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# RESIST

Newsletter #194

*A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority*

March 1987

## Labor Notes Conference — A New Social Unionism

PHIL KWIK

**O**n November 14-16, 800 trade unionists—from 32 states, four Canadian provinces, and ten countries, and representing over 70 unions—met in Detroit, Michigan at the Labor Notes conference “New Directions for Labor.” This was the fourth conference sponsored by *Labor Notes*, a monthly newsletter that has been publishing information and alternative analysis on the labor movement since 1979.

This conference gave labor activists a chance to discuss the current state of the labor movement and ways to revitalize it. The topic of the conference was timely as 1986 proved to be a pivotal year for labor: the attacks on the movement by the employers continued, the old bureaucratic leadership of the AFL-CIO showed no way to fight, and important key strikes were led by rank and file activists across the world.

### Attacks on Labor

The need for a new direction for labor was felt in 1986 as the corporate offensive against the labor movement continued and intensified.

For the seventh year, concessions undermined the living standards of U.S. workers. Since the Chrysler bailout of 1979, almost every major union in every industry has made some form of concessions. These have included not only straightforward wage cuts, but two-tier wage systems under which new hires receive a lower rate than current employees, lump-sum payments in lieu of rate increases and the wholesale surrender of work rules and conditions.

This concessions drive has led to the unbroken slide of average first year wage increases in major collective bargaining agreements from 11% in 1981 to .8% in the first quarter of 1986.

But concessionary bargaining did something worse than simply lowering wages. It made wages, benefits and conditions a matter of competition in industry after industry as unions allowed first one employer and then another to break the pattern agreements in each industry. Union leaders hoped that this relief would make the employer competitive again and, in that way, save jobs. It didn't work. It only destroyed an important line of defense—the pattern agreement.

This system of pattern bargaining was established at the end of World

War II when the CIO declared its independence from the conservative craft-based AFL and developed an aggressive, industrial organizing campaign. Within a decade wages and benefits were standardized as a complex of national pattern contracts was created in such basic industries as steel, auto, rubber, meatpacking, and coal mining.

In pattern bargaining it was a given that the stronger helped the weaker and by doing so everyone prospered. These major contracts provided a shield, a target of comparability, for millions of smaller groups of workers not in basic industries. In the 1960s and 1970s, as minority and women workers fought their way into unionized jobs, the higher wages and benefits of the major agreements provided a goal around which to establish equality.

The corporations have understood that the demise of pattern bargaining, in combination with a conservative political atmosphere, offers them even more opportunities to attack, isolate, and marginalize organized labor. They have realized that now is the time to increase profits by demanding deeper concessions and by increasing corporate flight to non-unionized low wage third world countries. This flight and resulting globalization of the

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# AGITATORIAL

## KEEPING OUR EYES ON THE MIDDLE EAST

**T**he Resist mailbag has been mixed lately. The most recent letter praises us for a newsletter that is "rare and indispensable," and commends us for providing important information about the "most lied about and mystified region in the press"—the Middle East. But we also received an angry cancellation along with charges of anti-Semitism, and one writer found our evident support for the Palestinian movement for national liberation "unjustifiable."

These letters came in response to the two-part series by Robert Vitalis on the so-called "peace process," Melani McAlister's November article, "Confronting Middle East Issues," and Eqbal Ahmad's "Comprehending Terror" which appeared in the December issue.

Our critics affirm points made in the articles themselves. Criticism of Israeli government policy is often seen as synonymous with anti-Semitism; Arabs in general, and Palestinians specifically may be charged with terrorism but American Zionist extremists may not; and many on the left, including some RESIST readers, would rather turn a blind eye on the Middle East than confront the complexities of the conflicts there.

The Middle East has been called both a trigger and a target for war between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. The region is crucial to the cold war balance of power because of its proximity to the Soviet Union and by virtue of its oil resources. Israel is valuable to Washington, not because it is a homeland to Jews, but because of its antagonistic relations with key states in the area. As a U.S. client state, Israel can do our dirty work for us. U.S. policy since the 1967 war has been to generously supply arms to Israel, building up Israel's own military-industrial complex. Israel now has the sixth largest nuclear arsenal in the world. Whether we like it or not, this isn't an area the left can afford to ignore.

