

Special Detroit Issue:

Black Working Class, Women, '43 Riot, DRUM, Gambling, Poetry, UAW

SPEAK OUT

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MAY - JUNE 1969

20¢

MOTOWN...

And the Heart Attack Machine

by Wovoka

"Brown's Bar was where Big Maceo held down the piano stool for many years; the Blue Heaven rocked to Eddie Kirkland's group. These were some of the places where Detroit's blues singers worked after hours when the joints opened up and their regular jobs closed down. Back in the forties and fifties, few of these singers were full-time professionals. John Lee Hooker worked for Comco Steel and Doctor Ross was working for the GM plant in Flint. The drinkers and dancers they would play for, were the people they'd worked next to during the day." (from *Detroit Blues* by Paul Oliver)

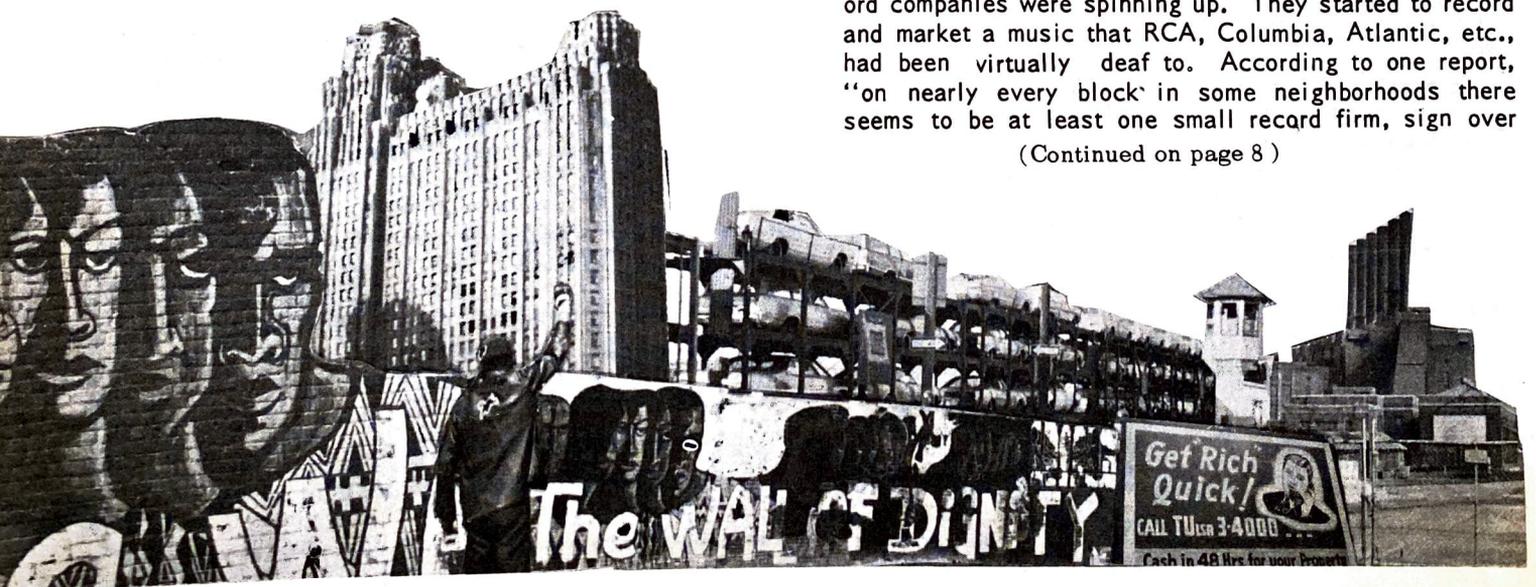
The blues singers dreamed of getting that one record that would get air time and real distribution which might free them from working in the auto plants. Conditions

were and remain such that anyone in auto would like out. John Lee Hooker was the one Detroit bluesman who made it. So a person could look at John and dream and know that it was dreaming but still go on singing because that's what sustained him. There's a saying that the white man's recession is the black man's depression: well, with the recession in 1958, depression times hit Motor City, the town's super hyped-up production machine came to a lame halt, and a lot of people got "freed." The dream, now realized, was nightmare.

Quit a Job -- Get A Job

While white folks downtown were trying to save their Detroit by building monuments to house last century's left-over culture and businessmen's conventions (putting up Cobo Hall, Ford Auditorium, and expanding the Art Institute, etc.), dozens of one and two man operated record companies were spinning up. They started to record and market a music that RCA, Columbia, Atlantic, etc., had been virtually deaf to. According to one report, "on nearly every block in some neighborhoods there seems to be at least one small record firm, sign over

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Editorial

Why Detroit?

What is so special about Detroit? Or, conversely, is Detroit so special that the lessons of its history and circumstances have little relevance beyond its borders?

It depends on how you look at the world. If revolutionary possibilities terrify you and spontaneous uprisings make the world seem irrational and unintelligible, then you view the world through the sociological survey. You find a tree-shaded street or a pleasant middle-sized town that provides a statistical average of the American working class: average size plant, average shape of product (round?), and so on. Then, when people aren't busy doing other things, you ask them sensible questions and get from them sensible answers.

Inevitably you will find out how well this system works and is likely to work in the foreseeable future.

On the other hand, you can take a crack at the methodology of Marx and try to find out what will make this society explode. In his day you would have clasped the Paris Commune to your breast and built a theory of the state and workers' revolution on the basis of the peak that workers' struggles had reached, not the valleys or the average. After 1917 you would have based your politics and your understanding of the world on what Russian workers had accomplished, not because they were exceptional (although they were) but because they showed what was possible.

In our day it is necessary to look for what existentialists have called the "extreme situation," the situation that illuminates reality and is not simply a pale reflection of it. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 is such a situation. The French Rebellion of 1968 is such a situation. And Detroit, the overgrown community town, is such a situation.

In Detroit the conflict between capital and labor is at its harshest. In Detroit you have the most progressive of unions and yet the sharpest division between union and workers. In Detroit you have one of the

most racist of cities and the most powerful black working class in the United States. In Detroit you have a cultural desert and the high point of popular music. In Detroit you have the most despotic working conditions and living conditions and the most democratic of responses.

Detroit will not tell you what will happen tomorrow in Sioux Falls, Iowa. But after Hungary, after France, after city riots and student battles, Detroit will tell you what will happen the day after tomorrow in the United States.

Self-Organization

In 1958 the North Detroit Little League was formed, one of the rare inner city little leagues. Within weeks of its formation Judge Davenport, a Black politician, sent word into the neighborhood from downtown inquiring what new political organization was being formed.

His sensitivity to political formations was not unwarranted in Detroit. Out of the North Detroit Little League came a committee to fight the foreclosure of workers homes in the 1958-61 depression and new block clubs began to form in the area covered by the Little League.

Detroit is an organized city, organized above all by the auto industry. During World War II, when transportation was overwhelmingly public, a network of working class communication existed which was not dependent on the daily papers. A trip on any bus or trolley would provide all the information available on which plants were being struck, which plants were hiring, relative working conditions, etc.

In the post-war years Detroit became criss-crossed by block clubs and neighborhood associations. Some springing out of the neighborhoods, some being initiated from the top down by city planners and sociologists. No matter where they start-

ed, however, they developed a range of organization available to any section of the population that wished to use it.

But it is not so much the existence of organizations as the instinctive organizational abilities that stem from the nature of life and work in the city that is the primary characteristic. The ties that produce wildcat strikes in the plants, produced the rapid spread of the 1967 insurrection.

The 1967 Insurrection provided the impetus for various developments coming to a head. The emergence of *Inner City Voice* and then of *DRUM* and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers tied together years of agitational and propagandistic work with the new organizational possibilities made visible by the Black population of the city.

An intensely organized population attracts organization. Very much like its attraction for the old left in the 1930's, Detroit has become a mecca for the New Left. *PAR* (People Against Racism) was formed in Detroit in 1965 by Whites who were in the Civil Rights Movement to organize in the White community on the issue of race. *NOC* (National Organizing Committee) is establishing a base for organizing workers in Detroit. Between them, these groups are involved in high school organizing, intensive public and internal educational work, anti-military activity, and factory-based organizing.

