

IN THESE TIMES

# Their first march may not be their last



By David Moberg and John Judis

WASHINGTON

**D**AVE WILLIAMS, A MIDDLE-aged machinist who works in the Pratt-Whitney jet engine factory in Southington, Conn., looked out at the stream of green-and-white shirted members of AFSCME who were marching by, chanting, "We're fired up, we can't take no more." He was surrounded by about 400 other members of the 2,000-worker local that he serves as recording secretary, waiting to take their turn in the parade of labor on Solidarity Day.

"I've never been to a march before," he remarked. "It feels good."

With at least a quarter-million, perhaps as many as 400,000 marchers, organized labor had reason to feel good about the first major Washington demonstration that it had ever called, let alone actively supported. Even in the days before, many of labor's leaders had privately wondered if they could pull it off. But with a mighty expenditure of organizational effort and at least five million dollars, the nation's major unions—except for the Teamsters—tapped a solid vein of working-class resentment against what they see as a fundamental unfairness of the Reagan administration.

But the crowd was noteworthy for more than its numbers. Unlike the participants at the great protests of the '60s, the marchers at Solidarity Day were overwhelmingly working class. Blacks as well as women were fully represented, reflecting their growing importance in the labor movement. And because of a newfound willingness of the AFL-CIO leaders to seek allies among the movements that arose in the '60s, middle-class feminists from NOW, civil rights proponents from the NAACP, environmentalists from Environmental Action and socialists from the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC) and New American Movement (NAM) marched alongside many people who had recoiled in horror at the demonstrations of 10 or 15 years ago.

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Williams caught some of the mood of the crowd in describing why his union local made the long bus trip to Washington: "They're sick and tired of this stupid bastard running this country. Mr. Robin Hood in reverse. Take from the poor and give to the rich. Next week he'll say: 'Let 'em eat cake.'"

Reagan is a "threat to social security, a threat to our jobs and a threat to our unions, with the way he treated the air controllers," Williams said. Even though he and his fellow workers build engines for the F-15 and F-14 jet fighters, he favors cutbacks in the military "to some extent." He's also angry at companies like Pratt-Whitney for exporting jobs and importing more and more component parts.

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activists like Williams, to demonstrate that the AFL-CIO leadership does speak for the nation's workers and disadvantaged. As many of the marchers acknowledged, there were friends back in the shop who were still sympathetic to Reagan for promising tax cuts and attacking social welfare programs, but the Solidarity rally made it clear that many in the core of the labor movement—the local officers, the shop stewards, the activist members—have no sympathy for Reaganism. If anything they were more critical of Reagan than their leaders and more willing to take militant action.

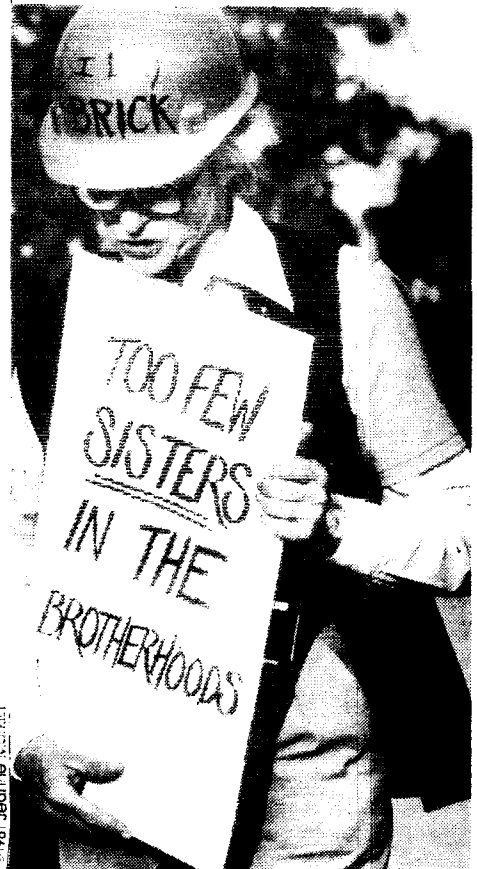
One issue where the difference was most apparent was the size of the defense budget. Kirkland and his assistant Tom Kahn are both long-time Cold Warriors who have backed Reagan's arms buildup. In the initial stages of organizing Solidarity Day, Kahn had even tried to prevent DSOC from becoming a sponsor because of its opposition to increased defense spending. But at the August AFL-CIO executive council meeting, Douglas Fraser of the United Auto Workers (UAW), with the support of AFSCME's Jerry Wurf and the Machinists' William Wipisinger, won council agreement for a mild statement decrying possible waste in the defense budget.