One of our critics called the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip "miniscule" compared to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and demanded that we offer equal time to criticism of the U.S.S.R. We are not,

however, in business to provide equal time, especially, as in the case of Afghanistan, when the issue in question is being given plenty of attention in the mainstream media. Our purpose is to provide left activists with thoughtful and challenging articles on issues that are not being addressed elsewhere.

The twenty year old occupation of the West Bank and Gaza can hardly be called miniscule. Two million people live in the occupied territories with their daily survival constantly at stake. The intent of the Israeli government is to destroy the PLO and all support for a Palestinian nationalist movement. The British Emergency Regulations provide a legal basis for collective punishment, detention, deportation and harassment of Palestinians.

The Palestinian weekly, *Al Fajr*, reported in January that 1,156 Palestinians have been forced into exile since 1967. In recent months Israeli government policy has meant attacks on Palestinian students in the West Bank and the murders of two children. The increased violence has been met by massive demonstrations by both Israelis and Palestinians, but the Israeli opposition has confronted a media black-out here in the U.S. And in Israel, an opposition newspaper, *News From Within*, has been shut down and its Jewish editors arrested.

Anti-Semitism is a serious charge. We don't take it lightly. One writer called Ahmad's article anti-Semitic because he referred to attacks on Arab-Americans by radical right-wing Zionists as "deadly acts of terror." The violence against Arab-Americans, including the 1985 murder of American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee leader Alex Odeh, is the work of a small but virulently racist faction of the American right wing. There is strong evidence linking the Jewish Defense League with these attacks. AADC members and offices have consistently been threatened and harassed by the JDL and other right-wing Jewish groups.

To deny or justify such acts permits anti-Arab racism to grow and intensify. Shielding the Zionist right wing does nothing to stem the tide of anti-Semitism that exists in American society. The American left must strongly

protest and organize against racism, including anti-Arab racism, just as we must protest and organize against anti-Semitism.

As McAlister pointed out in her article, it is ironic that a broader range of perspectives on the Arab/Israeli/Palestinian conflict are debated among the Israeli left than among progressives in the U.S. Perhaps this is because Israeli Jews have less fear of being called anti-Semitic, or of being labeled "self-hating."

Zionists and non-Zionists in the American peace movement have each failed to recognize the Israeli opposition to the occupation as well as the range of perspectives among American Jews. This collapsing of the Jewish experience into one political perspective—an uncritical Zionism—denies the rich and varied history, and present reality, of Jewish left activism. In future issues of the newsletter we will try to respond to that gap with an article on the Israeli left.

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# Automation, New Technology and Disposable Workers

ROY MORRISON

**W**hat some have called a "tidal wave" of layoffs, plant closings and mergers is sweeping over many of America's leading corporations in a time of relative economic prosperity. General Motors announced it would lay off 29,000 workers and close eleven plants over the next three years; ATT will drop 27,000 workers; IBM announced early retirement of 10,000; G.E. plans 2,200-2,500 1987 layoffs in Massachusetts; United Technologies plans to cut 11,000 jobs through early retirement and layoffs.

Unemployment, mergers and takeovers are nothing new to capitalism. Indeed, conservative economist Joseph Schumpeter praised what he called the process of "creative destruction" as the mechanism, driven by the market, whereby capitalism destroys the weak and inefficient for the benefit not only of more efficient competitors, but, ultimately, for society as a whole.

But recent corporate policies of acquisitions, takeovers and layoffs are not merely just another spin of the market's wheel of fortune. Nor is the problem just another cyclical economic downturn. Short term U.S. corporate profits are high, estimated at 234 billion dollars for 1986, up 39% since 1982. The real message from corporate America in the current round of layoffs and shutdowns, is that to survive in a competitive global marketplace more jobs will have to be eliminated, even if U.S. manufacturers build new factories.

ATT Chairman Olson said of the 27,000 layoffs, "We're committed to cutting costs; we will make the tough decisions to ensure we are in the best position to thrive in the years ahead." GE, which has already cut its work force by 100,000 in the past five years, warned its Lynn, Mass. workers about the newly announced layoffs, "We may have to face some harsh realities."

These layoffs are peculiar in that they not only hit production workers, whose jobs have already been reduced to a very small portion of total manufacturing costs, but they have also eliminated many support staff and middle management jobs.

