

ELECTIONS

Bella Abzug wins N.Y. nomination

by Carol Polsky

NEW YORK — Bella Abzug almost didn't make it, but the progressive ex-congresswoman from New York has won the Democratic nomination as a candidate for Congress. This was the one she had to win. After losing bids for a Senate seat and the New York City mayoralty, she risked the loser tag that turns credible contenders into perennial candidates.

That would have been particularly ironic in this case. If the State Supreme Court in Manhattan hadn't ruled in her favor, Abzug would have seen victory snatched by a technicality, by six green Bella ballots that should have been blue.

The ballots were among those cast at a raucous convention Jan. 15 by over 900 Democratic county committee members from the 18th Congressional District on Manhattan's East Side. The committee members gathered in a cavernous high school auditorium to nominate a candidate for a Feb. 14 special election called to fill the seat left vacant by New York City's new mayor Edward Koch.

The court ruling validating the six disputed Abzug ballots stripped former City Councilman Carter Burden of his own political comeback. He had been the announced winner—pending the court ruling. He's considering appeal.

Confusion runs wild.

Confusion at the nomination convention accounts for the mishap over the ballots. They were cast on the third round of voting after six of the original ten candidates had already withdrawn or been eliminated. The committee members had begun voting on green paper ballots (each round of voting took a different color, to prevent fraud) when two more candidates announced their withdrawal. That left only Abzug and Burden in the race. The convention chairman then directed the committee members to switch from green to blue ballots.

Amidst the noisy confusion, six Abzug supporters either didn't hear, or had already voted and left the auditorium. When the final vote was announced, it was 50.29 percent for Burden, 49.79 percent for Abzug. By that time, everyone knew about the green ballots, and the fight was on.

Shouts of "count the green ballots!" erupted from Abzug supporters in the crowded auditorium, but parliamentary moves to overturn their invalidation would have been uncertain, long and extremely tedious. So Abzug took it to court.

She was, of course, very pleased by the favorable court ruling and called it a "validation of the franchise." She promised a unified and strong campaign against the Republican candidate, S. William Green. Green was a regional director of the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development under Nixon.

Difficulty in winning.

While the green ballot snafu provided the most interesting, if bizarre, twist, another side of the story was Abzug's inability to produce a more solid and convincing win. She was considered the strongest of the ten generally liberal candidates, which included Allard Lowenstein, who has managed to keep himself visible in liberal causes and election attempts since being gerrymandered out of his Long Island congressional seat almost ten years ago.

Abzug came on strong in the first ballot, falling just short of 40 percent of the vote. Her nearest opponent, Burden, received 22.61 percent and Lowenstein drew 14.35 percent. Two candidates with less than 5 percent were eliminated.

On the second ballot, however, Abzug moved just ever so slightly upward, to 40.47 percent. Burden's tally rose to 28.80 percent. By the third ballot, with all other candidates gone, he jumped 21 points

Only a State Supreme Court ruling validating six ballots that had been cast on the wrong color gave Bella the Democratic nomination for New York's silk stocking West Side congressional area.

while Abzug was hard put to muster 10, even with the withdrawal of Lowenstein. Lowenstein's supporters, it was widely supposed, would go to Abzug, giving her the victory.

Probably enough of them did to make the difference, but they were clearly divided. She did not get the block of Lowenstein votes, nor was she the second choice of very many other committee members in that auditorium.

Abzug's difficulties were not so much ideological as personal. Manhattan politics are based on years of campaigns, handshakes, alliances, friendships, spats and rivalries. Bella's been in that world for a long time and as many people noted, "You either love her or you hate her." She has always had her committed and vocal supporters, but reaching beyond that has been problematic.

In addition, the 18th Congressional District, or most of it, is not Abzug's

home base. She doesn't even live there, and some committee members charged her with "carpetbagging." The district is, moreover, the stomping grounds of her political rival Ed Koch, the new mayor.