At the rally, the labor speakers simply avoided the issue. Wipisinger, the most outspoken defense critic, was not permitted to speak. Another labor leader omitted criticism of the defense build-up from the final draft of his speech. It took black leaders Benjamin Hooks of the NAACP

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Steve Cogan



For Joanne Vardell

## The view from one local

Nearly 400 members of an amalgamated New York City local of electrical workers mainly involved in defense-related work (OUE Local 431) made their way to Solidarity Day. Their anger was not atypical.

"For the worker who's going to be retired in 10 to 15 years, for the worker who's going to take disability, Reagan's social security plans are a problem," Irv Cohen, 50, a short, round, balding and jovial shop steward, said. "Also, OSHA is very important. I don't think there's much support for Reagan in our local, but Carter was a total loss."

Cohen liked the demonstration, but "what this country needs is a one-day walkout."

"A nationwide strike for one day," Sam Miller, 57, another shop committee member echoed.

"Union leaders are going to have to have guts," James Barton, 43, a black

trustee of the local added.

"This should have been done before the cuts," Miller said. "But on Oct. 1, when the cuts are felt, that's when you'll see the reaction, when the handicapped are affected, the old people are affected. People are going to get fed up. I think you're going to see riots. The only reason you haven't until now is food stamps—circuses and bread. You'll have more crime and people will be afraid to walk the streets. But Reagan may be one of the best things that's happened to the U.S. It will wake people up."

"Even though we do defense work and we've got jobs, we're hurt by cuts in social spending," Cohen said.

"We've got jobs," Barton said, "but we feel for others."

Would you be in favor of cutting the defense budget?

"Absolutely, yes," Cohen and the others chorused. "You build these wea-

pons and somebody's going to use them."

"You can't eat the MX," Barton said. "When you see all these people here, you know something's wrong."

Miller had little enthusiasm for any politicians. "The Democrats, whatever Reagan said, they went along with it," he said. "O'Neill said he was defeated before it even happened. This demonstration may not have an impact on Reagan, but it will scare the Congress. They're coming up for election. When they see us, this is votes—hard votes. The only time we'll get change in this country is when we get a third force, a party made of all unions in the country or like in New York when unions had the American Labor Party."

What do you think of the current leadership of the labor movement?

"Weak," Sam said.

"Weak," Irv echoed.

"The leadership shouldn't have let PATCO down. They should have had a nationwide strike like they do in Poland," Barton said. "It just makes them weaker."

—D.M. & J.J.

## SHORT

## Life irritates art

The *Atlanta Weekly* magazine recently decided to spice up its coverage of Atlanta's unspectacular mayoral race by requiring each candidate to resolve a thorny problem in a matter of hours. The hypothetical situation concocted by the *Weekly* had a black, PUSH-style group making quota-hiring demands on major corporations based in the city. In response, the corporate leaders had threatened to pull up stakes and move to a nearby suburb that offered them an attractive tax subsidy and a cozy deal in an industrial park. The mayoral aspirant's mission, should he decide to accept it, was to explain in writing how he, as mayor, would handle this scenario—in the three hours before the business nabobs held a press conference.

In mid-afternoon the *Weekly* dropped off a questionnaire at the office of each candidate, including former U.N. ambassador Andrew Young. Things were going smoothly until a hitch developed with tire dealer J.K. Ramey, a maverick right-wing candidate who easily clears six feet in height and has been known to favor string ties and cowboy hats. When a photographer arriving at Ramey's office made the mistake of saying "I'm here to shoot you for the magazine," the would-be mayor—an outspoken opponent of the criminal element—drew his gun and backed the visitor up against the wall. It was evidently a problem of semantics.