The 1986 layoffs are a signal of what is already well underway. We are in the midst of an ongoing structural transformation of the global economy. This transformation will have fundamental effects not only on U.S. workers in manufacturing firms, but also in offices, supermarkets and department stores.

## Elements of the Economic Transformation

The economic transformation underway has three basic symptoms. First, is the decision by some U.S. companies to deindustrialize instead of reinvesting in existing operations and communities. Companies close up shop, or become little more than marketing and finance organizations for the sale of foreign manufactured products. Second, is the development of an increasingly competitive and expanded global market. GM, for example, not only has to compete with Toyota, but with Korean, Yugoslavian, and soon Malaysian imports. Third, is the implementation of new computer based automation technologies. Automation is offered as the major means for the survival of U.S. manufacturing. Computer automation is also spreading into the office and throughout the growing service sector of the economy.

The economic transformation transcends decisions made by corporate management to close or consolidate existing U.S. operations and move to low wage pastures in the American Sunbelt and in the Third World; or to shift capital from reinvestment in new manufacturing plants into merger and takeover efforts. Clearly there has been an inclination in substantial portions of U.S. corporate management to believe

that the manufacturing sector is dispensable. Higher profits can be found more easily elsewhere. We are headed, the PR goes, toward a post-industrial period that will be characterized by a service economy in an information age.

High wages of U.S. workers are not the root of the problem for the manufacturing sector. Data Resources, Inc. reported that given current exchange rates, adjusted for superior American productivity, Japanese labor costs will rise from 62% of the U.S. level in 1985 to 84% at the end of 1986, while German labor will be priced 32% above that of U.S. labor. U.S. manufacturing worker productivity has increased 21% since 1982 and is now 20% above that of Germany and Japan. If the value of the dollar relative to foreign currencies continues to plunge, the U.S. will become attractive as a comparatively low wage producer compared to the other major industrial nations. Unions, who are often blamed by management and politicians for all economic problems, now represent just 17 million U.S. workers or 18% of the workforce.

Japan, whose manufacturing exploits seem to cast a shadow over the future of the American economy, is also feeling the pressures of global competition and the strong yen. There have been major layoffs in steel and shipbuilding. Even in electronics Toshiba's and Fujitsu's profits have dropped 80% in six months. The rate of economic growth is sharply declining. Japanese unemployment is 6%. The Japanese guarantee of lifetime employment is now offered to only a small fraction of the workforce.

Thus a complex and interacting mix of forces is driving both short and long term changes in the workplace and the economy. The economic problem is global. The underlying processes are of competition and global productive overcapacity in a world where not only industrial production, but all economic activity, is subject to an increasing pace

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of change through automation, computer control and computer monitoring. New capital investment in automated technology in this competitive global environment leads to a net loss and not a net gain of jobs.

Unfortunately, we are ill prepared to deal with such changes either where we work or in our communities. For the most part, we have neither the tools nor the power to effectively condition or control these changes. Clearly the challenge we face is for collective and social action, to organize where we work and where we live. The emerging high technology world market needs both a worldwide labor movement and an openness to new forms of action.

### **Computer Automation in the Factory**

According to Business Week, automation is crucial to the survival of U.S. manufacturing. When the decision is made by corporations to automate, the process often involves not just a redesign of machinery, but a basic change in the nature and organization of the workplace. Following the corporate and bureaucratic imperatives of profit and power, industrial engineers are assigned to design not just new factories, but systems and scenarios that have profound implications for our work and for society.

***“Because of the brilliance of industrial engineering, the direct labor element isn’t important anymore . . . We have squeezed the direct labor lemon.”***

At the core of the technocratic vision is Computer Integrated Manufacturing, or CIM. For some industrial engineers, CIM means a workplace without people. Its historical antecedents are the familiar Taylorist rationalization and optimization of work at the expense of the worker. The program is simple. Workers are disposable.

The aim of CIM is simply to “reduce the cost of manufacturing,” according to James Tompkins, President of Tompkins Associates, a CIM consulting firm from Raleigh, N.C. Tompkins was one of about 1,000 industrial engineers who gathered to talk shop at a recent conference in Boston. He has designed new plants for GE, NCR, and Ford,

and he has basically declared victory over workers and their unions. “Because of the brilliance of industrial engineering, the direct labor element isn’t important anymore. . . . We have squeezed the direct labor lemon.” He appears at least partly right. Direct labor costs now often add up to less than 10% of manufacturing costs.