SDS sends students into the city for summer work. Black nationalists gravitate towards Detroit.

The hip community has its own press and serious self-organization in Open City. Underground newspapers and student strikes occur in almost every Detroit high school. Black working class students have shut down a community college.

Life in Detroit is inseparable from politics. The struggle goes on every day, everywhere, everybody.

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SPEAK OUT

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Women in Motor City

by Sally Kleiss

Detroit during two eras, the present and World War II, shows the vast changes and objective basis for women's liberation. In the 40's the needs of the war economy gave women the power to move into basic mass production industry. The war machine had to be run, and upon entering the factories to do what had been considered men's work, women forged a new kind of social relationship between themselves and men.

Equality was approached through work, through side-by-side effort around the machine. The social interaction on the streetcars and busses and at work furthered women's liberation from the isolation and the social insulation of the home.

Into Industry

Based on their work in the factories, women were able to shake up the traditional family and impose new relations on their husbands and children. Women worked on all three shifts. Sometimes wives and husbands alternated shifts so that one of them would be at home with the children while the other worked. The movement of the "working mother" from peripheral and service jobs to basic industry provided women with a social recognition and power which was concealed because it was applied in the privacy of the home. Every member became a responsible participant in housework and child care. Older children quite often cared for the younger ones.

This new approach extended to relations outside the home as well. It was not uncommon to find neighbors caring for children whose parents worked, and it was at this time that the nurseries and day care centers sprang up in response to the needs of working mothers. In the factories women were immersed in and extended the cooperative labor inherent in the social labor process. At the Dodge Main Plant in Hamtramack, for example, women using the rest room would clean it afterwards, so that the regular cleaning woman

could shop for them as well as herself during work hours. These new social relationships were picked up by other women, including those who did not work outside their homes.

New Independence

Some women gained independence by following their G.I. husbands around the country, uprooting themselves and their children and moving alone to places entirely new to them. Even in traditional women's jobs, the G.I. wives became at least equal partners in the life of the marriage as opposed to their husbands who were completely at the mercy of military hierarchy.

When the men came home from the war and reoccupied their former jobs, women were pushed out (with the help of the UAW unions which opposed equal rights for women.)

One woman, typical of many, went from semi-skilled factory work to unskilled labor over a period of years. During the war, she had worked at Dodge on a military product, at Graham Page as a riveter, and at Ford Highland Park, as an O.D. grinder. From the end of the war to 1967, she found jobs in a small electrical shop on a merry-go-round, in a non-union spring factory on a stamping machine and drill presses, and worked intermittently as a salesgirl.

Frustration

The struggle of the forties was replaced by frustration in the fifties. The propaganda machine and the mass media made a 180 degree turn from "Rosie the Riveter" to "a woman's place is in the home." But the wartime experience had been too powerful, and the retreat imposed on women resulted, not in the happy housewife, but in increasing tensions and frustrations seeking avenues of expression.

The emergence of the New Left in its various forms set the stage for a new advance. Women travelled the freedom busses, marched against the Pentagon and the Democratic Convention in Chicago, looted during the Detroit insurrection and faced cops, along with men. But, organizationally, they were cast as messengers, clerks, typists and secretaries.

So they came back from DC, Chicago, and Selma, determined to work for their own freedom. They formed groups outside the Left, sometimes deliberately as a violent assertion of women's independent identity. At first they held discussions to determine just what the problems were and how they could be dealt with.

The increasing concern of Detroit's politically active women with the inequities of their social posi-

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Women

(Continued from page 3)

tion is a reflection of women in all situations, in all social classes.

Control of Overtime

The current debate over the 54-hour work week is a manifestation of the stage of women's liberation in Detroit. Some women advocate the application of the 54-hour work restriction to men, as well as women. One black woman who worked in the Huber Foundry (Chrysler) was forced to work 60 or more hours a week or quit. The union did nothing to enforce the law, or to help her. She quit. The significance of the debate is that women have taken the lead in

imposition of overtime on all workers.

Formations and Transformations

But the transformation of family life is occurring on all social levels, not just among the poor. New kinds of family relationships, unrestricted by traditional legality, are being attempted. Women are improvising new ways of caring for their children. One group has instituted its own nursery and has provided facilities for children so that women as well as men can attend meetings.

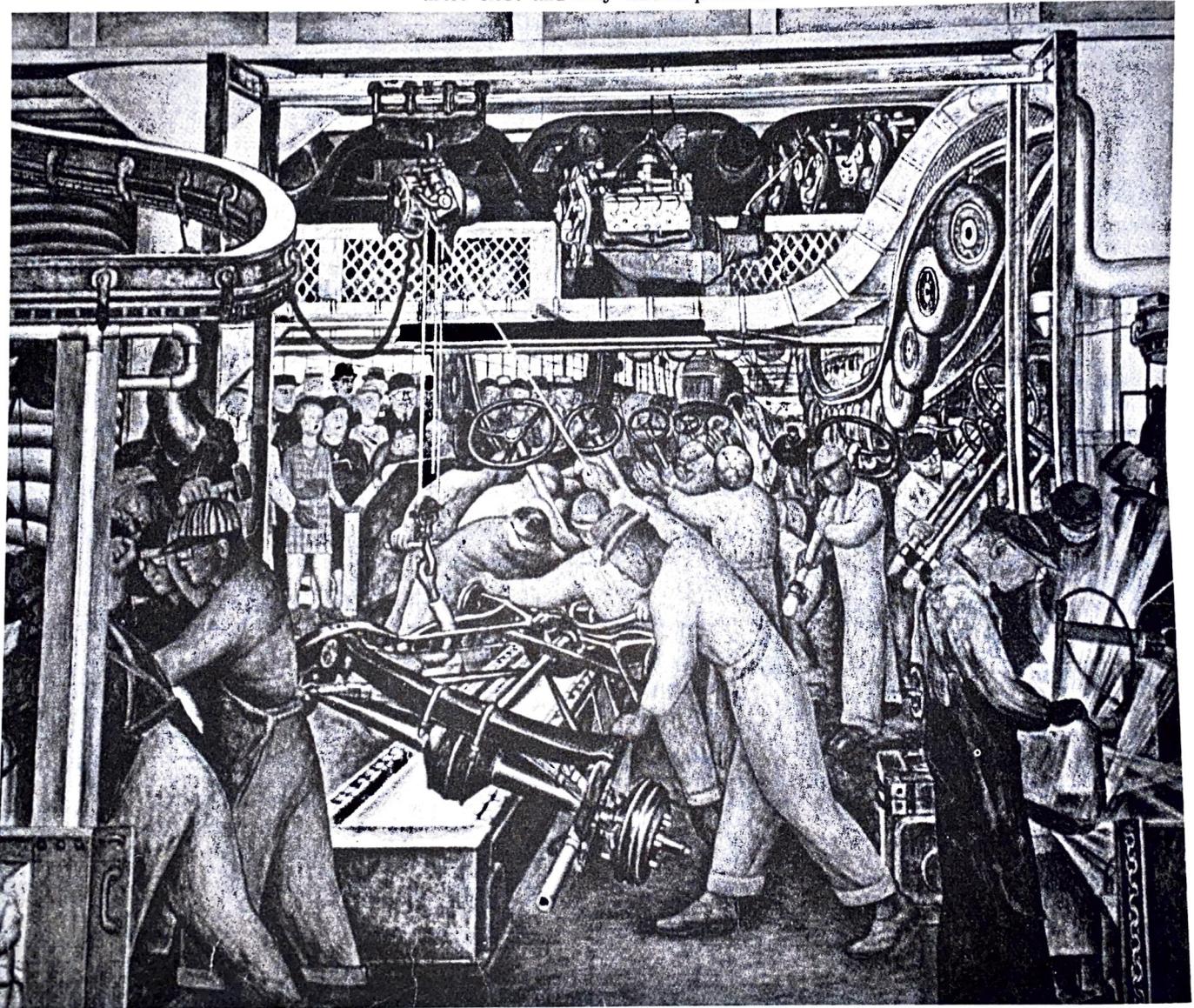
The current movement is just beginning. What is most significant is the spontaneous development throughout the Detroit Metropolitan area of all sorts of groups and formations based on women for whom this is there first and only social-political

activity.