## Church v. state

In what the Abortion Rights Mobilization (ARM) calls "a startling attempt to overthrow a traditional safeguard of church-state separation," the National Conference of Catholic Bishops/U.S. Catholic Conference has asked a federal court in New York to declare a crucial tax law unconstitutional. The law now under attack by the Catholic hierarchy, Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, prohibits tax-exempt organizations from using their money or facilities (such as church-funded newspapers) to intervene directly in political campaigns.

"This attack by a leading religious group," says ARM president Lawrence Lader, "would seriously endanger the First Amendment prohibition against religious intervention in political campaigns that has been an American tradition for 200 years." ARM went into federal court last fall to ask that the Catholic Church's tax-exempt status be removed because of continued violations of 501(c)(3). In recent memoranda to the federal court, the Church has responded by arguing that the law itself is unconstitutional and should be overthrown.

## Cowboy giver

As schoolchildren resigned themselves to ketchup sandwiches with a side order of relish, corporate diners were chuckling over their publicly subsidized desserts. The reason: While direct spending in certain areas has been cut back, \$266 billion in indirect spending (in the form of tax expenditures) have been left untouched by the Reagan administration's budget ax. *The Untouchables*, a study released recently by Common Cause, provides the following examples of this ambidextrous spending policy:

- Government spending to subsidize housing for low-income families was reduced for 1982, but tax expenditures, or loopholes, encouraging homeownership went unscathed.
- Though children from middle-income families will lose eligibility for federally funded lunch programs, tax benefits will keep flowing to corporate employees who lunch at the partial expense of all taxpayers.
- Three million retired workers will lose their minimum social security benefits next February, but employers who set up pension plans for their employees will continue to enjoy special tax benefits.
- And while the government has chopped off a third of its program to warn Americans about the health risks of smoking, the tax system will go on supporting ads for tobacco products.

The rest of this sad story is available from Common Cause at 2030 M Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

## Hobby hoarse

Mark I. Pinsky reports that Wilbur Hobby, the activist president of the North Carolina AFL-CIO who became the target of a federal prosecution for alleged mishandling of two CETA programs (*In These Times*, Aug. 26), was defeated for re-election on Sept. 18 at the state AFL-CIO's annual convention in Raleigh, N.C. Hobby's trial, postponed several times because of his ill health and this election, is scheduled to begin on Dec. 7. Before the voting, supporters of both candidates acknowledged that the primary factor in the contest was the legal action pending against the former tobacco worker.

—Josh Kornbluth



Fowler shakes a hand that feeds him at a recent convention of broadcasters.

## New FCC chair has small ideas

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) chair Mark Fowler, a broadcast industry lawyer before his recent appointment, seems to want to be one again—soon. In a move untypical of Washington bureaucrats, he has led the commission in a request to Congress to shrink his agency drastically.

He and four other commissioners (with Democratic holdover Joseph Fogarty dissenting and just-appointed Henry Rivera abstaining) recommended on Sept. 17 that the commission be directed, in any rewrite of the Communications Act of 1934, to rely not on regulation but "on marketplace forces" to set standards for broadcast, phone, satellite and telegraph industries.

The biggest catch in the argument is that classic free-market forces in information simply do not exist. Decades of pro-industry regulation have fostered superpowers like AT&T and the television broadcast corporations. Vertical integration is strong in the cable industry, as is cross-ownership (for instance, 32 percent of cable systems are owned by broadcasters).

The commission also called for Congress to repeal equal time and "reasonable access" laws, which require equal opportunity for major political candidates on the air; and to repeal the fairness doctrine, which requires that opposing sides of a controversy be aired. Among other recommendations, the new FCC also endorsed a Senate proposal to end an aspiring license applicant's right to file a petition to deny TV license renewal as long as "minimal standards" are being met by the present licensee.