The action now, according to Tompkins, is to eliminate what he called the “burden” of the maintenance, quality control and set-up of workers, production controllers, material handlers, inspectors, expeditors, supervisors and middle managers. “Like plaque between the teeth . . . burden builds up between the direct labor,” he declared. Computer integrated systems will help scrape away as many of the remaining workers as possible. “What we’re trying to accomplish with CIM,” he explained, “is to establish the stepping stones that will lead to the automated factory.”

Most engineers envision that CIM will be introduced slowly, and gradually refined, rather than constructed all at once. The requirement for automation is not the development of still more exotic new technology—the android R2D2 robot—but instead the development of standardized software to allow computers to talk to each other, and automated systems to move material from the beginning to the end of the production process. Typically, “islands of automation” are developed at a workplace and then tied together by computer systems with common data bases, languages and communication software. Communication is what allows the “islands of automation” to become integrated into a CIM system.

Tompkins is working on the design of a new \$750 million dollar automated assembly plant for Ford Motor Company. Under the plan, car design will follow the imperatives of the optimized assembly process, not merely the dictates of marketing. For example, door openings will be made two inches wider to accommodate the space needed by a robot to insert the instrument panel.

The success of the process will be measured by the number of minutes of labor saved in each part of the assembly system. There will still be UAW assembly workers in Tompkins’ new Ford plant. They will work alongside the computer controlled machinery, robots, self-guided vehicles, and conveyors that are continually reducing the role of labor in manufacturing.

There isn’t a consensus behind Tompkins’ reductionist vision of computer automation. Some managers believe CIM technology will replace rigid bureaucratic hierarchies with flexible information processing structures, and greater participation. Workers, they predict, will gain new skills. Adam S. Zais, vice president for CIM services for International Data Corporation, said, “What people have to realize is that we are really managing information. People are our most important high-level resource. Information is our most important low-level resource.”

At the root of this more humane computer age vision is the realization that workers must contribute their talents and abilities willingly if the corporation is to remain competitive. The pace of change is accelerating. By the year 2000, according to Johnson Aime Edosomwan of IBM’s Data Systems Division, the average technological life span of new products will have fallen from approximately six years in 1970 to six months. Thus a key requirement for corporate survival is a flexible and responsive workforce able to operate complex machinery and committed to producing high quality products.

Managers such as Zais call for a rapprochement between management and labor, “bringing labor into the management process; management into the labor process.” As an example of his vision, Zais cites the Nissan Motors plant in Smyrna, Tenn. “The workers don’t want a union because they feel it would ruin the relationship they have with management,” he said. “They feel they are actually a part of the day to day management of the company. Their job function may be to rivet, but their responsibility is to rivet so that we make cars that meet the market place, and will drive our profits up and move our company forward. . . . We share in the spoils of success.”

It is hardly news that new technologies and new forms of organization in the workplace are more likely to achieve the goals of management if they enlist the support of workers. But the choice management intends to present to workers is apparently one between the buccaneer attitude of a James Tompkins, yearning to make the workers disappear, and the corporate paternalism of an Adam Zais who offers a chance for workers to stick their fingers in the company pie. The terms and conditions in either case, however, are set by the company.

## Computer Automation and the Office

The computer is entering and transforming the office. The appearance of VDTs (Video Display Terminals) is what usually marks the beginning of office automation. Unlike manufacturing, clerical work is overwhelmingly female and overwhelmingly not unionized. Some clerical workers welcome the introduction of VDTs because they hope to learn new skills and take advantage of the power of computer technology.

For many others the office of the future "means little more than a recreation of the factory of the past," according to Judith Gregory of 9 to 5, the National Association of Working Women. "The goal of office automation today is to automate office procedures—the flow of work—not merely to mechanize jobs by giving workers machines that allow them to perform particular tasks more quickly."

Lisa Gallatin, Director of the Office Technology Education Project, which assists office workers in dealing with new workplace technology, notes that we are witnessing the development of the "electronic sweatshop." Clerical work, particularly data entry, claims processing, and customer service is becoming increasingly industrialized: organized on three shifts, mechanically paced, computer monitored, paid by the piece and subject to speedups. As jobs become sufficiently routinized they may be sub-contracted to off shore office firms operating in locations ranging from Jamaica to Barbados to South Korea and Singapore using satellite communication to relay data to the home office.