Welfare Rights Organization

The 500 members of the Welfare Rights Organization are currently the largest organized group of women in Detroit. In April, 1969, after picketing the Social Welfare Department, the women entered the building and "took over" the administrative facilities. They did so with absolute confidence in the plan they had developed which included providing food for themselves and their children, on-the-spot babysitting, rubbish details, etc..

Mothers occupied the desks at key points, intercepted and rerouted phone calls and generally prevented the flow of work from continuing,



Detail of Mural by Diego Rivera in Detroit Institute of Arts. Reprinted by permission.

Race and Class in Auto

by George Rawick

A new stage in the relationship of blacks to the American working class was marked during World War II when the former entered the auto industry in large numbers. A closer look at what happened in Detroit during that period tells us much about the American present and future.

Between 1930 and 1940 the percentage of black auto workers in Michigan had declined from a little under nine per cent to just over six per cent. The depression had created a reserve army of unemployed white workers and when factories started hiring again, black workers were taken last. Those blacks who managed to get jobs in the automobile industry were largely given heavy, dirty, and dangerous foundry work, non-production jobs such as porters and janitors, and were concentrated in one Ford plant--Rouge.

Of approximately 269,000 workers in the big four: Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, Packard and the main body plant, Briggs, 18,000 were black. Of the 9882 who worked at Ford, 9825 were at Rouge.

Wildcatting

What was important about hiring blacks was that it was expected to divert the workers' attention from developing the union to fighting racial battles.

Relatively few blacks were involved in the unions before the middle of the war. But when the big drive came to unionize Ford, black workers could not be used against whites, despite the fact that the union had not made serious efforts to organize them and that there was a great deal of racism amongst the white workers. The union was not the organ of black workers who simply accepted its protection of their wages and improved working conditions. When they moved, however, they did so for the most part through the wildcat strike, which they used throughout the war.

In August, 1941, for example, black laborers and foundry workers at

Chrysler's Dodge Main Plant in Hamtramck, struck against the union and the company because they were being passed over in transfers to the new Chrysler Tank Arsenal. This strike was the forerunner of activity at this same Dodge Main Plant which in 1968 led to the formation of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM), first in a series of Black Revolutionary Unions.

Changes

In the four years from 1942 to 1946, there was considerable increase in the number of black workers in the auto industry. The increase at Ford was not very large--by 1946 Ford employment of black workers was over 12 per cent. General Motors, always the most racist of the big three, made only slight changes in its policies despite government intervention to get more blacks hired. Chrysler, however, increased the percentage of blacks in its Detroit plants to 22 per cent by 1946 which over years would swell to today's 75 per cent.

In the period of conversion to war production, industry began to move out of the city, taking the high seniority white workers with it and leaving the city and its plants more and more black, marking the creation of a city with a large black minority and of auto factories with a black majority. (This trend was masked during the war when the ranks of the city were swollen by thousands of white workers from the south who would later leave.)

Increasing Tensions

During the war there was an acute housing shortage. The work force increased three times as fast as the new housing units, largely prefabricated temporary dwellings, and crowding led to conflict between blacks and whites. (There was an attempt to keep black workers out of the Sojourner Truth housing project in 1941.) All of this further increased tensions already grown enormous due to heavy exploitation in the factories in the form of the most extreme speed-up ever known. The

speed of the assembly line was constantly increased for "patriotic" reasons while the profits of the companies proportionately swelled.

There were a number of small rumble involving blacks and whites during the early years of the war. There had been wildcat strikes in auto plants opposing the upgrading of black workers, as white workers tried to protect their jobs. This discontent mounted not only because of the racist attitudes of white workers but because gains for black workers were made at the expense of white workers. Maintaining caste lines in the working class allowed the company to play white and black workers against each other. In June, 1943, the entire Packard plant in the heart of Detroit was shut down by such a wildcat strike. A short period later, on June 21, fighting between whites and blacks which broke out on the Belle Isle bridge spread to the entire city and black workers used the occasion to settle many scores.

Self-defense

What the 1943 riot (the largest armed conflict between blacks and whites in American history until that time) demonstrated was that the Detroit working class, white and black, had little regard for "law and order" and that they were willing to resort to armed conflict to settle matters. Moreover, it demonstrated that there was in Detroit a modern black working class that was capable of self-defense, self-organization, and militant action. Furthermore, it created a fear in the defenders of law and order that the guns of both white and black workers could be turned as easily against the Establishment as against each other.

Black and white workers demonstrated that, despite the caste differences and racism of whites and the anger of the blacks, they understood that they were all part of the same class. In the factories there was more unity between black and white workers during and after the riot than there had been before. No violence occurred in the plants, a

tribute not to industry and union leaders, as the usual accounts would have it, but as a result of the class consciousness that Detroit workers expressed, not in resolutions and doctoral dissertations, but in action and self-discipline at the point of production. This was to be repeated again in 1967 and carried to a higher point as it became obvious to most workers, black and white, that they could control the factories. In 1967 black workers set the conditions for work in the factories, white workers followed their lead, and for the moment the Establishment had to accept the situation.

Empty Rhetoric

The changes in the auto industry and in the composition of the working class in World War II set the stage for the city's future as can be shown.

While union rhetoric and political action statements called for black equality in the plants, little was done to implement the pronouncements. A black caucus consisting largely of skilled and semi-skilled workers was created in response to this situation and it increased the power in the union of its own members, and of skilled and semi-skilled blacks. While the black caucus won gains primarily for skilled workers, it played an important part in the development of the black working class in Detroit.

Blacks entered directly into the

politics of the working class through this means for the first time in American history. That was a most significant step even if it only applied to a section of the black community. The Detroit working class visibly and through its institutions is more integrated than anywhere else in the United States. Consequently, the self-differentiation within that class of blacks and whites is more advanced. In credit unions and in the union-sponsored Community Health Association, in education classes and political parties, in neighborhoods and supermarkets, and out in the street on Sunday morning, black and white workers meet. They share in many ways a common life-style, differentiated of course by race and caste. This situation came out of the period of World War II and was given expression by the black caucus.

Distinctive Ghetto

As a result of this development of a skilled black working class which was able to gain some power within the union (a power which was soon to be transformed, as the union was transformed, into a method of disciplining the entire working class), the Detroit black community is different than that in any other American city. Out of World War II came a large section of the black working class which was well paid, skilled, lived in houses they owned or were buying,

drove decent cars, had money with which to take vacations and go hunting and fishing, who educated themselves and sent their children to college, and who were conscious of their own social power in the community and in production. But at the same time, this section of the black working class was forced to live in the ghetto, subjected to police brutality and the racism of officials, and school teachers and administrators. They had to send their children to schools that were clearly poorer than those provided for white children (although better than those in rural Mississippi for blacks) and experienced rent-gouging from landlords who refused to maintain the buildings. They found—and still find—their cost-of-living higher than that for whites (prices in the ghetto are approximately 15% higher than elsewhere) and experienced the steady discrimination of auto companies and unions.

Revolutionary Mixture

Moreover, this highly self-aware group of black workers share an experience with others, including a fast rate of production, speed-up, the steady inability and refusal of the union to fight for improvement of total working conditions, the absolute breakdown of the grievance procedure, and the bureaucratization of the union which disciplines the workers instead of management.

(Continued on page 7)

Conversations in a White Castle

by Al Luthmers

"Politics is so important, I know, but is it real. Not really, I mean, but to you. Is this revolution really a part of your life or a substitute for it?"

I don't think you understand, my dear. I've given my whole life to the revolution, I've sacrificed everything. Or rather I would have, but I didn't know where to begin. I began, you know, but nobody noticed. Sometimes there is so much that you can start anywhere and find a whole universe. Or create one. One which corresponds to itself, that is: to reality. But what is it? What is there so much of? There is something terrible about reality, but what is it? No one will tell me.

Well...whatever it is, things don't last long. They can't. First they're

there, then they change, then they aren't, or they're some other thing... but with a history. And that history part, it's not really there, not unless you are in it, and then that is your location: a point from which you can know it is not what it was, but you can't see where it is now.

