

ORGANIZATIONS

Ultra-militancy characterizes new organization

By Dan Marshall
Over 1200 workplace activists, vowing to build a united workers movement and "turn every mine and mill into a battlefield, a fortress of struggle," gathered in Chicago Sept. 3-5 at the founding convention of the National United Workers Organization.

The convention, growing out of a July 4th demonstration of several thousand persons in Washington D.C. organized by the Revolutionary Communist Party, brought together workers from steel, auto, mining, electrical, garment and other major industries along with unemployed persons.

Featured speaker at the opening session was Buddy Cochran, a 30-year-old mechanic from Americus, Georgia, who drove his car through a July 2 Ku Klux Klan rally in Plains, injuring over 30, primarily spectators and members of the press. Free on \$50,000 bond, Cochran is awaiting trial on eight counts of aggravated assault.

In a deep Georgia accent that would rival Jimmy Carter himself, Cochran told the enthusiastic crowd how he was "touched off" when a KKK speaker called Carter a slang name. "I got into my car and, on impulse, drove towards

the platform," he explained to the *Chicago Sun-Times*. "The only mistake I made was misjudging my speed. I wanted to sideswipe the platform, not drive through it. It was not my intention to injure anyone. I wanted to disrupt the meeting."

Immediately after the incident, the Organizing Committee for a National Workers Organization set up a defense committee for Cochran, raised bail money for his release, and recruited lawyers from Birmingham, Alabama, to defend him.

Cochran's convention address, where he declared that he was "out to get the judge" that put him in jail, was greeted with chants of "Free Buddy Cochran" that rocked the Great Hall of the Pick-Congress Hotel.

Such militant, violent actions are a major preoccupation of the NUWO, both in their military rhetoric and past activities. On July 4th the Organizing Committee sponsored a demonstration in Columbus, Ohio, that ended up disrupting another KKK rally, resulting in several indictments and a local grand jury investigation.

In New York City, supporters physically broke up a meeting of the Advanced Management Research Institute, an

employer organization that sponsors training seminars around the country to instruct management in the techniques for avoiding or breaking unions. "Workers confronted these bosses, turned over tables, emptied water pitchers on three piece suits and set off stink bombs that postponed the conference for two days," they state proudly.

Their workplace activities have thus far consisted mainly of supporting individual strikes like the four-month rubber strike last year and past wildcats of coal miners, which they participated in through the Right to Strike Committee. They recently organized a public meeting in Johnstown, Pa. to protest layoffs at Bethlehem Steel, one speaker claimed, and led 100 workers who stormed into company offices the next week.

The basic purpose of the NUWO, as "summed up" in a pamphlet by the Revolutionary Communist Party, formerly the Revolutionary Union, is to unify "local fighters" into a nationwide structure that can wage campaigns around workplace or social issues. They believe that a small number of activists, using the "single spark method," can transform particular struggles, "those which have the potential to become major bat-

les of the class," into big fights that threaten capitalist power.

NUWO makes no distinctions between conservative and progressive trade union officers, denouncing them all as "company stoolies" and "traitors," who are "practically indistinguishable from the Boards of Directors of the major corporations." They also tend to idealize strikes as weapons the rank and file should employ "whenever necessary and possible, in a serious and disciplined way, to kick the companies and their lackeys running our unions in the teeth."

The extremely well-organized convention included a multitude of banners, extensive security procedures, heavy recording equipment and simultaneous translations in Spanish and Chinese.

On Sept. 5 delegates demonstrated in front of the Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry to protest the city's voluntary school busing program, an attempt, they charge, to divide white working class people against blacks. Their action put them into conflict with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Operation PUSH and other minority groups that support the plan.

IN BRIEF

New evidence unearthed in Sacco-Vanzetti case



By Sidney Blumenthal
New evidence unearthed in the Sacco-Vanzetti case strongly suggests that the prosecution may have conspired with other authorities in manufacturing a fraudulent case against the two Italian radicals. (IN THESE TIMES, Aug. 17.)