In general, the industrialization of clerical work through automation means the progressive application of the mechanisms of de-skilling, devaluing and control that are commonplace phenomena of factory organization. Work is broken down, or rationalized, into simpler and simpler components, so that the multifaceted training of senior workers is no longer required.

The worker in the automated office may accomplish much more but receive no more pay, or be forced to take a pay cut because the work supposedly requires less skill. Work is devalued and wages fall. Computer monitoring and pacing provide levels of control that human supervision could rarely sustain in an office. This machine control and regimentation is frequently accompanied by very high levels of debilitating stress and tension.



University office worker. Photo: Kenneth Paul Fye

In the future, as work becomes sufficiently de-skilled, machine operators may no longer even need to be able to read the language of forms. Optical scanners that now read prices and product codes in supermarkets may replace data entry clerks. Computers that can understand natural language will eliminate typists and wordprocessors. While the rate of U.S. clerical employment continues to expand, Galletin indicated that the rate of growth is decreasing. The Congressional Office of Technology Assessment projects a decline in the 1990s. Computer automation is essentially a labor saving technology that will eventually eliminate jobs.

### The Future

The promise of new technology is awesome, with the positive potential, as French social critic Andre Gorz speculated, of leading to the virtual abolition of onerous work, and a shared social abundance. His vision may be utopian, but if we ever want to begin to tread along Gorz's "Paths to Paradise" we must find successful ways to organize for our future.

The transformation we face is both complex and global. It requires responses that are also sophisticated and transnational in scope. Lisa Galletin points out that technology itself is not inherently bad. The central

questions are how technology is used and who controls it. As long as management alone is able to make decisions about new technology and economic change, workers are at a disadvantage. Our inclination has been to view technology as a given, its effects determined by technological imperatives, not human choice. To shape our future we must understand the nature of technological development and economic change as social and political phenomena.

It is clear in this sense that Ned Ludd was right. The Luddites, the celebrated machine smashers of the English Industrial Revolution in 1811-1813 did not rise up, as the management propagandists would have us believe, from an irrational hate and fear of change. The Luddites acted collectively as a last resort, to oppose technology that served the mill owners and not the workers and their communities.

Social historian and peace activist E.P. Thompson wrote, in *The Making of the English Working Class*, "... the conventional picture of the Luddism of these years as a blind opposition to machinery as such becomes less and less tenable. What was at issue was the 'freedom' of the capitalist to destroy the customs of the trade, whether by new machinery, by the factory system, or by unrestricted

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## Social Unionism

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economy is resulting in third world workers facing miserable working conditions, dire poverty, and increased repression as corporations join with foreign governments to "pacify" the workforce.

The demise of pattern bargaining, unfriendly court decisions and legislation which erode labor's power to organize and represent its members, and the current administration's support for anti-labor governments in foreign countries, have all led labor to its weakest point since the 1930s. The percentage of unionized workers in the U.S. dropped to 18% in 1985—down from 23% in 1980 and 30% in the 1950s.

### Labor Bureaucracy's Response

The response of the U.S. union leadership to these attacks has been confusion, bankruptcy and retreat.

In 1982, in order to deal with the decline in the labor movement, the AFL-CIO created a Committee on the Evolution of Work comprised of 26 top union officials. This committee's report, the "Changing Situation of Workers and Their Unions," addressed the changing composition of the workforce—toward service sector, low wage industries—but contained no substantial criticisms of labor's internal practices or regime.

It's recommendations were technical or administrative in nature: the need to use cable TV to reach the workforce, the need to offer unorganized workers credit cards and other incentives in place of organizing them, and the need to improve the public's perception of unions. Nowhere does the committee mention massive organizing drives, rank and file democracy or workplace militancy as a means to return labor's strength and regain the upperhand from corporations.

On the shopfloor, the AFL-CIO leadership has allowed the role of unions to become ambiguous as they have accepted a "partnership" in running the company. This partnership—through Saturn agreements, quality of worklife programs and stock ownership plans—has resulted in lower wages and reduced job classifications in exchange for vague promises of job security.

These non-adversarial schemes serve the same purpose as concessionary bargaining. They attempt to involve labor in the employer's competitive struggle in the marketplace. In this way, worker

is pitted against worker, solidarity is shattered, the ability to resist future aggression diminished.

