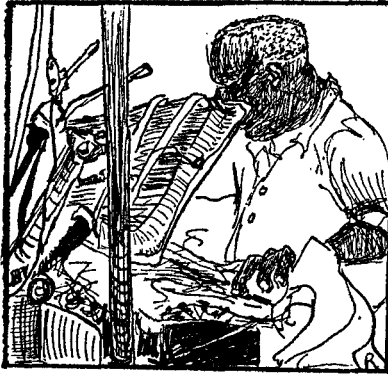


Gus Tyler's article is an answer to Herbert Hill's sharply critical view of the ILGWU which appeared in our last issue. We look forward to continuing and broadening the debate on the relationship between the Negro and labor movements. This is surely one of the most important political and social issues in American life today.

Mr. Hill has informed our Board that he is writing a detailed answer to Mr. Tyler's article below. Naturally, Mr. Tyler will have the right to rebut. Other material on the question of Negroes and the labor movement will be found in the correspondence section in this issue.

The Truth About the ILGWU

Gus Tyler



ON AUGUST 17, 1962, the Labor Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Herbert Hill, began to read "testimony" to the House Education and Labor Committee investigating the "extent" of discrimination, exploitation and corruption in the garment industry and the union. Hill never had a chance to finish his statement. Committee members objected to its inclusion in the record because it was not factual testimony but "opinions, conclusions, and characteriza-

tions." (*New York Times*, August 19, 1962)

Unable to have his "testimony" accepted by the Committee (to which he was a special consultant) as submitted, Hill used the facilities of the NAACP to circulate the statement widely. The same piece appeared as an article in *New Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 4.

When David Dubinsky, President of the ILGWU, appeared before the Committee to refute charges, he was repeatedly told that the Committee would *not* entertain replies to Hill *since the Hill statement was not part of the record*.

On October 8, Hill's "testimony" became the basis for a resolution passed by the NAACP Board of Directors demanding further Congressional investigation of the ILGWU. The resolution stated that "the union leaders have as yet made no adequate answer to charges."

Since the Hill testimony is the basis for a widening rift between the NAACP and the progressive labor movement, it may be worthwhile to see how much truth there is in this basic body of charges.

! To set the Hill charges in perspective, here is the ILGWU policy and record:

1. The doors of the union are open to all workers, regardless of race, creed or color. Among members it counts Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, French Canadians, Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese, and the older ethnic groups of Jews, Italians, Irish, Poles, Russians, Germans, and Scandinavians. Just how many the union does not know since it does not put a racial or religious tag on dues-payers. But Negroes and Spanish-speaking members alone—relative newcomers—run into the tens of thousands.

2. The union admits all races, creeds and colors to its skilled craft locals, the cutters and pressers. These add up to hundreds of Negroes, Puerto Ricans, plus other Latins, Japanese, etc.

3. The union runs extensive training and placement programs to upgrade skills and teach new skills especially for newcomers. In the skilled operating category, this program in the union's greatest center—New York with about half the union membership—is attended by workers, 90% of whom are Negroes and Puerto Ricans.

4. The union runs an unusual leadership training program to recruit and train leadership from all groups, with a special care to find present staff and future top leadership reflective of the composition of the industry and the union.

5. All union facilities are integrated: locals, meetings, summer camp, health centers. This is true of the union everywhere.

6. The union has, for years, been a force in civil rights movements—and has been recognized as such.

And now to the details.

HILL CHARGE: “As a matter of practice and policy, Negroes and Puerto Ricans are barred from membership in these locals”—Local 10, Cutters; Local 60, Pressers; and the Pressers Branch Local 89.

THE TRUTH: In Local 10, there are 199 known Negro and Spanish-speaking members (the ILGWU has many Cubans, Panamanians, Colombians, Dominicans, Salvadorians, Mexicans, etc., as well as Puerto Ricans) as of the summer of 1962. There are probably more. An exact count is difficult since the union does not tag its membership by racial categories. The 199 names were found in a shop count. (The count rose to 239 by November 1962.)

The 200 or more Negroes and Spanish-speaking members of Cutters' Local 10 is an impressive demonstration of integration, since in this trade where there is very little “turnover” of employ-

ment, the total number of jobs covered by Local 10 has fallen in the last decade. Despite a *diminishing* number of available jobs, there are at least 200 Negroes and Spanish-speaking members in the cutters' union.