Disclosure of the new evidence came as Massachusetts celebrated Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti Day, Aug. 23, on the 50th anniversary of their execution. It was officially proclaimed by Gov. Michael Dukakis, who declared that their trial for the murder of a South Braintree paymaster and guard had been "unfair."

Ballistics experts at the 1921 trial linked a shell fired from Sacco's gun to a shell recovered from the scene of the crime. This key shell was one of four shown to the jury. The possibility now exists, how-

ever, that the crucial shell, instrumental in convincing the jury of Sacco and Vanzetti's guilt, may have been fabricated.

A few months before the trial, Harold Williams, assistant district attorney of Norfolk County, prepared notes stipulating that only three shells, not four, were discovered on the site of the South Braintree murders. Williams's handwritten notes say that a policeman, John Shay, recovered the shells. Yet the jury was told by the prosecution that a machinist, James Bostock, had found them, a sharp discrepancy that casts doubt on the prosecution's integrity.

Williams's notes were accidentally discovered in Harvard Law School's archives by Lincoln Robbins, an independent historian who has devoted the past two years researching the still-controversial case. Robbins claims that the fourth shell was fired

through Sacco's gun by the authorities in order to tie him conclusively to the Braintree crime. Robbins also contends that the prosecution suppressed the real identity of the shell's discoverer so that the false evidence could be successfully introduced and accepted in court.

Robbins's hypothesis is conjecture, despite its logic. There is little way of proving it, since almost all the principals in the case are now dead. Williams's notes, however, definitely indicate a disturbing omission in the prosecution's presentation.

Not all of those who played roles in the dramatic affair have passed away. The sole living juror, Harry E. King, 91 years old, appeared recently on a Boston television program devoted to a discussion of the case and offered some revealing views.

King vividly recalled that Sacco and

Vanzetti confessed at their trial that they were "Bolsheviks" and "Communists." Unfortunately, the court transcript does not uphold this version.

King also said that a railroad crossing guard, a key prosecution witness, had identified both Sacco and Vanzetti in a speeding get-away car. Actually the guard claimed to be able to identify only Vanzetti, who, incidentally, could not drive—a fact the defense counsel failed to point out.

King's erratic memory may be attributed to the effective manner in which the jury was manipulated by the prosecution, or senility. At a distance of 50 years after the execution, it is difficult to discern which is responsible for his illusions.

Sidney Blumenthal writes for The Real Paper in Boston.

Infant formula promotion provokes Nestlé boycott

With "Crunch Nestlé Quick" as their slogan, members of the national Infant Formula Action Coalition (INFACT) began a nationwide boycott of Nestlé products last month.

Nestlé is the largest seller of commercial baby milks in the Third World, and the focus of the campaign against infant formula abuse for the first time.

To use the formulas safely a parent must have access to clean drinking water, sterilization equipment, refrigeration, literacy and enough money to mix the expensive powder in sufficiently-nutritional concentrations.

However, such conditions are rare among the people Nestlé aims its ad campaigns at in the Third World. Thus the bottle formulas become breeding grounds for bacteria, leading to infant diarrhea, malabsorption, malnutrition and death. A recent survey of the hospital in Freetown, Sierra Leone found that 713 of 717 babies admitted for malnutrition were bottle-fed.

Meanwhile, human milk is wasted. Breast milk, called the "original convenience food," is always available, sterile, nutritious and free. Most Third World women still carry their infants with them while working at home, in the village or field, and only a small percentage are unable to nurse for medical reasons.

The alarming rate of switchover from

breast to bottle accompanies aggressive and often misleading promotional campaigns, which aim to convince mothers that the way to health, beauty and status is through bottle feeding. These campaigns use extensive media coverage, company-sponsored "health and education programs" to promote their products, sales personnel dressed as "milk nurses" or "mothercraft workers," false implications of medical endorsement, and the wide-spread dissemination of free samples in hospitals and clinics.

The February 1977 issue of the Brazilian publication, *Modern Supermarket*, reveals that processed infant and baby foods have a profit margin of 72 percent—three to four times the profit margins of nearly every other item in the supermarket.