The leadership also calls for protectionism as a solution to low cost imports. At the same time, it rewards third world unions which, in partnership with the corporations and governments, keep wages in their respective countries low to attract multinationals.

Bureaucratic unionism has no method, plan or idea of how to deal with such aggression other than to plead for cooperation with the employers, counsel caution to the ranks and wage a conventional strike when all else fails.

### The Rank and File Responds

Increasingly, however, rank and file workers throughout the world have come to realize that without solidarity and resistance to the corporate offensive there is no hope for the future. Although the list of unions that have lost fighting concessions is long, there have been some unambiguous victories, leading many workers to feel the fight is worth it.

In order to more effectively resist, workers have recognized the need for a new type of unionism that includes democratic decision making, mobilization of the union membership and increased cross-union support, from unions both within the U.S. and overseas. This new unionism would be similar to the social unionism of the 1940s when labor was establishing the pattern agreements. In those years, union solidarity was more than closing ranks in a fight. It was a concept that embodied fundamental social values: of mutual responsibility to all those who labored for a living; a commitment to the underdogs symbolized by the fights for decent housing, national health care, jobs and civil rights; a belief that organized labor was the leading force for social change in an imperfect society.

Some signs of this fighting spirit are the development of opposition to the AFL-CIO's Reaganesque foreign policy in Central America, the new labor-based anti-apartheid movement, and oppositional and democratic campaigns within the American Postal Workers Union, the United Automobile Workers Union and the hospital workers' union, 1199.

But the main example of the resurgence of the labor rank and file is the strike of 1500 members of UFCW

Local P-9 against the Hormel Company in Austin, Minnesota. This strike began in August 1985 and lasted throughout 1986. By rallying tens of thousands of unionists to its side, the P-9ers have battled, not only the company, but the state government, the National Guard and the UFCW International in drawing the line against concessions.

The P-9 strike was noted for its democratic mass involvement of the rank and file. The P-9ers took an active role in building strike support and in making decisions at mass meetings. P-9ers supported embattled farmers in the upper Midwest and the farmers supported them.

Through the Adopt a P-9 Family Project and defense projects to support the strikers' constitutional rights, the P-9ers received support from over 3,000 unions across the country.

The local union hall was a hub of strike, political and cultural activity. A 24-hour kitchen provided hot meals. Clothes and toy exchanges were set up for the strikers' families. The union's walls became the canvas for mural art. Peace movement activists were brought to Austin to train P-9 members in non-violent direct action techniques.

Although the International ended the strike on paper, placed the local into trusteeship, and signed a sweetheart deal with Hormel, the workers in Austin continue to fight the company

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## Automation

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competition, beating down wages, undercutting his rivals, and undermining standards of craftsmanship."

In the late 1980s another economic and technological transformation is well underway. A clear and broad political agenda to respond to these changes has not yet emerged. It is time to organize, where we work and where we live, to build a humane future in which technology serves the workforce rather than the managers, and enhances the meaning of work rather than eliminating the workers.

*Roy Morrison is an anti-nuclear activist, writer and energy consultant in New Hampshire. He is the co-author of a forthcoming book, Mondragon: Beyond Capitalism and Socialism, which will be published by New Society Press.*

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to regain their jobs, and continue to travel the country teaching other unionists what they have learned.

Other examples of militant, democratic unionism can be found in the new union federations in South Africa, El Salvador, Brazil and the Philippines. In these countries, workers are not only fighting to increase wages and improve conditions but are also taking an active role in battling their respective governments. They are setting an example of how unions can be forces in social change.

The struggles of Local P-9 and of workers around the world got unionists talking about what the labor movement should be, and activated many in doing support work for P-9 and for workers in South Africa and Central America. The *Labor Notes* conference brought together these unionists, provided an opportunity for them to learn from first-hand participants in contemporary struggles and offered a time to discuss the way forward for labor.

Over the three day conference activists heard three panels—which included representatives from South Africa, El Salvador, the Philippines, UFCW Local P-9, and other major labor battles; participated in 38 workshops; and met in the black, Latino, women's and men's caucuses. Although the conference was educational and did not adopt any platform, what emerged from these discussions was the beginnings of a vision for a new social unionism.