Between Koch and Abzug stand years of "bad blood." She lost the 18th to Koch in the mayoralty primary race and she lost it to Moynihan in the 1976 Senate primary. (She gave up her West Side congressional seat to run in that primary.)

Abzug is the favorite to win the Feb. 14 special election. Although the 18th is called the "silk stocking district," with some of the country's wealthiest neighborhoods, it also includes parts of the Lower East Side and increasing numbers of highrises containing moderately well-off young professionals. The changing demographics, plus the growing movement of the Democratic party away from Tammany Hall toward more respectable, middle class "reform" politics, accounts

for the high Democratic vote in the last decade. Before, John Lindsay was the kind of Republican the district elected to Congress.

A June or September primary will follow on the heels of the special election, with a regular election in November. Whoever has the incumbency has an advantage, but there will probably be a primary race. Allard Lowenstein, for one, has said he'd support the nominee in February but refuses to commit himself beyond that.

For now, and probably for later, abzug has her seat. Had she lost this nomination, she'd have been casting about for a new race to run in. But she was running out of races and running out of time. New York could well have lost one of its strongest and most progressive voices in politics.

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TRIALS

Dawson Five prosecution dropped

"This is a great day for the Dawson Five now that we are free. And all black people are now one step closer to being free."

With this jubilant statement, Dawson Five defendant J.D. Davenport greeted the news on Dec. 19 that county prosecutors had finally decided to abandon murder charges against him and four other black youths from rural Georgia. For the Five, the decision ended a two-year nightmare marked by illegal police tactics, confessions obtained at gunpoint and flagrant racism. (ITT, Aug. 3 and Aug. 24, 1977.)

The prosecution dropped the charges against the Five after a Georgia Superior Court judge ruled that the "confessions" obtained from the defendants were inadmissible in court because they had been extracted by means of intimidation and threats, backed up by cocked police pistols. The "confessions" were the mainstay of the prosecution's already feeble case against the Five.

The Dawson Five—Roosevelt Watson (17), Henderson Watson (21), James Edward Jackson Jr. (17), Johnny B. Jackson (18) and J.D. Davenport (18), were charged in the murder of a Dawson, Ga., man during an alleged grocery store robbery. From the outset, supporters have said the five were held on insufficient evidence.

In addition to the forced confessions, the prosecution relied on the testimony of the white owner of the grocery store where the murder took place. It was learned that the owner, Linward (Tiny) Denton, failed to call the police immediately after the shooting, and initially stated he could not identify any of the culprits.

It wasn't until five days later that he named Roosevelt Watson, whom he should have had little difficulty in recognizing since he was a regular customer at



the store. When the four other youths contended that Watson was several miles away at the time of the shooting, they too were arrested.

More than discrepancies marred the case. In his statement on suppressing the confessions Superior Court Judge Walter Geer said that the statements "were not freely, voluntarily and intelligently made."

He also announced the administration of a lie-detector test to Roosevelt Watson in Americus, Ga., "in an environment strange to the defendant." Watson "confessed" only after he was threatened with electrocution and castration, and forced to search for the alleged murder weapon—which was never found—in an icy pond for several hours. The other defendants also "confessed" after being interrogated at pistol point.

The forced confession charges against the police were corroborated by William Rucker, a former Dawson police inspector, who testified that he was present when a deputy questioned one of the de-

fendants, Junior Jackson, with a pistol cocked at Jackson's head.

The Dawson case revealed numerous instances of harassment and discrimination against blacks in Georgia. Millard Farmer, defense attorney for the Five and a staff member of Team Defense, a legal defense project that focuses its work on prisoners threatened with the death penalty, disclosed the gross underrepresentation of blacks in the jury pool in Terrell County. He found that the jury pool was 26 percent black, although blacks make up 65 percent of the county's population.

William Rucker, the former police inspector who confirmed the torture charges against the police, described under oath the pattern of illegal activities aimed at repressing black people in Dawson. This harassment included keeping lists of all blacks—but no whites—who buy guns, intimidating some blacks who tried to register to vote and setting high bails for imprisoned blacks.