The boycott demands an end to all promotion of Nestlé's artificial formula—through mass advertising, distribution of free samples, milk-nurses and promotion in the medical profession. It also demands that artificial formula be prevented from getting into the hands of people who lack the means or facilities to use them safely.

People who boycott are urged to write letters of protest to Nestlé Co. Inc., 100 Bloomingdale Road, White Plains, N.Y. 10605.

—Liberation News Service

CORPORATE POWER

Roundtable wields immense power behind the scene

By Harry C. Boyte

When the *Wall Street Journal* reported recently that the Business Roundtable, premier organization of the largest corporations, had not yet taken a formal stand on proposed revisions in the labor law (*JTT*, Aug. 24), the news caused a few ever-hopeful liberals to speak of its statesmanlike qualities.

Indeed, the Business Roundtable has carefully sought, and received, similar accolades several times this last year on the occasion of well-placed public relations gestures. Yet the fact is that such activity scarcely illustrates either the mood of big business or the specific agenda of the Roundtable.

The Roundtable's serious efforts this year have advanced the most immediate and predatory of corporate goals on issues of the economy, energy, consumer affairs—with often striking success. In fact, the history and programs of the Business Roundtable over the several years of its existence furnish a remarkable portrait of the corporate community's rightward shift.

In the 1970s the continuing problems of the American economy have evaporated what used to be known as corporate liberalism and have produced instead a savage politics of self-interest and plunder not overtly advocated for decades. The Roundtable has been a major architect of such a politics.

New advocacy organization

The Business Roundtable formed in 1972 out of two smaller groups, the Labor Law Study Committee and the Construction Users Anti-Inflation Roundtable, a group sometimes called "Roger's Roundtable" in honor of its guiding light, Roger Blough of U.S. Steel.

From the outset, it sought the membership of the nation's largest corporate and financial interests. The Roundtable defined itself as a new kind of advocacy organization, designed to "speak out for the business viewpoint," in the words of an early leader, John Harper of the Aluminum Company of America.

In its earliest days, the Roundtable sometimes reflected that style of corporate liberalism fashionable in the last decade. Its original charter held out hope for a new partnership with labor, and the group's first chairman, W.P. Murphy, got brief publicity when he called for standby economic controls in the winter of 1972.

The growing difficulties facing the American economy rapidly withered such hopes. In the spring of 1973 John Connolly won overwhelming support from big business when he sketched Nixon's plans for a post-election "government-business partnership" that would relax government restrictions, aid profit margins and spur foreign sales. As problems mounted over the next several years the private sector's mood became ever more aggressively self-interested and crude.

In the context of this hardening line the Roundtable proved an ideal and timely vehicle for the corporate community. It rapidly recruited the giants of capitalism, including the three largest auto companies, the three largest banks, seven of the largest oil companies, the major steel producers, retailing organizations and utilities—altogether over 150 American firms. Its annual dues ranged on a sliding scale from \$2,500 to \$35,000, and supported a budget of \$2 million, supplemented by special project budgets.

Abandoning the corporate liberal policies of the last decade, the Business Roundtable, under the leadership of duPont's Shapiro (right) has become the premier corporate force in Washington.



But the Roundtable's influence and importance is not to be measured by the amount it spends. The key fact of the Roundtable is its role in bringing together chief executives to talk about developments and to plan strategy.

Working through task forces, the Roundtable helped cohere the disparate criticisms and gripes of big business in the early '70s into a coherent political agenda. In its own name it undertook major campaigns against consumer, anti-trust, and full employment legislation. It used a variety of forums to propound the thesis of a "capital shortage" facing private industry that would require huge increases in profit levels in the coming decade. It helped spur a newly fashionable "free enterprise" propaganda blitz as an accompaniment to the capital shortage argument, placing ads in magazines like *Readers Digest*.

More surreptitiously, the Roundtable was a major force in the Environmental Coordinating Committee, set up to lobby against federal clean air standards, and the Employment Advisory Council, designed to fight affirmative action. Indeed, its task force report on affirmative action formed much of the basis for a Ford administration effort to dismantle effective enforcement, thwarted only at

the last moment by a national coalition of women's and civil rights groups.