HILL CHARGE: "Local 60 has an all white membership."

THE TRUTH: One out of every five *pressers* (a skilled craft) in Local 60 is either Negro or Spanish-speaking, mainly Puerto Rican. This, too, was accomplished in the face of diminishing jobs for pressers in the New York market.

HILL CHARGE: "Locals 10, 60 and 89 are lily white."

THE TRUTH: The charge is pure fabrication, as we have seen, in the case of Locals 10 and 60. The charge is comical in the case of Local 89. This local was created at a time when dressmakers' Local 22 conducted its meetings in Yiddish, because the members could not speak English. The newcomer Italians did not understand Yiddish, so they set up a parallel local to conduct the union's business in Italian. Local 89 still does so, with the result that it is not "lily white," but pure Italian, with no Negroes, Jews, Puerto Ricans or other non-Italians in the membership. To put Negro pressers in Local 89, as Hill seems to suggest, would be to disfranchise them completely from union participation unless they were Italian-speaking Negroes.

Negro dress pressers (who work in the same shops as Italian Local 89 dress pressers under the same contract with the same wage rates) are members of Local 60—where the business is conducted in English, a language more convenient for most of the Negro pressers.

HILL CHARGE: "Negro and Puerto Rican workers (in the New York Dress Joint Board) are limited to membership in Local 22 and in the unit known as 60A which is the 'jim crow' auxiliary of Local 60."

THE TRUTH: The locals of the Dress Joint Board are 10, 22, 60 and 89. There are Negro and Puerto Rican members in *every single one* of these locals except 89, the Italian affiliate of the Joint Board. Local 60A is not "jim crow," it contains all races, religions, etc. It is composed of *dress shipping clerks* no matter what their race, creed or color. It is a *craft* affiliate of Local 60 and *not a racial* grouping. Most of its members are Negro and Puerto Rican, but to call it a 'jim crow' local for that reason would be the same as calling the Sleeping Car Porters' Union a jim crow union because all or most of its members are Negro.

HILL CHARGE: "To anyone acquainted with the realities of the union's operations, the reason for denying a separate local union charter to 60A is that, given the ethnic composition of the

membership, there would inevitably be a Negro or Puerto Rican local union manager."

THE TRUTH: In the ILGWU, around the country, shipping clerks do *not* have separate locals, whether they are White, Negro, Gentile, Jewish or Mexican. Generally, ILGWU locals are *industrial*, not *craft*. The cutter and presser locals in New York and a few other areas have an historic basis that does not apply to parts of the country or even to the trades in New York that have been more recently organized.

More important: a majority of the combined members of Local 60 and Local 60A are Negro and Puerto Rican. Each member has an equal vote—whether in 60 or 60A. If the present manager is not a Negro or Puerto Rican, it merely indicates that the members of this union prefer not to cast a "racial" vote.

Hill's suggestion that a separate local of shipping clerks would elect a Negro manager is both inaccurate and vicious. It is inaccurate because Local 60A is "mixed" with no one ethnic group—Negro, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Irish, Jewish, or Italian—in a simple majority. What is more, if a predominantly Gentile labor movement could elect a Jew, Samuel Gompers, as its president for more than three decades; and if a Protestant U.S. could elect a Catholic as President; and if the NAACP could choose a white Jew as its labor secretary, there is no reason to believe that the members of Local 60A would elect a manager on a racist rather than unionist basis. The proposal is socially vicious because to create a separate Local 60A *just to guarantee the election of a Negro or Puerto Rican manager* is to create a jim crow local—separate but equal. ILGWU members prefer integration: craft and color.

HILL CHARGE: "These workers (members of Local 60A) earn in the vicinity of \$50 a week."

THE TRUTH: This may have been true before Local 60A organized the shipping clerks into a union. A study of 536 shops, employing 1,220 members of 60A, shows:

3%	earn from	\$46	to	\$49 a week.
13%	earn from	50	to	60 a week.
21%	earn from	60	to	70 a week.
22%	earn from	70	to	80 a week.
17%	earn from	80	to	90 a week.
9½%	earn from	90	to	100 a week.
14½%	earn more than	\$100 a week.		