"Where is it?" "Where is it?" It has to be somewhere. Maybe it's not where you thought... "Why, it's not really there. Where were you?" she said. He answered, "Well, here I am again." "But before, what about before? Where were you then? I looked for you, you know, rather I would have, but I didn't know where to begin or even where to look." "You did, I know, but what did that have to do with me?" he said in a low voice. Then he laughed and said,

"Where were you, my dear? Not that I looked, or didn't know. Why don't we have some coffee, instead? I know! Why don't we have a piece of pie. Sometimes you say, 'Where were you, my dear?' But that's not true, that's not what you don't know. Maybe you mean what, what were you, or at all, a point of information, 'Were you, deary?' But who can say that?"

"May I have some pie please?" "Why, of course, sir, what kind would you like?" "Well, how about that big piece or the shelf?" "Oh, that. That's the capitalist pie. But we have a whole new pie in the oven." "Really, what's in the new pie?" "Why, the fruits of labor."

(Continued from page 6)

This is an explosive and revolutionary mixture, the real Detroit Molotov cocktail, that the militancy of black workers, skilled and unskilled, employed and unemployed, has demonstrated in the past few years. This working class militant today is more disciplined and better focused, than ever before.

No Backlash, No Backtalk

In 1943, black workers fought white workers in the streets and kept peace in the factories. In 1967, black workers fought the cops and National Guard and not only kept peace in the factories but indicated they could control production. In 1943, white workers tried to discipline black workers through armed conflict. In 1967, the white working class did not lift a finger to aid the police and National Guard to suppress the black workers. Despite armed insurrection, the "backlash" of the white working class was nowhere evident, a fact which has disturbed sociologists and struck fear in the hearts of the members of the Establishment!

If the progress from 1943 to 1967 has been in this direction, then the future becomes clear. We can see a militant, independent working class, black and white, organized separately, not necessarily giving up their prejudices and their angers against each other, but struggling against a common opponent.

PERIODICALS

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The 1943 Riot

--Excerpts from Indignant Heart
by Matthew Ward.

"Everyone, everywhere I went, was asking who and what had started the riot. No one seemed to know. The riot seemed to spring up everywhere at once. The riots seemed like a dream to me. I was wondering if this was the way death felt. All the time I felt like I was tipping on thin ice and any minute I would fall through. I saw all the police passing and I'd see a group breaking up a store and the police would leave them alone. A little further on, another group would do the same and then another group would do the same and the police would shoot into the crowd and go away laughing. I was wondering if this was like the war. What struck me was how grim all the Negroes were...."

"..It was said that a leading Negro detective had shot and killed several police for shooting into a crowd of Negro women. Wires and messages from Negroes in Chicago were received saying that Detroit Negroes didn't know how to fight a race riot. They said they would be over that night to show us. Two or three truck-loads of Negro G.I.'s stationed at Battle Creek, Michigan, broke away with a truck of guns and ammunition and headed for Detroit. They were stopped by the police who blocked the road, ten or fifteen miles before the entrance of the city.

"It was organized among us that in the community, half of us would work one day, and part stay home, during the riot. Three carloads of workers came by my home and said-

they were going to work. I got in the car and one of the men asked if I had a pistol. I said mine was left down South.

"He said, 'Man, you're sure going to need it now.'"

"One time I got to a crowd and some people were crying. Two policemen had just killed a little kid and his body was still lying in the store. An older woman had told the child to go in and throw some stuff out of the store. The police came and the kid ran and hid behind the ice-box. He laid down, scared, on his face. The police shot him through the back as he lay there. If I had had my gun I would have shot every police I could see. After the crowd told me the story, and I could see the little kid lying there, I really got mad. I got a pistol that night..."

There wasn't a store from Hastings to Grand Boulevard that wasn't completely smashed. Most of them were set afire. Many of the white business places on Oakland, north of the Boulevard, were wrecked too. From Russell to John R., Negroes took charge. The whites who lived in the Negro neighborhood weren't bothered at all. They sat in front of their houses and watched what was going on."

"Some of the white business men tried to go back in their stores when the riot was over and many were killed. Places where Negroes could never get jobs opened up with Negroes running them. The owners did not ever come around."

Motown

(Continued from page 1)

the door, Cadillac in the driveway." Until shortly before he started Motown in 1959 (the one black record company to really make it), Berry Gordy was working in a Ford body shop for \$85 a week. While working he used to write songs in his head: "It helped me knock the day-to-day drag." Right after he quit his job at Ford, Gordy opened up the 3D Record Shop, which specialized in jazz. Detroit has produced some of the best jazz musicians, men like Yusef Lateef, Lee Morgan, Curtis Fuller and Joe Henderson. Like the blues singers, these jazz musicians also played in many of the bars and clubs on Hastings and later on 12th Street. All of these musicians have long since split for other parts, and jazz in Detroit has fallen on hard times.

Gordy, who had been writing songs with Bill "Smokey" Robinson, sold the 3D, borrowed \$700 from his father, or so legend has it, and started Motown. Smokey got together The Miracles, the first Motown group. "Shop Around," their first big hit, brought in the capital to really get the company moving. About the same time Gordy wrote the song "Money," which the Beatles recorded on their second album. The lyrics of that song express a sensibility shared by both the writer and the Beatles, before either of them had made it safely out of the working class:

*Your lovin' gives me a thrill
but your lovin' don't pay my bills.
Money don't get everything it's true
but what it can't get I can't use.
Now give me money -- that's what I want.*

It is no accident that the Beatles publically acknowledge a heritage to the Motown sound. Both Detroit and Liverpool are solidly working class cities, giving Motown and Liverpool groups certain common experiences. Though the Motown sound comes out of the distinct social-musical history of the black working class, both Gordy and the Beatles were able to break through and make it. This was because they were able to produce songs that articulated where kids heads were at, particularly the people they grew up with. The lyrics of "Get A Job," recorded by Smokey Robinson and The Miracles, at the tail end of the recession, is that kind of articulation:

*It was hard for me to get a job
Well I finally did and my boss was a slob
He's on my back all day long.
He says to me, Get the boxes take 'em to the basement
Do the job right or I'll get a replacement.
Well this man about to drive me stone insane
One of these days I am going to have a fit.
Though the thought keeps running through my brain,
I'm never going to quit my brand new job.*

From Blues to Rock

Just as the lyrics of Motown songs come out of a people's common experience, the music comes out of something just as real and is not simply the pure immediate

creation of some writer's head. Detroit blues had always had a more complicated instrumentation than most urban blues: the harmonica working tightly with the guitar and a boogie piano adding as much to the rhythm as the drums, with a saxophone often weaving in and out. As the city and factory ceased being a completely alien scene for people, the urban blues became more and more sophisticated. As people found ways of fighting back and of defining their sensibilities, not just in response to oppression but on their own terms, Detroit blues went through some more changes, rearranged its face and gave itself another name. That name is Motown.

The Miracles were, from the start, beyond the earlier rock-rhythm and blues of Chuck Berry, who used all the instruments as part of the rhythm section. The Miracles would use super-tight arrangement of instruments, but with real orchestration, and with Smokey's voice skimming above the group, and the bass punctuating or repeating key words and phrases.

Shortly after Motown started, Gordy hired the writing team of Eddie Holland, Lamont Dozier and Brian Holland. The three, who were still in high school when they started with Motown, have written almost all the material for the Four Tops and the Supremes. Though Holland, Dozier and Holland are an organic team, Motown has organized all its writers and producers into committees. Songs are not written for a particular group or singer but for the "sound" and then the group that can best put the song over is chosen. While there are complaints that the committee method is stifling to individuality, the collective sensibility that comes through has turned out more single hits for Motown than any other company.

A former Motown studio musician told me that he attributed the success of the company to the studio musicians, who are some of the best around, and to the com-

Martha and the



mittee system, which can't help but incorporate the wide range of musical elements that are part of a people's culture. Listen to the piano intro on the Temptations song "I'll be in Trouble." That piano is little more than an uptempo version of the boogie piano on Big Maceo's "Big City Blues" that he used to play in the days of Brown's Bar.