### **A New Social Unionism**

The first premise of social unionism is that the interests of workers and employers are opposed. Labor creates wealth, but capital commands it so there is a tug over how this wealth will be distributed. This is where unions come in. Unions have to fight over the distribution of wealth in collective bargaining, but also, as the government appropriates a share of this wealth, unions must fight over how government funds are spent.

The second premise of social unionism is solidarity. Unions are formed to eliminate competition among workers, whether that competition be based on wages, benefits or working conditions. This economic solidarity is a necessary starting point for improving living and working standards.

But it also implies a set of values that is opposed to the values of the employ-

ers. For labor, mutual responsibility for one's brothers and sisters is the moral core of solidarity. Labor's responsibility spans generations, so that labor fights for decent pensions and social security and for better schools. It also spans racial and sexual lines. Solidarity requires social equality within the unions and requires that unions become a leading force, rather than a reluctant ally, in the fight against racism and sexism in society. Labor must also take the lead in the fight for a social agenda that again makes housing, jobs, income, national health care, and education political priorities.

The third premise of social unionism is democracy. A union is its membership. Its power derives, not from clever arguments or legal maneuvers, but from its ability to mobilize its ranks for action. The campaigns, imaginative support programs, aggressive outreach, and constant membership mobilization of P-9 showed what a democratic union could do.

The fourth premise of social unionism is that all those who work for wages and salaries should be organized. The key to redressing the growing imbalance of power between labor and the corporations lies in organizing the unorganized.

The shift from goods-producing to service-producing industries and occupations and the changing racial and sexual composition of the new sectors of the workforce call for a broader social outlook that speaks to the needs of women and minority workers. This means bringing social concerns into the workplace as well as in the legislative arena. The importance of comparable worth in organizing Yale University clericals was a step in the right direction.

The fifth premise of social unionism is strategic and tactical creativity. While the strike remains labor's central weapon against the employer, it is evident that it is not always enough to walk off the job. As corporations merge and move, they acquire vast and far-flung resources with which to take a strike. Furthermore, they are willing and able to run scabs. New, creative tactics to improve the balance of forces must be part of a new unionism.

In recent years, new tactics have emerged and old ones have been revived in new forms. Corporate campaigns, community-labor and farm-labor alliances, active boycotts, and the linking of labor struggles with

social issues such as comparable worth or the fight against apartheid in South Africa have been used to supplement militancy in strikes and organizing drives.

The final premise of social unionism is internationalism. The economy is becoming global. Corporations now span the earth and labor must do the same. A new internationalism means a fight against the AFL-CIO's foreign policy of dividing and confusing trade unionists abroad in the interests of corporate America. Internationalism also means working to change the foreign policy of the U.S. and to lend material support to the emerging labor movements in South Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

The protectionist policy and "Buy America" rhetoric of the AFL-CIO undermine the building of international links among workers and once again direct our attention to saving our employer.

So far, this new direction for the labor movement has not been articulated in its entirety in any single struggle. There are no clear and simple models. But it can be seen in different stages in the different forces that are leading the charge against the continuing concessionary drive.

As these forces get together and plan long term strategies and tactics, they will be creating a new democratic, international social unionism which will allow labor to regain its strength and once again speak for the working women and men of this country. □

*Phil Kwik is on the staff of Labor Notes, and was one of the organizers of the "New Directions for Labor" conference. To receive Labor Notes, write 17300 Woodward St., Detroit, MI 48203.*

### **Middle East Issues**

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As peace activist Norman Solomon wrote in a December op-ed piece in the *Oakland Tribune*, "There is no justification for trying to absolve Israel for its cruelties. . . . It is wrong to carry belief in any government, or faith in any people, to such an extreme that trust becomes gullibility and faith turns a blind eye on injustice." As progressives, both Jewish and non-Jewish, we intend to keep our eyes open, and to continue to address Middle East issues with the breadth of perspective they require. □



# GRANTS

**Chinese Progressive Association, 27 Beach St., 3rd Floor, Boston, MA 02111.**

The Chinese Progressive Association (CPA) has served the working class people of Boston's Chinatown for ten years. The Chinese community there is composed predominantly of non-English speaking immigrant people who have been locked into the garment industry and non-unionized restaurant jobs because of language barriers and discrimination. In recent years a dramatic decline in the garment industry, where three-quarters of Chinatown's women have been employed, has resulted in monumental job loss with resulting loss of health insurance and other benefits. The Chinese Progressive Association is responding to the crisis with the development of a Garment Worker's Center. The Center will assist displaced workers in their organizing and negotiating efforts in order to assure full rights in job retraining, unemployment benefits and health insurance.

