance procedure before filing a complaint?

A. Certainly not when the union is a party to the discrimination. This is often the case. When it is not the case, a grievance and an EEOC complaint can be initiated at the same time. Of course, if the worker has reason to believe that it will be easier to win the grievance if there is no EEOC complaint, the filing of the complaint should be delayed. This would be a matter of judgement in each individual case.

Q. How do you file a discrimination suit?

A. The worker should go to the Federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC), the address will be in the phone book, and file the complaint. In Illinois, the EEOC will transference the complaint to the State Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) which investigates, holds hearings, and tries to settle the issue. If this fails, the case returns to the EEOC which can choose to take the issue to court if it wants to. All of this is free. It costs the worker nothing.

However, there is a problem. Both the EEOC and the FEPC have a huge backlog of cases. It takes years for a case to work its way through, if it gets through at all. So the worker has another alternative. 180 days after filing a complaint with the EEOC, he or she can hire a private attorney and take the matter directly into Federal Court. In cases where the company resists changing its ways this almost always has to be done to get any results.

Q. How much will this cost?

A. These cases are very expensive and time-consuming, the costs will run into thousands of dollars. However, if the case is won, the company or the union will be required to pay all legal costs including the cost of your lawyer. Most lawyers will not take a case unless they are quite sure of winning it. Still, winning a case takes time and money must be put out as it goes along, which will eventually be gotten back if the case

Q. What can be won?

A. In individual cases, back pay for up to two years and the restoration of full rights on such things as seniority, pensions, vacations, etc. A side benefit is that it gets harder to fire a worker who wins a Title 7 case for any reason because it looks like retaliation for the suit. Of course, if you win the suit, the action or the policy which led to it is overturned.

Q. Is it always necessary to wait for years to win a case?

A. Sometimes results can be gotten quicker, if the company knows it will lose in court and is willing to work out a settlement. This is most likely to be the case in class actions which can be very expensive and politically damaging for a large company to lose.

Q. Are there any added benefits involved in legal complaints against discrimination?

A. Yes, there is one important benefit for any group attempting to do organizing work. This is what is called the right of discovery, and sometimes it can be as valuable as the suit itself. What discovery means is that the worker and his lawyer have the right to examine all of the company's records that might have a bearing on the complaint. When you are talking about a class action which involves a large number of workers, this can mean virtually all of the company's records.

Q. What about retaliation for filing a complaint?

A. This is assuming, of course, that the discrimination didn't involve a firing, in which case there isn't much more the company can do. Realistically, some retaliation should be expected even though it is clearly banned both under Title 7 itself and under the National Labor Relations Act. For example, it would not be a good idea to be absent or late regularly after filing a complaint--or,

# Emerson Electric -1937

## Sit-Down!

It was 1937. Across the nation, thousands of working men and women were putting their bodies on the line in a great struggle against the powerful corporations. After years of poverty the Depression had only worsened. Working people were fighting back. They were organizing themselves into unions to better resist corporations which were forcing low pay, longer hours, and speedups on them.

In their struggle, working people had only recently acquired a new weapon, the sit-down strike. From early 1936 when the first sit-down strike was used against the Firestone plant at Akron, Ohio, the use of this tactic spread like wild-fire. Everyone was "sitting down". Waitresses and auto workers. Woolworth clerks and electrical workers.

St. Louis was a part of this great movement. Brief sit-downs hit the GM plant early in 1937. A downtown restaurant saw its waitresses, porters, and cooks "sitting down" during the noon rush. The most significant sit-down strike to occur in St. Louis at this time, however, was one which made headlines across the country. For fifty-three days, hundreds of workers held the Emerson Electric plant in St. Louis, demanding union recognition and wage increases. It came to be the second longest sit-down strike in American history.

In 1937 there were 12,000 electrical workers in St. Louis. The largest plants were Wagner electric with 4,000, Century Electric with 1,800, and Emerson with 2,000. Emerson was the first to be organized by the CIO. The strike there was the spearhead in the effort to unionize all the electrical workers of St. Louis.

### THE SITDOWN BEGINS

It was noon. March 8, 1937 when work at the plant at 20th and Washington St. came to a halt. Three hundred workers remained inside the factory while the others filed out to take their positions as picketers on the

that day. It was less than two months since that day at Flint, Mich. when fourteen people were shot while defending the sit-down strikers at the big GM plant.



The strikers demanded a closed shop, recognition of the union as the sole collective bargaining agent, a minimum wage of \$.50 an hour, elimination of piece work, seniority in employment and promotion, the negotiation of grievances, and a 36-hour work week with time and a half for over-time.