This means that about two-thirds (63%) earned from \$70 a week up to more than \$100. The truth is that the shipping clerks owe a vote of thanks to the pressers local, whose relatively stable membership, high dues rate (more than twice that of the ship-

ping clerks), and experienced staff made these gains possible. Standing by themselves, the clerks would have great difficulties primarily because of the very high turnover of workers in their craft. The clerks enjoy all benefits of being united in *industrial* union fashion with a more highly skilled craft. No student of labor relations has to be told why—and to destroy these advantages to create a jim crow local is bad economics and worse inter-group relations.

HILL CHARGE: "Over a number of years, Negroes, who are members of other locals of the ILGWU, have attempted to secure membership in Local 10 but are almost without exception denied membership."

THE TRUTH: Among the more than 200 members of Negro and Spanish-speaking origin (including Puerto Ricans) there are members of Local 10 who were transferred from Locals 23, 66, 91, 105 and even 60A.

HILL CHARGE: "It is quite possible that for public relations purposes the ILGWU will produce *one* or *two* Negroes or Puerto Ricans who claim to be members of Locals 10 and 60."

THE TRUTH: The actual count in Locals 10 and 60 of members from these ethnic groups is well over 500. They do not "claim" to be members; they *are*. They have been for years.

On a November 9th broadcast, Hill stated "there are in the vicinity of 50 (Negro) cutters of Local 10 in the city."

Here it is clear that when Hill said "one or two" he had no regard for the truth. Now when he says 50 he still has no regard for the truth. This is the old McCarthy numbers game: a couple of thousand Communists in the State Department; a couple of hundred Communists in the State Department; maybe a couple in the State Department.

HILL CHARGE: Local 10 had been found "guilty" of excluding Ernest Holmes from membership because he was a Negro.

THE TRUTH: On November 4, 1962, WNBC-TV broadcast the following:

On September 9, 1962, in the second half of a broadcast of "Our Protestant Heritage," over this station, a guest, Herbert Hill, Labor Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, made certain spontaneous and unrehearsed remarks concerning the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and two of its leaders.

Mr. Hill stated that, in the Ernest Holmes case, Local 10 of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union had been found guilty of discrimination by the State Commission For Human Rights.

The fact is that this case is still being investigated by the Commission and no final determination of guilt has been made.

The full story will be available when the investigation is completed.

HILL CHARGE: "To prevent the admission of non-white persons into that local union (Local 10)," the leadership exerts "rigid control of admission into various training programs . . ." including the "referral of young persons to the Fashion Institute of Technology High School."

THE TRUTH: Local 10, of course, does *not* prevent the admission of Negroes and Puerto Ricans. They are members of Local 10.

"The Fashion Institute of Technology High School" is nonexistent. There are two separate schools of major importance to the needle trades in New York where the trade is taught. The first is the High School of Fashion Industries, run by the New York Board of Education. The other is the Fashion Institute of Technology, a two year college level school, licensed by the State of New York. Despite the fact that these two schools have been the great training-ground for the industry since 1933, Hill has done so little research into the way people are trained and placed in the New York garment trades that he does not even know the *names* of these schools.

Neither Local 10 nor any other union controls admissions, formally or informally, to the High School of Fashion Industries or to the Fashion Institute of Technology. Any grammar school graduate who wishes to may enroll in the High School. If that High School discriminates against any student, then the NAACP ought to denounce the New York Board of Education. The truth of the matter is that in the High School of Fashion Industries, the student body is presently about 40% *Puerto Rican* and about 30% *Negro*. The school graduates cutters as well as operators and has for years been successfully placing its graduates.

HILL CHARGE: "The ILGWU . . . continues to operate the union in the interests of a small and declining number of white garment workers with high *seniority*."

THE TRUTH: In the New York metropolitan area as in almost 95% of the ILGWU shops, there is *no seniority clause* in contracts. The ILGWU contracts call for *equal division of work* when there is not enough to go around.

The terrible irony is that the ILGWU is one of the few, perhaps the only, major union calling for equal division of work. In the ILGWU, the Negro or Puerto Rican in New York, or Mexican in the Southwest, or Japanese on the West Coast is *not* the *last hired* and the *first fired*. Once a member of the union, any worker—regardless of origin—shares the work equally. No union in America—or anywhere in the world—has a greater job security clause for newcomers to the trade and union.