—Liberation News Service

LABOR

Steel City: Buy it or lose it

by David Moberg
Staff Writer

"Black Monday" in Youngstown, Ohio, was more than any town should suffer. That was the day Youngstown Sheet and Tube suddenly closed its aging Campbell steel works, throwing nearly 5,000 workers out of their jobs and sending waves of economic jitters through municipal offices and small businesses that had depended on the steel economic backbone since the first iron furnace opened there in 1803.

Yet in the few months since that day, Sept. 12, United States Steel has also announced that it will let its mills in Youngstown run down, eventually eliminating those 5,000 jobs; General Fireproofing, a major steel fabricator, is leaving; General Motors' Packard Electric in nearby Warren laid off over 1,000 workers; and Lykes Corp., the conglomerate that bought out Youngstown Sheet and Tube in 1969, has been hinting strongly that it might abandon its remaining Youngstown steel facilities.

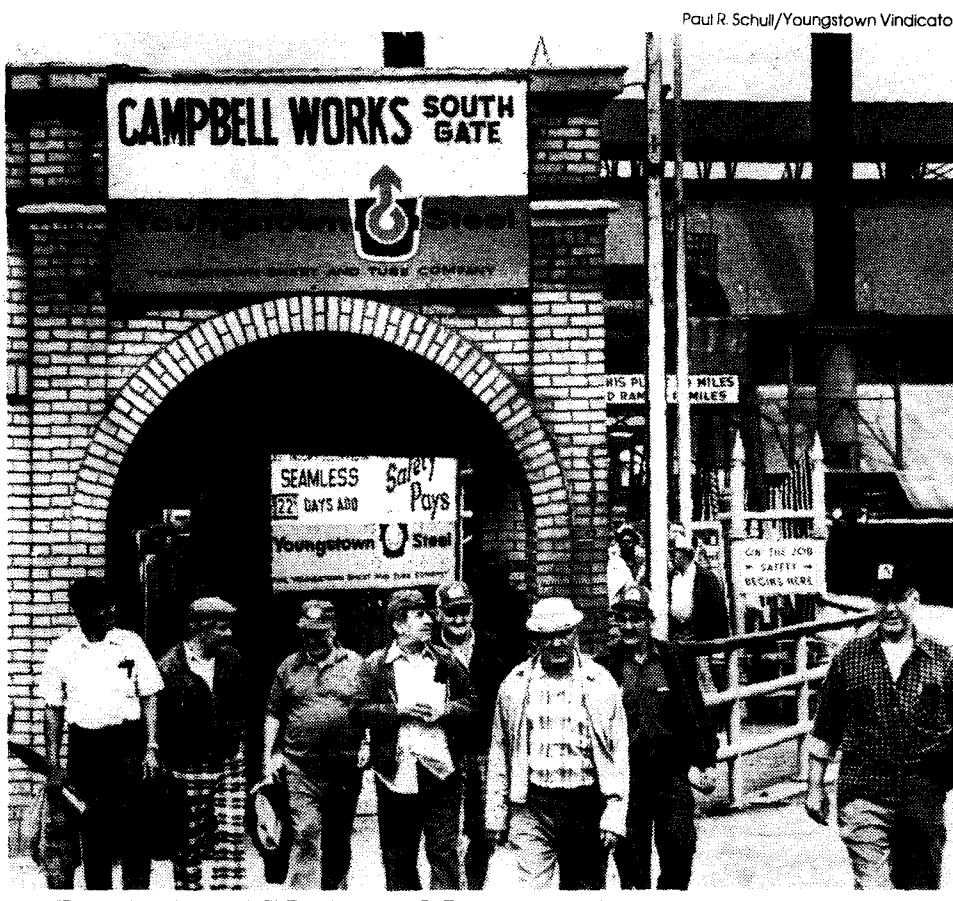
Faced with such desperate circumstances, a surprising coalition of community leaders has endorsed a dramatic proposal for the community and workers to purchase and operate the vacated Campbell Works, with its current producing capacity of nearly two million tons a year, mainly of sheet steel.