For forty days the company refused to negotiate. The Emerson Company was a part of the powerful National Metal Trades Association which would not allow any member to recognize the right of collective bargaining. It attempted to deal with the workers.

would support it. The company then played a long waiting game hoping that hunger and over-due bills would force the strikers to give up.

The St. Louis Relief Administration supported the Emerson Company in this tactic by refusing to grant relief to any person that was out on strike. As the strike continued however, and the meagre resources of workers dwindled, action was taken. On April 1st, fortytwo workers, most of whom were from Emerson, sat in at the St. Louis Relief Administration office. They took over the office, vowing to stay until relief was administered to all people in need, regardless of whether they were on strike or not.

The workers, black and white, men and women, remained at the office throughout the day and night and into the next day when the Relief Administration finally gave in.

The company also tried to divide the striking workers by sending them a leaflet which attacked the CIO as being "red" and communist. The workers ignored the leaflets and continued the strike.

#### **WORKERS ORGANIZE IN THE PLANT**

As the days passed, and the Emerson Company still refused to meet the striker's demands, the workers inside the plant did not budge. An organization and discipline had arisen. They called themselves "Emerson City". The day was divided into three 8-hour shifts. Each shift was divided into three patrols. One patrol guarded all of the entrances. Another served as a fire patrol. The third worked on clean-up. If a striker was neglectful of duty he was tried before a judge and jury. One person served as prosecutor, another defending the erring worker. Penalties consisted of extra clean-up or fire control. Throughout the strike, no one was told to leave. Food was delivered from a nearby restaurant. Packing material made comfortable beds. In their spare hours they played mouth harps, guitars, and drums and chimes they had improvised out of metal tanks and disks within the plant. Cards, checkers, and horse-shoes were also favorite pastimes.

#### **SIT-DOWN CONTINUES**

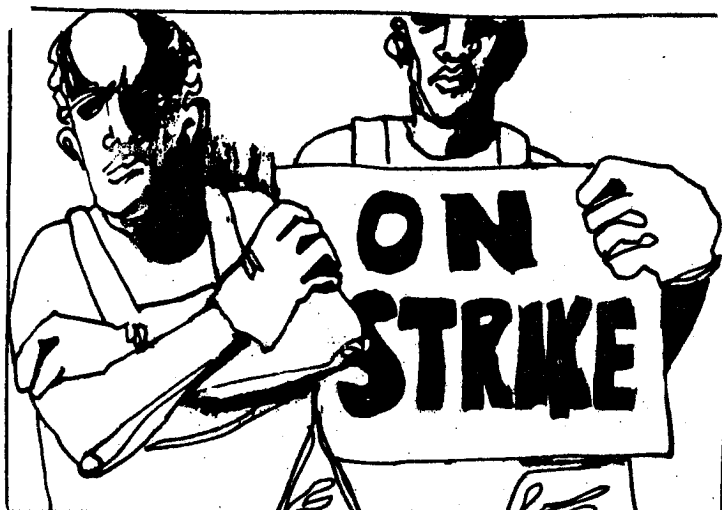
Finally, after forty days, Emerson agreed to negotiate with the union. At this point, it was agreed by the union officials that

the sit-down workers would march from the plant to join a mass meeting where the national president of the union was speaking. The workers inside the plant, however, did not go along. Their leader said; "...I know Newman (the president of Emerson) and I do not believe that the company will give anything easily. Only what is dragged out of it." The strikers stayed inside the factory.

After several days of negotiations the company recognized the union as the bargaining agent. The local CIO official who was heading the bargaining team said that the sit-down should end and the workers leave the plant. Again, the workers inside the plant refused to go along with the union official. They voted to stay inside the plant until their demands for a \$.50 an hour minimum wage had been met.

It is this fact that makes the St. Louis Emerson strike unique in the history of labor strikes. In the other sit-downs of these days the workers left the plant after the union was recognized. However, the St. Louis strikers were determined to occupy the property of the company until their wage demands were met.

At this point, William Sentner, the leading CIO official in the strike, spoke to workers outside the plant saying that he had changed his mind. He admitted that he had made a mistake in urging the workers to leave the factory. He told the assembled strikers: "We are not going to give up that plant until



the company comes to some definite agreement We will fight until we can fight no longer ...we do not want trouble but if it comes you have your fists, use them!" The company, he said, "cannot be trusted"...I was wrong and you have more sense than me." At this point, it was the striking workers inside the plant who led the strike and pushed the demands of the workers against the company and not the union.