HILL CHARGE: "A shortage of skilled sewing machine operators in developing (in New York). The leadership of the skilled craft locals of the ILGWU must bear a share of the responsibility."

THE TRUTH: There is a shortage of skilled sewing machine operators. Nobody knows this better than the ILGWU. Some employers have either closed shop in New York or threatened to fold up for lack of skilled operators. Hill's charge implies that the ILGWU prejudice is so deep that rather than teach Negroes and Puerto Ricans these advanced skills, the union would prefer to lose the industry and lose its strength at its prime center in New York.

The truth is that as far back as 1938, the ILGWU worked with Max Meyer to set up the Central Needle Trades High School (now the High School of Fashion Industries) to train skilled workers. The school is a huge establishment, advertising its existence in subway car cards pleading for increased enrollment. Its student body numbers about 2,000. Its ethnic composition: 40% Puerto Rican and 30% Negro.

In addition, the High School runs evening sessions. Here there is open enrollment for any worker in the trade to learn any skill: operator, cutter, pattern maker. Last year, more than 700 ILGWU members attended. 90% (*ninety percent*) were either Negro or Puerto Rican.

In addition: to encourage ILGWU members to upgrade skills, New York locals run special union-sponsored classes—advertised by and recruited by the locals. The High School teaches the classes on its premises. 532 ILGWU members attended last year. 90% (*ninety percent*) were Negro or Puerto Rican. These classes have been run for years.

(For any reader who may doubt that Hill could so have perverted the truth, I propose that you get the facts by writing either to Michael Katzoff, Principal, or Theresa Fanelli, Teacher-in-charge of the Evening Session, at the High School of Fashion Industries, 225 West 24th Street, New York 11, N.Y. Or better yet: organize a committee and go and look.)

HILL CHARGE: The two Puerto Rican locals "are denied Puerto Rican leadership."



THE TRUTH: The entire leadership of the Puerto Rican locals—Director of Organization, Business Agents, organizers, local Presidents, and Executive Board members—is Puerto Rican. The sole exception: Jerry Schoen, a state-side man with many years of experience who serves as Manager. (Schoen was appointed only after Alberto Sanchez, Puerto Rican Director of Organization, *turned down* the job as *manager* to stay with organizing.)

Perhaps more pertinent for those who prefer the “color-blind” approach to this problem is the letter submitted by Hipolito Marcano, President of the Puerto Rican Federation of Labor, to the sub-committee of the House Committee on Education and Labor, on this matter:

The workers in Puerto Rico never look at the national origin, color, race, religion or political ideas of their leaders with the only exception of communist affiliation which is barred by our State Federation Constitution. A labor leader's worth cannot be measured by his religious beliefs, his origin or color of his skin but by his service, dedication and devotion to the cause of the working people whom he represents. We learned that lesson at the turn of the past century, when our labor movement was founded—not by a Puerto Rican—but by a native born Spaniard, Mr. Santiago Iglesias.

The workers in the garment industry in Puerto Rico were earning 2 cents an hour in 1940, when President Dubinsky and other “continentals” representing labor were appointed as part of the first Wage & Hour Committee to investigate this industry. Today those workers average over \$1.00 an hour and their wages are constantly increasing in addition to very reasonable fringe benefits. A great change has taken place and is going on. Organized labor has done a substantial part to win that battle for the enrichment of our life as a free and democratic community. We don't care about the color, origin or religion of the leaders who have done that task of constructive leadership. The credit goes to the Union and in this particular industry the credit goes to the ILGWU for a job well done and for which we are grateful.

HILL CHARGE: “In the locals where there is a major concentration of non-white workers . . . the so-called minimum wages are in fact the maximum wages.”

THE TRUTH: ILGWU members, with rare exception, work on a piece work system. This means that a rate is set for a given operation and workers are paid for what they produce. The minimum is set so that the *slowest* worker will, on the set rate, make the minimum; the faster worker makes proportionately more—some twice as much or more. The average wage and the maximum wage in an ILGWU shop on piece work are *never* the minimum or even near the minimum.

In addition, ILGWU contracts provide for supplementary benefits—medical care, hospitalization, optical care, vacations with

pay, holidays with pay, death benefits, retirement benefits, severance payment, etc.—that automatically add 10%, 15%, or 20% to the money wage. This does not exist in similar ways in non-union shops.