The Stable

The Four Tops, Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell, the Supremes, Stevie Wonder and the Temptations are some of the groups and singers that are in, what company execs call the "stable" and who bring in about \$30 million a year. The Temptations who are one of the best groups to come out of Motown or rock and pop music in general, sum up in their sound the last 20 years of Detroit jazz, blues, spiritual and rock. They are at their best when they stay away from Gordy's desire to sneak strings into every other song. There are exceptions like "My Girl" in which the strings are just an adjunct to the message the group is trying to put over, and it all works. The instrumental break on their song "Run Away Child" is one of the most sophisticated arrangements in rock history, without that sophistication destroying the song's roots. After the break, the Temptations pick it up and they are so together and flying so high, that they put the best strings in the world to shame.

There is a lot of talk about the Supreme's sound turning "white" and "commercial," and that the Beatles sound has turned "artsy," as both groups move away from their roots. Maybe so, but what's more important is that there will always be new groups coming along whose heads will still be down in the streets and who will be articulating new values that bourgeois society has no use for, as in the Temptations' song "Beauty Is Only Skin Deep."

The cultural renaissance that was supposed to develop with the building of Cobo Hall, Ford Auditorium, and the

addition to the Detroit Art Institute, never materialized--or rather it did--but not from the sources that liberal intellectuals were looking to. And all those buildings turned into testaments to the lameness of official culture. Cobo Hall came alive for the first time when, about a year ago, Aretha Franklin gave a homecoming concert, which filled almost every one of the 22,000 seats. Before the concert was over kids were dancing in the aisles. (Aretha's father, Reverend C. L. Franklin, is pastor of the New Bethel Church, scene of the recent shoot-out, where two pigs hit the dust.) On an evening in July, 1965, the Motown Revue gave its first homecoming concert after a tour of Europe. The concert, planned for Belle Isle, was going to raise money for the Southern movement. Twelve thousand people turned out. The Belle Isle Bridge (starting-place of the 1943 riot) was jammed with cars and city officials claimed that "exuberant spirits threatened to get out of hand." They called out the brand-new shiny Tactical Mobile Unit for the first time. The concert was cancelled.

"Now at midnight all the agents and the super-human crew, come out and round up everyone that knows more than they do. Then they bring them to the factory, where the heart attack machine is strapped across their shoulders and then the kerosene...." (Bob Dylan)

MERCHANTS' CONSPIRACY UNLIMITED Versus MOTOR CITY LADY

for Gladys Knight and the Pips

Salt face jews
of summers spent in Atlantic City
spent their bellies on salt taffy
now escape from the immigrant pond
of De
troit city

Deranged yarmulkahs of fear
floating down Lake St. Clair mis
taken for dead
fish
by the Bob-lo crew after the last DDT attack

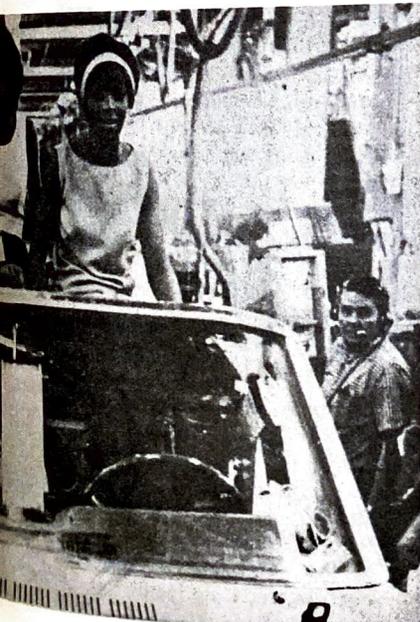
But business is still business
even by remote control
even when sold out
to the shrewd Syrian in the fresh
ly ground
black pepper inner sanctum of motor city
after the July storm

Inner sanctum motor city lady
spreading her legs ever
wider
throughout the town
though even shrewdness

rapping credit through a grape leaf
has "heard it through the grapevine"
and wonders why she didn't tell him her
self how
choosy she had become in her maturity

--Wovoka

Vandellas



Auto Workers in Detroit

Black Cats, White Cats, Wildcats

by Martin Glaberman

Detroit workers have been through many stages. From carriage production to car production to tank and plane production and back to car production. From prosperity to war to depression to war and back to prosperity and depression. From open shop to union shop; from democratic union to bureaucratic union.

Modern mass production is most closely associated with the introduction of the moving assembly line by Ford before World War I. The combination of relatively high wages combined with the most intense exploitation is also associated with the auto industry and Ford's famous "five dollar day."

Ford also provides the crucial turning point in the modern history of Detroit. In 1941, the year that Ford was organized, the transition was made from the organizing days to the period of stability and legality. After 1941 what was left to be organized was accomplished either by government fiat in the war plants or by NLRB election. The workers were kept out of it.

Just as important was the Ford contract, which was also intended to keep the workers out of it. Everyone was amazed that Ford, who had resisted the union to the bitter end, had granted concessions to the union far beyond what had been won at GM and Chrysler. Full time for union committeemen and the dues checkoff were the keys to the Ford contract. What it achieved was the incorporation of the union in the management of the plant.

The earlier contracts were simple documents which left the workers free to fight with any weapon they chose.

New Workers

During the war years there was a tremendous influx of new workers into the auto plants. They were southerners, black and white, and women. The demands of the war and the shortage of labor combined to give workers substantial weapons in their struggles. Black workers fought for upgrading into production jobs (other

than foundries). Women became production workers on a large scale. The union leadership attempted to surrender the bargaining powers of the workers by rushing to give the government a no-strike pledge. Union officials took places on government boards. There began the growing merger of union hierarchy with the political power structure.

The resistance of workers to this process began to widen the gap between the rank and file of the union and the officials at the top. It was in Detroit that this resistance reached its high points.

A struggle against the no-strike pledge was carried on in the UAW against the major caucuses in the union. This reached its peak at the 1944 convention of the UAW when the top officials were chastized and

A curious example of the problem of working class consciousness came out of that convention. The question of the pledge was referred to a membership referendum. In this vote by mail, the no-strike pledge was accepted by a vote of two to one. However, at the same time, in the Detroit area auto-war plants, a majority of auto workers wildcatted time and time again.

Reuther's Career

The Reuther regime in the UAW coincides with the major post-war transformation of the auto industry. The centralization of power with the elimination of the smaller auto companies (Kaiser, Hudson, Packard, etc.) was combined with the decentralization of production in the newly automated or modernized plants. Reuther continued the policies begun by old Henry Ford and followed by GM's C. E. Wilson. The five dollar day was superseded by the cost of living allowance as the golden chain that was to bind the workers to the most intense and alienating exploitation to be found anywhere in the industrialized world. No wage increase can compensate for the fact that the operations required of one worker on an auto assembly line never total as much as one minute.

In 1955 auto workers erupted in a wave of wildcat strikes that rejected the policy of fringe benefits combined with increasing speed-up. They made it clear that what was at issue was the inability of the union contract to provide any solution to the day-to-day problems on the plant floor. In some plants, at the expiration of the three-year contract, there are literally thousands of unresolved grievances testifying to the need of the workers to manage production in their own name.

Ever since 1955 Reuther has attempted to incorporate the local wildcats into the national negotiations, with very little success. In the 1967 contract negotiations in auto it took one year, one third of the life of the contract, to wear down the workers, local by local.

Gains in Productivity (Speed-up and Intensification of Exploitation) in Auto Industry, 1957-1966

Output per production worker/man hour:

1957	96.9
1958	96.9
1959	103.4
1960	112.5
1961	117.4
1962	125.0
1963	129.8
1964	131.7
1965	137.7
1966	141.0

Average increase in productivity in this period in auto industry was 4.8% per year. Average in all of manufacturing was 3.7% per year. Average for the entire economy was 3.4% per year.

AND THE BEAT GOES ON

embarrassed in front of the government officials they tried to serve by the defeat of resolutions to retain the no-strike pledge.

Overtime and Productivity

From 1958 to 1961 the massive reconstruction of the auto industry led to a major depression in Detroit. It made visible the erosion of working class power engineered by the auto union. Chrysler workers, some laid off for over a year, picketed Chrysler plants (and UAW headquarters) to prevent overtime work. Chrysler was able to get a court injunction against the picketers on the ground that they were in violation of the no-strike clause of the union contract.