The CPA's involvement on behalf of displaced workers following the recent shut-down of the P & L Sportswear plant was instrumental in helping the workers achieve a dramatic victory, setting a standard for future efforts. The P & L fight revealed a number of specific needs for organizing in the Chinese community, including documentation and translation of materials citing workers' rights, development of support and advocacy services for immigrant workers, and direct services such as English-as-a-Second-Language instruction. The planned workers' center hopes to meet these needs through the establishment of a bilingual clearinghouse on workers' rights, an updated roster of job openings, child care assistance, women's discussion groups, and overall advocacy. The Center will continue to monitor and evaluate job retraining programs, document the garment workers' struggle and seek 100% job placement for displaced workers.

Resist's grant of \$500.00 went towards initial funding for the Garment Workers' Center.

## The Resist Pledge System

The most important source of Resist's income is monthly pledges. Pledges help us plan ahead by guaranteeing us a minimum monthly income. In turn, pledges receive a monthly reminder letter (in addition to the newsletter) which contains news of recent grants and other Resist activities. So take the plunge and become a Resist pledge!

**Yes, I would like to pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ monthly to the work of Resist.**

**Name \_\_\_\_\_**

**Address \_\_\_\_\_**

**City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_**

**Council of the Southern Mountains, P.O. Box 1188, Clintwood, VA 24228.**

This year marks the Council of the Southern Mountains' 73rd year of work with the people of Appalachia. As an organization devoted to achieving self-determination for poor and working class people in local communities, the Council addresses health and safety issues in the central Appalachian coalfields, and provides support and assistance to workers during strikes and layoffs. The Council serves as a liaison among a number of member groups printing leaflets, posters and brochures for members and publicizing the problems and issues facing both union and non-union workers. The Council's *Mining Community Health and Safety* program has worked to upgrade safety regulations in non-union mines and to involve citizens in the enforcement of strip-mining laws. The Council has provided fertilizer, plants, seeds, and assistance in obtaining foodstamps to hundreds of low-income families in eastern Kentucky and Southwest Virginia, and is expanding its farmer's market and gardening activities.

Central to the Council's work is the publication of *Mountain Life and Work* (ML&W), a 61-year-old magazine providing news coverage of community organizing in Appalachia. ML&W's investigative reporting on key issues makes it an important resource for labor and community activists. Recent issues have addressed work-place dangers in nuclear power

plants, nuclear transport in the region, and hazardous waste dumping. Resist's grant of \$400.00 went towards a new composer for ML&W.

**January 22 Committee for Reproductive Rights, P.O. Box 26201, Los Angeles, CA 90026.**

Formed in 1984 to defend abortion and birth control clinics faced with arson and bombings, the January 22nd Committee for Reproductive Rights has continued to vigil weekly in support of clinics in the local area. Their work has expanded to include all areas of reproductive freedom. The committee's focus is on keeping abortion legal and funded, on stopping sterilization abuse, on broadening access to birth control and sex education, and on lesbian and gay liberation.

Activities include demonstrations, leafletting and coalition work. The group participated in the "condom caper"—where picketers dressed as birth control devices demonstrated at CBS to protest the network's refusal to air public service announcements about birth control. Other recent actions included a march on the local "right-to-life" office, co-sponsorship of forums on reproductive freedom and health care, and work to defeat proposition 64, the AIDS quarantine initiative.

Recent changes in the California Supreme Court pose a serious threat to Medi-Cal funding for abortion. Currently half of all publicly funded abortions in the U.S. take place in California. The Committee expects to work actively to preserve Medi-Cal funding. The Committee recognizes that reproductive freedom cannot be a reality without a living wage, and without combatting racism and homophobia. They have participated in joint campaigns with an anti-apartheid coalition, labor support organizations, and disability rights groups. A recent Resist grant of \$500.00 went to support the January 22nd, 1987 vigil at the Feminist Women's Health Center in Los Angeles. The action focused on the threat to Medi-Cal funding of abortions in California.