Although there are between 200 and 300 worker-owned firms of one sort or another in the U.S. now, this would be one of the largest undertakings. If successful, it could be a model for other communities facing loss of industries and jobs and provide leverage to construct a new federal urban policy.

Save Youngstown.

That's the theme of the campaign—"Save Youngstown, Save Urban America." It has already gained support from all major religious leaders in the area (including several bishops), nearly every politician, Steelworkers union director Frank Leseganich, presidents of six steel union locals and many in the community—workers in steel and other industries as well as small businessmen.

Despite the initial broad endorsement, most people remain skeptical. Laid-off steelworkers are still collecting unemployment and Trade Readjustment Act benefits totaling \$208 a week in most cases.



Paul R. Schul/Youngstown Vindicator

Facing loss of thousands of jobs, Youngstown steelworkers asked, "Why don't we run the mills?" Once a joke, it's now their hope.

Most will probably delay any planned exodus to new industrial Meccas, such as Houston, until summer. Supplementary Unemployment Benefits for the workers are nearly exhausted, however. Steel companies, in Youngstown and across the country, are also refusing to grant the 1977 contract's much-touted job security benefits to anyone laid off before Jan. 1, 1978, including the Campbell workers. (The union is taking the issue to arbitration but informed sources expect that they will lose.)

Yet there is less skepticism and more hope about the takeover plan now than there was last September, when Gerald Dickey, recording secretary at the Brier Hill local of Youngstown Sheet and Tube, began pushing the community-worker

ownership idea he'd picked up at a Campbell town meeting. A few days later he put on his three-piece suit to talk with "one of the local millionaires" about his idea.

"This guy was the first to laugh in my face about it," Dickey recalls. "You ought to have seen people laughing in the beginning. I was the biggest asshole in the world talking about 'community ownership.' Still a lot of people think it's a joke."

Less laughing now.

There's less laughing and more listening now:

• Over 200 churches and clergy, gathered in a new Ecumenical Coalition of the Mahoning Valley, called a conference in late October, adopted the idea and excoriated both ineffective, nonexistent federal

urban policy and the Lykes Corp., which they said had "failed the test of stewardship in the management of this company and its resources."

• Consulting engineer George Beetle, in a study commissioned by the Western Reserve Economic Development Agency, concluded that Campbell Works could be re-opened and break even on its recently losing operations by 1983.

• Then on Dec. 31 the Department of Housing and Urban development granted the Ecumenical Coalition \$300,000 to draft within six months feasibility studies and designs for community-worker ownership. Gar Alperovitz of the National Center for Economic Alternatives will direct those projects.

The federal government could provide substantial economic aid to the community-worker control project under existing legislation. However, it will probably make no pledges until there is a convincing plan and a demonstration of serious grass-roots financial commitment.

Union would still be needed.

Although work on the design of the new enterprise has barely begun, Alperovitz has a few ideas, partly reflecting discussions with people in the area. First, "no one thinks it should be union-owned," he said, "not even the union. The whole community has a stake in it and will be needed for money equity and support."

Yet the community as a whole should not be the owner, he also says. Instead its power should be balanced with that of workers in the mill.

Also, "the union as an institution should maintain its traditional bargaining role," Alperovitz says. Leaders in the Ecumenical Coalition have firmly stated, according to Catholic Bishop James Malone's chief aide, Fr. Ed Stanton, that the plan is in "no way part of a labor-busting or union-busting thing."

Union leaders want a guarantee that the national Steelworkers contract will be respected, including seniority and pension rights.

In the present crisis atmosphere the main concern has been restoring jobs, but there has also been some talk about workers playing a role in governing the plant and controlling their work. However, the plant's success will require "strong, competent management—under policy guidance."