Beyond Rank and File Caucuses

In the 1960's, also, the pressure of the black working class was constantly changing the level of employment in those plants that were within the reach of concentrations of black Americans. By the time of the Detroit rebellion of 1967 the majority of auto workers in the Detroit metropolitan area were black. These workers were a combination of older,

long-seniority workers who had achieved power and stability in the plants and young militants who took what was there for granted and began the movement toward new forms of organization.

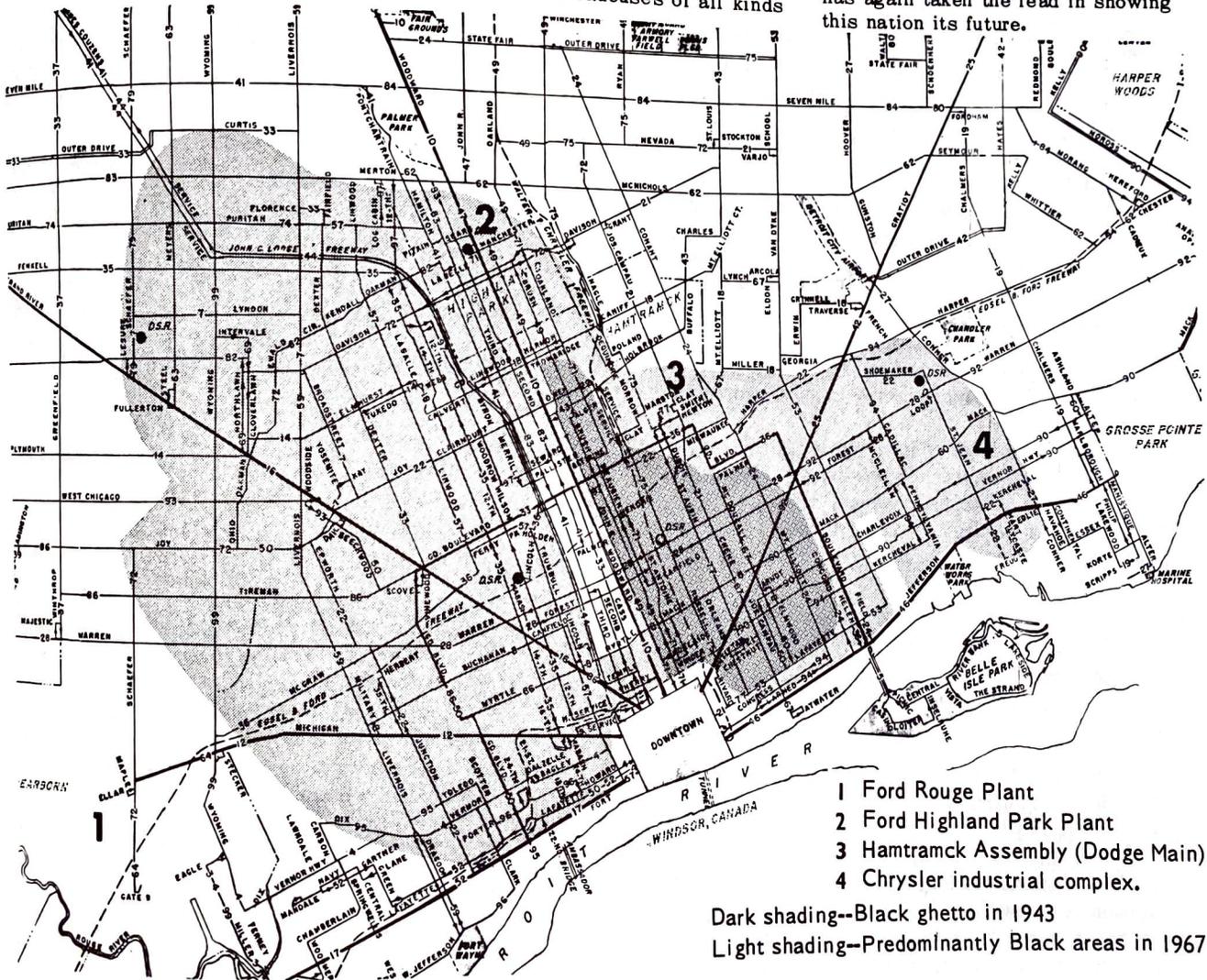
Black workers felt most intensely the exploitation and alienation of auto workers and they led the way in newer struggles. The Detroit rebellion of 1967 exposed the vulnerability of the auto corporations to the populations of the inner cities in industrial America. One year later the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement was organized which, with companion organizations in other plants, became part of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

What was crucial about this development was that it went beyond earlier black caucuses which were limited to pressure against management and the union hierarchy. And it went beyond earlier caucuses of all kinds

in that it was not an electoral machine that functioned as a loyal opposition within the union. It was a direct, shop-floor organization that was willing and able to call strikes in its own name and fight against both the union and the management in a struggle to assert the power of the working class in production.

Tensions between black and white workers have existed in varying degrees since the earliest days in auto. Sometimes they have erupted into open struggle. Sometimes they have been submerged in major battles against the industry. Tensions exist today, especially in relation to the skilled trades, which can easily break out into battles between workers. But that is secondary to the fact that black workers are attempting to assert working class control on the shop floor.

Detroit, through its black workers, has again taken the lead in showing this nation its future.



- 1 Ford Rouge Plant
- 2 Ford Highland Park Plant
- 3 Hamtramck Assembly (Dodge Main)
- 4 Chrysler industrial complex.

Dark shading--Black ghetto in 1943
 Light shading--Predominantly Black areas in 1967

League of Revolutionary Black Workers

An Interview With John Watson

FE: What types of conditions exist in the plants that are being organized by the League?

JW: Working conditions are deplorable. What's been happening over the last fifteen or twenty years in industry in general, but especially in the auto industry is the increase in productivity. A lot of people describe the increase in productivity as meaning that there's automation or something like this going on. But in most of the automobile plants, what's been going on is "nigger-mation."

"Nigger-mation" is simply when you hire one black man to do the job which is previously done by two or three or four white men. There's a constant struggle which is going on inside the automobile plants in which the foreman and the general foreman and the supervisor are constantly attempting to work the men harder. They are constantly attempting to speed up the production line. They are constantly attempting to cut down the number of people who work on the lines.

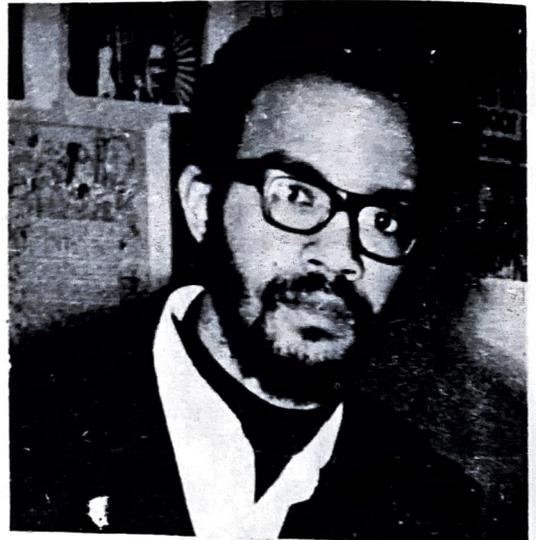
Besides the problems that black workers have with productivity and safety standards, they have the added problem of overt racism, which exists under these monopoly capitalist corporations. In the first place most of the supervisory personnel, white-collar personnel, skilled trades are all white. It's almost impossible for the average brother who gets a job in an automobile factory to be able to move into one of these positions.

Besides that those white foremen generally have very degrading attitudes towards black people. Every day there are instances in which there are clashes between black workers and white foremen because of racist remarks or racist actions on the part of company representatives.

FE: What generally has been the relationship between the black union movement and white workers? For example, recently out at the Chrysler Sterling Stamping Plant there was a wild-cat strike, led mainly by white workers, who called on the League of Revolutionary Black Workers to come out and help them with their organizing. Is this kind of thing happening more frequently?