### *SIT-DOWN ENDS, STRUGGLE CONTINUES*

The company responded to this militancy shown by the workers by withdrawing its recognition of the union and looking toward the courts for help. It sought a court order which would force the men out of the plant and put a halt to all the mass picketing. After fifty four days the strike had reached a critical point with the company and workers faced off in what could be a violent clash.

Again Sentner urged the workers to leave the plant. In the public announcement which preceded the march of workers out of the plant the CIO explained: "The evacuation to be made is in the interest of public peace and to demonstrate the sincerity of the CIO movement in its efforts to effectively, by lawful means, further its unionization campaign...and to discourage violence of any character."

The workers were opposed to evacuating the plant but heeded the orders of the CIO and marched out in an orderly manner to the cheers of hundreds of strikers and their families. The strike continued, however, and Emerson and the CIO re-entered into negotiations. Eventually the union was recognized, and some benefits were received, including a pay raise. However, after all the negotiations were finished and the workers had returned to their jobs the minimum wage for Emerson employees was \$.35 an hour for experienced workers and only \$.32 an hour for inexperienced employees.

Only one sit-down strike has ever lasted longer than the one in St. Louis. The workers who sat down inside the plant and the workers who ran the pickets outside, sat-in at the Relief Administration office, aided the pickets of other striking electrical workers at other companies, showed the commitment and desire which is necessary for workers anywhere to win demands from a company. Obviously, it was the workers, more than their own union leadership who pushed

company property until their wage demands had been met. The union "leadership" opposed the workers and formed a separate force in the three-way struggle between company, union and rank-and-file. Today, as in 1937, only the unity and determination of working people themselves can be relied upon to effectively resist companies in the ongoing struggle for decent wages, better working conditions, and benefits, and a more productive, meaningful life.

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## Reply to Emerson Electric

During the discussion of the Emerson Electric article several questions and criticisms were discussed. We decided to publish the article and the criticisms voiced by the minority.

### *CONTRADICTIONS IN THE ARTICLE*

A major problem with the article is the apparent contradiction between the information given about the strike and the conclusions drawn. This contradiction led to the article being one-sided in two respects: 1) it seemed to imply that the strike had been a failure, and 2) it concluded that the union was "opposed" to the workers. Either, or both, of these conclusions may be true, but they do not follow from the information given in the story.

The implication that the strike was, a failure is contradicted by the fact that they did win union recognition, "some benefits", and a wage increase. They did not win their complete demands, but then no struggle short of socialist revolution is likely to win all of its demands. And in Depression America, union recognition was a victory for the workers.

The second aspect of the article is more important. The conclusion that the union was "opposed" to the workers simply can not be defended from the information given us. The union

cupation, but in the end the workers followed the lead of the CIO and left the plant to carry on the strike from outside. The article gives no reasons for this move by the workers, though there is mention of the company going to court to get State intervention. Were the workers facing an imminent armed attack from the State? In such a situation should they have stayed in the plant? In any case, they did follow the union leadership out of the plant and continued to wage the strike from outside. Thus in what sense did the union oppose the workers? The information given in the article simply does not support the conclusion that the union formed a "third force" opposed to the workers.

#### *DOGMATISM vs. ANALYSIS*

This contradiction between the information given and the conclusions drawn make the final conclusion about only by "our own" efforts seem to be a classic American anarchist, anti-leadership position, rather than a clearly informed and precisely drawn historical lesson. To be able to draw such conclusions, our analyses of workers' history must be better grounded in the concrete analysis of historical situations. As Lenin said: The heart of Marxism is the concrete analysis of concrete situations. In the present context, this means that the Emerson article should provide information about such things as the CIO's overall organizing strategy for the St. Louis area, the lefts relation to this work, the political situation in St. Louis (class alliances, the level of class struggle) and more information about the Emerson workforce and its political development. Without this grounding of the Emerson and other strikes, it is hard to construct an accurate history of the rise of class collaboration unionism and the bureaucratic suppression of workers struggles. How can we tell a tactical maneuver from a bureaucratic sell-out without such a sense of the situation? Perhaps this information is not available, in which case, writers should refrain from making broad political conclusions.

We can not expect book length artic-

we can't settle for interesting "once upon a time" stories that are dogmatic because their conclusions are tacked on to the end of a description rather than being derived from that description. Sweeping, simplistic anti-leadership conclusions do not help the working class struggle.

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#### *DISCRIMINATION SUITS cont.*

generally, to try to stretch any of the company's work rules. On the other hand, if the company knows that the complaint is a serious one, it has to be a little careful about retaliation because that would definitely weaken its case in court. So the retaliation is likely to be on little things, more harassment from supervisors, more surveillance, than to be something major like getting fired

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