ILGWU contracts provide that the union *minimum* shall not only be above the Federal minimum but shall automatically rise whenever the legal minimum rises.

ILGWU policy is to set union wages as high as possible without jeopardizing the jobs of unionized shops that must meet non-unionized competition in one of the most fiercely competitive industries in America. To pave the way for higher *union* wages, the ILGWU has successfully spearheaded repeated campaigns to raise the Federal legal minimum. For an account of the pioneer role of the needle and textile unions in the fight for an improved Federal minimum, see *A Legislative Campaign for a Federal Minimum Wage—1955* by Gus Tyler, published by the Eagleton Foundation, Rutgers University, New Jersey. Also see *Dissent*, Summer 1961, “Marginal Industries; Low Wages, High Risks” by Gus Tyler.

HILL CHARGE: “I cite the Fine Art Pillow and Specialties Company of 37 West 26th Street in Manhattan as a typical example of conditions . . . Here, virtually all non-white workers, male and female, who are union members are paid \$1.15, \$1.20 or \$1.25 an hour.”

THE TRUTH: According to a payroll check, 54 of the 104 employees are paid more than \$1.25 an hour. These are overwhelmingly Negro and Puerto Rican. Of the *top ten* earners—from \$1.53 an hour to \$3.23 an hour—seven are Negro or Puerto Rican.

The further truth is that Fine Art Pillow is about as typical of ILGWU conditions as Mississippi is typical of America. This is a rubber and plastic shop in a trade where union jurisdiction is contested by dozens of legitimate unions plus dozens of racket unions. Of the thousands of ILGWU shops in New York, Hill chose this one for an on-the-spot check. And even then, Hill got the facts all wrong.

HILL CHARGE: There is “systematic exclusion of Negro and Puerto Rican members from effective participation in the leadership and policy making procedures of the union.” Hill refers specifically to the fact that the ILGWU constitution sets up rules on caucuses and qualifications for holding top offices in the International union.

THE TRUTH: The caucus clause dates back to the 1920’s, when the ILGWU was in a battle with the “standing” caucuses of the Communist Party. Whatever the merits of the clause—a good subject for a full set of articles—it certainly is no bar to Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Cubans, Portuguese, French and other minorities

running for and winning office in the union. Dozens out of these backgrounds presently hold both appointed and elected office. If this "clause" is a sign of the "Decay of a Labor Union," then the ILGWU has been decaying ever since it beat the Communists several decades ago and increased its membership ten-fold.

Other qualifications provide that to run for President a member must be elected as delegate to the ILGWU convention. Hardly a disqualification! If a member can not be elected by his own local, he is hardly Presidential timber. In any event, this clause applies to all members—regardless of race, creed or color.

To run for the General Executive Board (top legislative body of about two dozen elected at the convention) a candidate must have served as a paid officer with the benefit of three years experience. Hardly a disqualification! Virtually every paid officer of the ILGWU has seen three years' service, including the dozens of Negroes and Puerto Ricans on staff.

Most important: *Every Convention of the ILGWU is a Constitutional Convention.* At any convention, a *simple majority* may remove all these qualifications to elect anyone the delegates want under any qualifications they set up.

The truth is that the ILGWU has made labor history by a most extensive and expensive program for leadership development, unparalleled in the world labor movement, with a conscious concentration on the development of leadership that would reflect the newer ethnic groups in the industry and the union.

In 1938, the ILGWU set up an Officer Qualification Course to prepare candidates for elective union posts. Enrollment was open to all members of two years standing. 832 applied. Of these 19 were Negro and 8 were Spanish-speaking—a total of 27 in 24 years.

Why so few? The answer is the composition of the union, where 80% of the members are female, with little interest in and less time for full-time union jobs. Of the 832, only 106 were women.

Because of the predominantly female composition of the ILGWU, especially among the newer ethnic groups, the union set up a full-time, full-year Training Institute in 1950 *to reach outside the trade*, if necessary to recruit leadership talent. (The only such program in the entire American labor movement.) In the first 11 years of its existence, the Institute graduated 30 trainees of Negro or Spanish-speaking origin. (90 applied. One out of three was graduated, a *higher* percentage than for the Institute as a whole.)