JW: This kind of support between black and white workers in militant actions is in its beginning stages of development now. Our position vis a vis white workers has been distorted by the ruling class, the UAW and by various white radical organizations which are opposed to us for some reason or other.

Basically, we have organized an all black revolutionary union movement, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, because of the fact of racism existing in American society, because of the fact that the working class is already divided between the races, and because it is necessary for black workers to be able to act independently of white workers. We have earned historically that in too many instances white workers have been willing to sell us out because of their own racist misunderstandings of the dynamics of struggle.



Photos - A. Gotkin.

JOHN WATSON

Since the beginning we've had relationships with white workers at the plants that we've organized. For instance, at the Hamtramck Assembly Plant there has been the formation of an organization among white workers which hopes to begin to organize them to struggle against the company and against the union in regards to their own interests, and to support the development of organizations like the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

In recent history, however, there have been some positive developments along the lines of the League being able to move into coalitions with groups of white workers. For instance, at the Detroit News there has been the development of an organization known as the News Revolutionary Union Movement (NEWRUM) among black workers. And this organiza-

tion has attempted since its very inception to encourage the development of militant revolutionary organizations among the white workers at the plant.

Unfortunately, we ran into some problems there in that we found that although a number of the white guys who were down there had risen above the levels of racism and understood the exploitative nature of the company and the exploitative nature of the system, they had very little experience in organizing to fight oppression and exploitation. As a result of their lack of experience, the white workers' organization has been moving at a very slow pace. It seems to be necessary that the leadership of the League begin to provide some sort of theoretical or practical guidance to those whites who are attempting to move to organize in this particular situation.

In other plants such as the Sterling Plant, for the first time militant whites have called for us to support their action. Our position on this is that we, of course, support any progressive action on the part of any workers, white or black, who are moving to resolutely confront this racist capitalist system.

FE: Speaking about the white radical organizations, recently there has been criticism from the Progressive Labor Party on the basis that there should not be separate unions for black and white workers, as this splits the working class. The accusation is that separate black unions are a form of nationalism, which has to be considered reactionary in all its forms. What is the League's outlook on the question of nationalism? Does it recognize a distinction between revolutionary and reactionary nationalism and if so, what is that distinction?

JW: On this question of the Progressive Labor Party, and the criticism which it has leveled at us, in the first place our activities are based upon reality. They are based on an analysis of the real world, not some sort of subjective wishes about how we would like the world to be.

The real facts of the matter are that this is a racist society, it is a monopoly capitalist society, the entire society is divided up according to class and according to caste. This is a fact. Black people don't unite with the white working class simply because Progressive Labor says that that might be a good thing. White workers don't eliminate their racism simply because Progressive Labor says that this might be a good thing.

The Progressive Labor Party which hasn't organized a worker, has no right at all to attack the League of Revolutionary Black Workers or DRUM or any other component part of the League. They are another one of these little groups which have a conception of themselves, a very egotistical and ethnocentric conception of themselves, as the vanguard party.

If you're the vanguard party, it means that if anybody else is moving in a revolutionary direction and mobilizing masses of people into revolutionary organizations, there must be something wrong with the program they're following because the only correct program is the program of that particular party. As a result of this particular kind of outlook

they find it necessary to attack anybody who is trying to do anything for whatever dogmatic reasons they can find. Either you're a nationalist which is counter-revolutionary or you're backwards or you're just developing or something else.

From their point of view, you reach the pinnacle of revolutionary development when you decide to become a member of Progressive Labor. We're not members of the Progressive Labor Party and we're not about to become members of the Progressive Labor Party or any other existing white organization because none of them are doing anything which shows us that they're capable of organizing a mass revolutionary struggle in this country, among blacks or whites.

As far as the question of black nationalism is concerned, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers recognizes that black nationalism in and of itself represents a broad political spectrum from left to right. There are black nationalists who are essentially black fascists, and you have other black nationalists who are essentially black Marxist-Leninist Communist revolutionaries.

We understand that there are black nationalists who simply feel that they as individuals have not been getting a big enough piece of the pie of black exploitation and who are not moving in the interests of black people. We oppose the idea that the solution to our problem is the establishment of a new economy in which you have black capitalists, black factory owners, exploiting black workers the way the white people have. We see the solution to the problem not simply as one of establishing a nationalist organization or a nationalist community, but one in which all forms of exploitation and oppression are eliminated within that community.

(Selections of an interview reprinted from THE FIFTH ESTATE.)

The Cop

Just think.

Were you dressed like that how would you act Big black boots

Sometimes spurs even.

Pants tight up the leg, baggy in the ass. And the belt, Jesus the belt.

Holster.

With gun and bullets hanging there. Of course the jacket would be leather.

Black.

Shiny badge with numbers.

And the cap to top it all.

Swagger you would too. Double barrel shotgun in the car. Nightstick.

Were you made to dress like that how would you act,

Brother?

--Kenneth Mikolowski

Agrarian Reform in Berkeley

by Michael Lipsey

(What follows is selections from an eyewitness account of the battles in Berkeley, Cal. over the Peoples Park in May 1969.)

People's Park Wednesday night, (14th), 50 people maintain all night vigil

Bonfire: joints passed around, no speeches, Young people huddling under blankets...waiting...rapping,

Background

Now for two years one square block a block above Telegraph, has been a rubble-filled place: broken down cars, huge pool of stagnant water (50 feet across), garbage (used to be cheap housing occupied by troublesome students, hippies).

About May 5, 2000 people appear with tools (much people, few tools, take turns on shovels, picks--unlimited manpower); remove rubbish, rocks, weeds, with only sketchy plan, build (in three incredible days) park, one square block containing one acre donated sod, large playground, five sets of donated swings, etc., sandbox (huge), mammoth bar-b-que, several flower and vegetable gardens, pond for fish, one large sculpture, brick walkways, maypole, carved benches, picnic tables. An Absolute Miracle!

Surprise, UC announces they've found the funds to build soccer field and are about to start immediately. Amazement and outrage! We won't let the bastards do it.

And Wednesday (14th) at 5 A.M. Berkeley Police and a San Jose construction company team arrive. Rout surprised "vigilers"--unbelievable 10 foot fence around block in about three hours. Police guard fence--by 9 A.M. the "vigilers" have brought their friends and word is passed around. Radio stations spread work; in streets everybody is talking, tear down fence and fight for park. By the rally time 1000 people have come; skirmishing starts.

Sit eating hamburger and watch helicopters circle, talk about something else. Pigs break up all groups pretty well, later they form again. Troops keep arriving in great numbers; whole convoys driving down the

street, all Telly area cordoned off again two blocks each way

"Off the pig," rocks, police charge with clubs, more rocks, back and forth. We've seen this before; everyone is experienced, more people keep arriving, People on rooftops--riot breaks out here and there extending farther towards Oakland than in the past. Onto the campus--tear gas, pepper fog--shouting--city of Berkeley--car overturned with assistance of soft spoken bookstore manager--moments later someone in crowd breaks window of soft-spoken bookstore--the revolution is complex.

They're Shooting People!

Suddenly word spreads. Four people hit by shotgun pellets. It finally happened--no one leaves. Pool of blood, large crowd, confused, "They just shot him standing on the curb," Alameda pigs across the intersection directing traffic away with shotguns.

Then there Wuz the Tigers

by Anna Tuzik

What's in Detroit? Mostly, factories. I've got these two friends who give directions to where they live by telling a visitor which factory they're near.

Of course, Detroit's got the usual things--a library, an art institute, a college, union offices, and lots and lots of bars--oh, and a race track! Detroit--does it sound musical? No. The river on which Detroit is built--is it dusky and glamorous? No. The skyscrapers--are they breath-taking? No. Well, what is Detroit?

I don't really know. It's got a lot of people. All kinds of people. In another city, they wouldn't be friends or hardly know each other, but because they happen to be in Detroit, you know them. One of them lives in the suburbs--he's a black militant who is studying to be a lawyer. One of them (also in the suburbs) is a Southern engineer with an interest in getting rifle trophies--who married the local society girl.

They all know there was a riot

"He was shot in the back, and they took him away." Stunned. On the campus rocks and clubs. See Cops Charge. Brick bounces off pavement, catches cop in crotch, he goes down in agony. I lose my taste for throwing rocks, crowd laughs (spectators, not rock throwers.)