Friends of the Fairness Doctrine—a Washington, D.C., advocacy group including more than 30 media reform groups, along with religious, labor, women's, consumer and other organizations—has protested the recommendations, charging that "the FCC has become the lobbying arm of the broadcasting industry." It cited Supreme Court decisions in 1969 and 1981 upholding the constitutionality of the fairness doctrine and its importance in protecting First Amendment rights.

Fowler has eagerly endorsed the notion of pro-big-business deregulation since he was nominated for his new post. But with this series of

recommendations he has gone further, encouraging a fundamental restructuring—a reduction in power and size—of the FCC.

Perhaps he, like James (Mr. Apocalypse) Watt, just isn't worried about the future.

(Friends of the Fairness Doctrine can be reached c/o Deborah Costlow, Media Access Project, 1609 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, D.C., 20009, (202) 232-4300.)

—Pat Aufderheide

## Day eight at the Diablo blockade

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA—As of day eight of the action, protests against the Diablo nuclear plant continued despite the arrest on trespassing charges of 1,400 people who had blockaded entrances to the facility for more than a week. The blockade was expected to last at least until the end of September, though the Abalone Alliance, the coalition of antinuclear groups that organized the civil disobedience action, claimed that "no end is in sight."

Among those arrested were San Francisco black activist Rev. Cecil Williams and rock singer Jackson Browne, a long-time nuclear foe who has given several benefit performances for the Abalone group.

During a lull over the Sept. 19-20 weekend, 5,000 local residents, who had not joined the blockade, marched past the main gate to show their disapproval of the plant.

While people continued to join the blockade, the overall numbers dwindled after nearly a quarter of the estimated 2,500 participants in the protest were arrested on Sept. 15. By Sept. 22, about 400 people remained at Abalone's outdoor headquarters, located 15 miles north of the plant. Efforts by county officials to close down the camp were delayed by Abalone attorneys.

Meanwhile, rough handling by

arresting officers had apparently declined since a state highway patrolman pointed a cocked rifle at a group of protesters on Sept. 18. After the incident, blockade organizers received an apology from the state police commissioner; meetings with law-enforcement officials were also held to reduce the rising level of tension. But Abalone did compile "about a dozen instances of documented brutality" and was considering filing a formal complaint, spokesperson Mark Evanoff said.



The state police commissioner has apologized for brutality against protesters.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission decision on Sept. 21 to approve reactor testing at the plant did not dim Abalone hopes, according to spokesperson Jim Adams. "We're disappointed with the ruling, but not surprised," Adams said. "From the calls we've received since the decision, it appears that more people will join us. So this may just add fuel to the fire as far as we are concerned."

—G. Pascal Zachary



Isabel Letelier at the dedication of a monument to her late husband and Ronni Moffitt.

## Letelier death is commemorated

"I was advised many times not to come accept this award," Jacobo Timmerman, former prisoner of the Argentine junta and author of *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*, told the 200 people who had gathered for brunch Sept. 20 at Washington's

Georgetown Hotel to see him receive the Institute for Policy Studies' fifth annual Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award. "But I decided to come personally because of that. The slander against you must not prevent me from expressing my solidarity with this institute and paying my respects to Orlando Letelier and Ronni Karpen Moffitt."

Letelier, the former ambassador for Allende's Chile and later the director of IPS' Transnational Institute, and Moffitt, a co-worker at IPS, were murdered Sept. 21, 1976, when a bomb planted by agents of the Chilean Secret Police exploded in Letelier's car. This year's recipients of the award in their memory were Timmerman and the Maryknoll Sisters, two of whose members were assassinated in El Salvador last December.

Sister Blaise Luppó, in accepting the award for the sisters, made clear that the assassinations would not deter the order from carrying out its mission in third world countries. "We work for human rights because we have come to understand God in that way," she said.

Prior to the brunch for Timmerman and the Maryknoll Sisters, Letelier and Moffitt's colleagues at IPS dedicated a small monument to them, erected on the corner of Sheridan Square where they were assassinated. With the shadow of Reagan's foreign policies hanging over the small gathering, a local singing group intoned, "This is a mean world to try to live in until you die."

—John Judis