Some idea of the philosophy of the Institute and of the ILGWU can be obtained from a letter written by an ILGWU Vice-President when one Spanish-speaking graduate left the union

staff. The letter was addressed to a Puerto Rican social agency in February, 1960:

No one knows better than you that in the last few years many Spanish speaking workers, especially Puerto Ricans, have entered our industry and union. To develop staff and leadership from this community of working people we have a special Training Institute, a full year course. We look forward with keen interest to the growth and maturation of such new personnel so that in the coming years they may be able to play a major role in our union.

To us, C..... represented more than an individual. He represented a trend. His progress, we felt, would be an encouragement for other young men and women with his interests to serve in the labor movement.

To put it bluntly, we feel that C.....'s departure represents a setback to our program of developing Spanish-speaking staff and leadership in our union.

In the report of the General Executive Board of the union to its 1959 convention, progress was reported. "The call for the development of such leadership in the ranks of the ILGWU, on the basis of merit only, has taken the form of numerous appeals in the Spanish language press and in *Justicia* for Spanish-speaking ILGers to enroll in the ILGWU Training Institute. The results of the recent ILGWU elections indicate that a corps of such leaders is already emerging from the ranks."

The report went further. "President Dubinsky urged that the Puerto Rican government establish a training institute for developing community, civic and labor leadership for the thousands of islanders who are in transition. This would be the greatest preventive to their being exploited by misleaders and charlatans taking advantage of language and initial cultural confusion in the slum environment, as well as in the homeland island itself."

The ILGWU offered to provide on-the-job training on the mainland for these Puerto Rican trainees and pledged to place them on ILGWU staff immediately after graduation.

Without appearing to be superior or self-righteous, may I ask whether there is any other union in the world that can show a comparative record of trying to develop new leadership—with a specific eye on new ethnic groups?

HILL CHARGE: "Workers who take home \$49.00 a week tell each other jokes about the greed of union business agents."

THE TRUTH: The ILGWU has one of the tightest systems ever devised by a union to check on the conduct of its officers: an army of accountants with a special corps of accountants to check accountants. In the last 30 years, the union has had occasion to drop some 40 of its officers for improper conduct.

The Hill charge is trial by rumor and humor. It is an anonymous smear: the kind of smear used to characterize races, religions, the NAACP, or the labor movement by reference to some piece of gossip embedded in jokes. No facts. No names. No evidence. Just a report on alleged jokes.

The truth is that, although I knew this anonymous piece of evidence—trial by rumor—was in the Hill “testimony,” I was shocked that *New Politics* did not use the editorial scissors here.

To characterize a union or any body of humans by the anonymous smear—the great mark of McCarthyism, of the anti-semite, of the white racist, of the bigot—is hardly “evidence.” This is the lynch spirit.

(Unfortunately, this piece is limited to answering charges. For those who would like to know what the ILGWU has done over 62 years to promote inter-group understanding and civil rights—may I suggest a reading of “Equal Opportunity-Union Made,” Educational Department, ILGWU, 1710 Broadway, New York City, N. Y.).

GUS TYLER is the Director of Politics, Education and Training of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.



A SYMPOSIUM

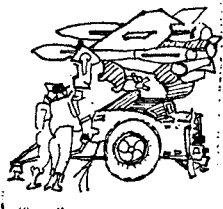
CUBA



BLOCKADE



CRISIS



Recent events have placed the burning issue of Castro's Cuba in a new perspective. President Kennedy's blockade, followed by Soviet Russia's removal of missile bases and bombers raises the issue to transcendent — terrifying — international importance.

Consistent with this magazine's policy of bringing significant controversies to our readers' attention we have asked the following writers to assess and debate the meaning of recent events in and over Cuba. The symposium airs many of the conflicting views within a wide range of radical and socialist thought. It may be noted that three of the nine articles are by editors of *New Politics*: Robert J. Alexander, Hal Draper and Samuel Shapiro—each representing a different attitude.

The economic and political changes that Castro has wrought in Cuba are of course inseparable from the swelling international crisis. Accordingly, we have divided the symposium into two parts. The first four articles emphasize the implications of the blockade for the United States and for the peace of the world. The other five emphasize the internal nature of Cuban society.

We welcome comments and criticisms from our readers.