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Job security gains for Longshoremen

by Dan Marschall
Staff Writer

NEW YORK—For 20 years the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) has sought a single contract for ports on the Atlantic coast as partial compensation for the union's dwindling membership and threatened decrease in bargaining power. As 50,000 East Coast longshoremen headed back to work last month, ending a 60-day strike, they brought with them a settlement that makes significant progress towards that goal.

Through a precedent-breaking "job security program," the union turned guaranteed annual income (GAI)—traditionally negotiated port by port—into a coast-wide bargaining issue. The new three-year pact, in addition to wage and benefit increases of 30.5 percent over the life of the agreement, establishes a coast-wide fund, jointly administered by union and management, to cover any shortfalls in welfare, pension and GAI funds.

The job security section is thus one of the "best plans in industry," boasted ILA president Thomas "Taddy" Gleason.

The prime issue in the strike was containerization—the shipments of cargo in van-size metal boxes that are loaded to and from ships with giant, highly mechanized cranes.

"The ILA's position has always been that we couldn't stop progress, but wanted to share in it. Any increase in productivity enjoyed by management has to be shared by labor," Lawrence Malloy, ILA public relations counsel, told IN THESE TIMES.

First introduced in the late 1950s, containerization expanded rapidly after 1965 when shipping companies realized its widespread advantages in economic efficiency, lower labor costs and higher productivity. Industry calculates, for example, that it takes 10,584 man-hours to load and unload 11,000 tons of cargo by conventional methods. The same cargo on a container ship can be handled in 546 man-hours.

Containerized operations also cut the "dead time" required for ships to load and unload in ports from seven to eight days to 36-48 hours.

The effect on longshore employment, however, has been devastating. In the port of New York, where containerization now accounts for 70 percent of all cargo movements, the longshore work force has declined from 31,000 in 1958 to 12,000 in 1976, according to union and industry figures.

The ILA made its first breakthrough in countering the job-destroying impact of

containerization in 1968. After a 57-day strike, the union won a "job protection" provision stipulating that any container coming from or destined to a point within a 50-mile radius of an ILA port would be "stuffed" (placing cargo into containers) or "stripped" (taking cargo out) by ILA labor.

This contract clause was intended to stop shippers from utilizing non-union labor at inland "consolidators" and thus avoiding ILA wages and work rules.

The 1968 agreement also guaranteed longshoremen in New York, the busiest port on the coast, a minimum of 2,080 hours of work annually, granting them an approximate income of \$16,640. This guaranteed annual income then spread to contracts at other ports, although the minimum number of hours was considerably less.

Since the widespread use of containerization, these rules have maintained some longshore jobs while protecting the incomes of all members on union rolls before 1969. In recent years, however, both these provisions have run into trouble.

In 1975 the National Labor Relations Board declared that the "stuffing and stripping" clause violated the Taft-Hartley Act. Its decision was later upheld by the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, more shippers have diverted their goods away from New York because the high GAI payments made shipping more costly. According to the New York Shipping Association, local carriers paid out over four times the GAI benefits than five other ports combined. But as shippers pull out, the fund, based on shipping tonnage, are jeopardized.

These developments led the ILA and NYSA to propose that GAI become a coastwide issue. For NYSA, this change would recapture some competitive advantage for the New York port. For the ILA, it would begin to compensate for the loss of their "stuffing and stripping" rule.

In large part, their gambit succeeded. Shippers based outside New York strongly opposed the new proposal, but were impelled to accept it by the union's still-considerable strike muscle. Deficits in local GAI plans will now be covered by the coastwide fund.

The contract also approaches parity in GAI plans from port to port. In Boston, for example, the minimum hours were increased from 1,500 to 1,700. In New Orleans a sliding scale of up to 2,080 hours was enacted.

The new contract "creates a whole new ball game," commented one shipping executive who resisted the changes. ■