Saturday

11 A.M. people gather Shattuck Square downtown--thousands milling around, nervous--especially considering surrounding streets, filling with Guard, cops from Highway Patrol, Berkeley, etc. Several times around Shattuck Square clapping, "We want the park." Pigs and troops keep moving in closer--. On University, try to get past pigs. Someone tries to appeal to pigs and gets clubbed with rifle butt and is pulled away by friends back into crowd. Getting busted while injured means additional assault charges.

two years ago and they sure as hell don't want another one. Creepy cops crawling all over the place! (Either do it good next time or bust.) Some of them don't come into the city, but make sure they still know somebody there. Those that come into Detroit know on which streets to walk and at what time of day. That's pretty good. They all mingle and they all go home. Actors drink with working men, sometimes. Professional men stay cooped up downtown in a club, because they are already cooped up. Then there was the Tigers! Everybody mingled. No cop had a chance that night--you knew what it would be like. what Detroit is--trying to share. You even share a coffee with your optometrist or a smoke with the elevator operator who was all out of cigarettes.

You take a look at the guys in the plant around you or the women in the office. You figure they're pretty good people or else they wouldn't be working right there next to you. Right? Right.

Sterling Strike

The wildcat strike over a safety hazard at the Chrysler Sterling Heights Stamping Plant was finally settled Friday, May 9. By a vote of about 1,300 for and 790 against, the workers of Local 1264 accepted the final settlement worked out by the UAW International, which had stepped into the strike. The settlement included the following:

- a new scrubmobile to add to the other, which broke down too often, to clean the oil slick in the basement of the plant.
- a roughing up of the basement floor to provide better traction for the Hi-los which had to maneuver in the area.
- rehiring of 63 of the wildcatters out of the original 69 fired.
- five of the men to be subject to arbitration for the violence they are charged with.
- 16 of the 63 would be punished with a weeks delay in hiring; all others rehired immediately.
- no back pay for the strikers.
- international representatives would have the right to immediate entry and examination of the plant.

WOMENS LIBERATION CONFERENCE will be held on Saturday, June 14, 1969, at 10 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. at Wayne State University's Student Center, 7th floor. The program will include a panel discussion, workshops, and a film. (for further information contact: Dianne Rawick 868-0211)

BOOKS RECEIVED

- Sport: A Philosophic Inquiry, by Paul Weiss. Southern Illinois W. Press. 274 pages. \$7.50. (To be reviewed.)
- Damned!, by Andy Anderson. Solidarity (South London), 40 Tudor Close Dartford, Kent, England. 43 pages mimeo. 2/6 (30¢). Concerns freedom of the press in England.



Inner City Insights

When I first arrived in Detroit, two seemingly superficial matters made an impression upon me. First was that in the downtown center area there were barely 12 benches for the public to sit on. Second, in every public eating place the walls were adorned with signs like: "No Loitering," some even more emphatically: "No Loitering by Order of the Police." What kind of city was this that so thoroughly feared the congregation of its own citizens? In this decade, events in this city have answered that question.

Stage by stage, the sequence is self-evident: Stage 1. A springtime night in 1961, a white woman was stabbed in mid-town Detroit and over a thousand people found on the streets at midnight were rounded up in a dragnet which left only two under arrest by the next morning. It is needless to add that those arrested were almost all black and their crime was being out at night! The revulsion against this practice of mass arrests sank into the political consciousness and altered the rules of the game of who was to be mayor of the city. A thirtyish unknown lawyer, Jerome Cavanagh, upset all predictions and won the office. Note: organized labor was against him. The blacks swung this victory in the teeth of all organizational politics then known to the city. All!

Stage 2. An early summer Sunday morning--July 23, 1967. Since revelry for the population must end at 2 a.m. sharp when the bars close, there are gatherings--undoubtedly duplicated in other cities--in what is known in Detroit as "blind pigs." In these establishments the drinking and gambling hours that workers enjoy are extended beyond the legal boundaries set by official authority. The intrepid police arrived to make their arrests and discovered there were some 80 or so people to be taken to jail. Paddy wagons were sent for by the arm of the law but the neighboring community had awakened in the early hours of the dawn and in

precisely that interim the Detroit rebellion of 1967, the largest of any American city thus far, upset all predictions of urban peace and harmony.

Stage 3. Having seen their people massacred in the days of July, 1967, there are more blacks walking around with the thought of self defense on their minds and the means for it in their hands. On the night of Saturday, March 29, 1969, there were armed blacks leaving a meeting held in New Bethel Church. Two police stopped to "investigate" and were shot at. Reinforcements arrived and boxed in over 100 people in the church--the new scene for the shoot-out. The supposed culprits were protected by the silent assembly and all were dragged to jail in a repeat of Stage 1, above.

But this time a black judge, George Crockett, set up court in jail, freed most of the arrested and confronted the whole prosecuting apparatus with a "fait accompli" which sent shivers up the collective spine of official authority. The progression of the Black movement into social--as distinguished from "official" authority has now moved from the street and "blind pigs" through the church, into and through the church, and into and through the police station, where the whole issue has drawn the community into a new and strange quandry. Conservative lawyers and concerned bourgeois in the city stand behind Crockett; the Black organization of policemen (the Guardians) has split off from the white policemen's organization; and the search has begun for a Black candidate for Mayor (see Stage 1).

The day of reckoning, however, is decided by an army of "loiterers" (the constant element in all three stages). Through incident and accident, they are shattering a bloc of first, the urban bourgeoisie, who personally live out of town but hold sway over power in the city, and second, the labor unions which have organized roots in the city but are mortally afraid of seeing two million people mobilize and begin their own program of urban renewal.

Poker in the Paint Plant

Up Your Ante

by Larry Williams

There was always a lot of gambling in the Ford Highland Park Paint Plant. It was a regular social thing and everybody who was involved organized their work so they would have plenty of time to play poker. It was against company rules but the workers didn't make the rules and they liked to gamble. As the foremen had to get along with the men everyday, they couldn't really stop it, so they used it to get production out. A foreman would say, "If you can sit around in the lunch room and play cards all day, you can get your work done." And the rules were useful if a foreman wanted to get a special favor.

There was always a game going, day and night, sometimes five or six at one time, and the stakes ranged from nickel ante - dime bet to a quarter ante - dollar bet. The high stake games (dollar bet) carried a lot of status for regular players, whether they won or lost. But the games were mainly sociable and there were unwritten rules about money. If a man was too concerned about money or acted as if he were only in the game for money, he spoiled it for everyone. Also, if a player consistently played stupidly it made everybody uncomfortable.

190-190

A new worker at the plant once got into a game and in the space of a few hours lost his whole paycheck of \$190. Many of the original players, when they saw the way he was playing, dropped out of the game. Their places were quickly taken by others who saw a chance to make some easy money. That game gave rise to a lot of hard feelings and many people refused to play with the men who were in it for a long time afterward. Playing with "190" (as he was thereafter called) was strictly taboo for any respectable gambler.

I do not think that it was the amount of money lost which caused such concern. I have seen some

very good poker players lose similar amounts during long runs of bad luck without causing any commotion. What was at stake was the men's conception of the game. One often heard the expression, "We don't play cut-throat around here; this is a friendly game." Taking advantage of a man's foolishness, or drunkenness, caused hard feelings and grudges which were apt to take a long time to mend, and these had serious consequences outside the poker game.

Things Fall Apart

The affair with "190" broke open a Pandora's box of quarreling and bickering which started over the game and turned into petty quarrels about everything in general. For weeks afterwards social life in the plant was strained, and I heard

many complaints that it seemed harder to get the work done with everyone in a bad mood. There was less gambling and more drinking in the shop. A check of the production records showed that during the week following the incident production fell off on an average of 4200 gallons per day. The work was not only harder to do, but there was less of it being done.

Normally jobs were exchanged and combined and an intricate network of deals were worked out between individuals so the work could be done in the most expedient manner possible. The reason production fell after the incident with "190" was that the bitterness of the quarrels temporarily suspended many such deals.

In short, the breakdown of cooperation in production went hand in hand with the breakdown of normal social relations at the poker table.