The Roundtable used a variety of high pressure tactics to give its efforts clout. Its basic practice was straightforward—it brought chief executives to Washington to lobby directly. Sometimes it also followed up such visits with delegations of workers. It also hired a string of high powered lobbyists like Leon Jaworski. And it was not above rather blatant distortion of the truth to advance its efforts as well. Thus in 1975 the group announced findings of a poll purportedly showing overwhelming public sentiment against the Consumer Protection Agency—a poll soon criticized as biased by polling experts.

Immense power.

With such tactics, the organization, shrouded in secrecy, nonetheless achieved immense power. It killed the consumer protection bill in 1975 and 1976. It aborted anti-trust legislation that would have allowed class actions by damaged consumers. It built support for deregulation of natural gas and undermined legislation on chemical hazards in the workplace. Overall, it contributed to that dramatically rising solicitude in

government toward "business confidence."

By the 1976 elections the Roundtable was unquestionably the dominant organization of big business in America. Its chairman, Shapiro of the du Pont empire, led the business delegation that gave President-elect Carter the "business community's views" on what to do about the economic downswing, immediately after the election.

Its cochair, Reginald Jones of General Electric, was picked by Carter to head the Labor Management Group on inflation with George Meany.

Its economic report in 1977, arguing for less government regulation and government initiatives to spur corporate investment, was answered in June, when Vice President Mondale pledged to the group's annual meeting that the administration's "central role" would be to help stimulate such investment.

And though Carter lobbyists held on grimly to goals like gas price controls and the consumer protection agency, the Roundtable's efforts left the fate of such measures in doubt to the last minute.

Harry Boyte is a writer in Minneapolis, currently working on a book on new populist movements in the U.S.

Business and labor, together and apart

The Business Roundtable is expected to announce soon that it is opposed to labor law reform, shattering the tenuous hopes of the AFL-CIO that the "good will" accumulated between labor and management on other issues—like their mutual revulsion to mandatory wage-price controls—would extend to labor's most important piece of legislation this year.

The Roundtable's task force on labor legislation recently declared its strong opposition to the reform effort because, in the words of their Public Information Director, James Keogh, they felt that "the proposals restrict employee rights and make it easier to bring them into a union structure without appropriate safeguards to their own point of view." Their policy committee, composed of 43 top corporate executives, is expected to concur when it meets in early September.

The Roundtable's position is not likely to disrupt, however, the discussions between top union officials and corporate representatives on the Labor-Management Group, an

informal committee coordinated by former Labor Secretary John Dunlop to advise President Carter on key issues and to help restrain the "wage-price spiral" that government considers a major cause of inflation. All eight industry members of the group are also members of the Business Roundtable.

The AFL-CIO does not consider it contradictory to be working with company executives on some issues, like the construction of nuclear power plants and higher quotas on imported goods, while opposing them on others, like labor law reform, the minimum wage and common situs picketing.

The Roundtable's position also comes as no big surprise, says Al Zack, AFL-CIO Public Relations Director. "We thought they were involved up to the hilt, but were being quiet about it because they wanted to do it under the table."

"The Business Roundtable has been working quietly behind the scenes because they were afraid they would contradict past speeches about the glories of collective bargaining,"

he told *In These Times*, citing the Roundtable's membership in the National Action Committee, the right wing coalition that defeated common situs picketing and has now moved on to labor law reform.

Douglas Fraser, current United Auto Workers' representative to the Labor-Management Group, also has no plans to resign. "It's to our mutual advantage to continue these exchanges," explains Jerry Dale, UAW Assistant Public Relations Director. "But this certainly won't restrain us from fighting like hell on labor law reform."

The moving force behind the group, John Dunlop, now back at Harvard University, sees nothing two-faced in labor's willingness to forge alliances with business on some issues. "The same kind of thing has been true for a hundred years," he explained to the *New York Times*. "It is part of the concept of business unionism, and you can have it only with a labor movement that is not highly ideological."

—Dan Marshall