

# **"Will the Real Al Shanker Stand Up!"**

The following "White Papers," sent to us by a New York teacher, contain serious charges against Albert Shanker and the leadership of the United Federation of Teachers. To our knowledge, they have not been reported in any newspaper or magazine although the material is certainly of broad public interest and of special concern to unionists and radicals. Mr. Shanker will be invited to reply in the next issue of New Politics.—Ed.

## **White Paper I**

### ***"THOSE WHO FORGET THE PAST..."***

UNIONS WITHIN UNIONS have had a rather rocky history. Sundry opinions have been bandied about concerning the practicality of extending to employees who work for a union those same rights viewed as inalienable for other workers. To be sure, some very firm positions have been taken that employees of a union should relinquish this cherished right to bargain with their employer. History has shown union presidents to be the staunchest proponents of this view. Perhaps the most infamous case on record is that of FOUR vs. ILGWU. David Dubinsky's brutal destruction of the Federation of Union Representatives is one of the most disgraceful abuses of power ever used to deny a small group of employees their right to union representation.

The UFT, cognizant of the philosophical as well as moral inconsistency of preaching the need to organize on the one hand and suppressing that need on the other, recognized the formation of a staff union. Two contracts have been signed between TRU (formerly TEA) and UFT. The Teachers' Representatives Union represents all of the UFT field representatives, the publication staff, and the director of research, twenty-one staff members in all—seven of whom are teachers on leave.

Few teachers are aware of the internal structure of the UFT, and fewer are aware of the internal strife. It was after much soul searching, much frustration, and many attempts to reach a reasonable rapprochement that members of TRU decided to take overt action to bring to the attention of UFT members the outrageous and reprehensible treatment we have suffered in silence for many months. We have determined that a strike may prove to be the only course available to seek redress. Therefore, so that you, the members of UFT, may know the facts and because you deserve to know first hand, we here present the facts. Opinions and judgments, we will leave to the reader.

This past fall, as a result of two separate elections, one a hand vote at a TRU meeting and one a secret ballot election, Charles Loiacono

was elected president of TRU. One of Loiacono's first acts as president was to attempt to have a meeting with district representatives for the purpose of organizing them. Upon hearing of this meeting, Al Shanker threatened to fire Charles Loiacono and any other TRU member who would attend the meeting. Al Shanker also threatened to isolate and withhold support of any district representative who would attend. TRU members were adamant about this anti-union coercion, but some of them wanted a meeting to discuss the entire question of organizing district representatives. A meeting was called, and to the dismay of many TRU members a motion to organize district representatives was defeated. We later discovered why. It happened that in the days prior to this meeting Al Shanker called in three members of TRU, questioned them and influenced them concerning their participation in this meeting. He impressed upon them his strong opposition to having district representatives organized. Al Shanker's procurement of this "inside" aid, their influence on other TRU members, and Dan Sanders, then a TRU member, mouth-ing Al Shanker's words, split our union on the issue.

It also happened that Al Shanker secretly campaigned against Loiacono prior to the closed ballot election for TRU president. He influenced members to vote against Loiacono by casting aspersions on his character. Al Shanker's involvement first came to light during a TRU meeting when one of the three "conspirators" confessed that Al Shanker started the mud-slinging rumors. Later a second "conspirator" confessed the entire episode.

Seeing this as a serious violation of the NLRA, the attorney for TRU advised us to file an unfair labor practice suit. The "conspirator" in question was interviewed by the NLRB and confessed. He was to return the following day to sign an affidavit. On that day he suddenly changed his mind and refused to sign. Affidavits were signed, however, by other TRU members, and armed with all the details swore to by these members, the NLRB conducted an investigation in which Al Shanker was questioned. On May 26, 1970, the NLRB notified TRU that the General Counsel in Washington, after a thorough investigation of the facts, had authorized them to issue a complaint against Al Shanker for committing unfair labor practices in his dealings with TRU.

Calling Al Shanker to account was not the end of the unfair labor practices, it was the beginning. The first charge was made on December 5, 1969 for violation of section 8A (1) (2) of the NLRA. This was followed by a Boulwarism charge, 8A (5); this charge was dropped by us even though it appeared to be an open and shut case. We feared that the one witness whose testimony would prove the charge would expose himself to reprisal since he was not a TRU member. Then came an 8A (5) (8d) on February 25, for refusal to bargain. The charge was withdrawn when Al Shanker agreed to bargain, but subsequently re-filed

when he again refused. Fired one day before receiving tenure, Marvin Rogers filed on March 25, 1970 an 8A (3) for discrimination because of union activities and racial prejudice. The latest charge, an 8A (1) (2) (5), is perhaps the most serious. It charges aiding and abetting a group within TRU as well as refusal to bargain. In real terms it describes the accomplishment of Al Shanker's aim—"busting the union." That is precisely what has happened. As of this writing Al Shanker refuses to deal with TRU, claiming he does not know who speaks for the organization. The Pontius Pilate stance is an extremely effective one since it obfuscates the real intent to break the union and takes on the appearance of neutrality in an internal struggle.

Not all the unfair labor practices have resulted from violations of the NLRA. There have been numerous violations of the TRU-UFT Agreement. There was a time when field representatives were denied pay for work on Saturdays and Sundays. A threatened boycott forced Al Shanker to agree to settle the matter in arbitration. TRU won the arbitration handily. We got from a third party the justice and fair play we could not get through a genuine employer-employee relationship.

Joe Pacheco and Gladys Roth were on duty the day the astronauts landed on the moon in July. Schools were closed, teachers were paid. The UFT office was closed, all employees were paid. Pacheco and Roth, both TRU members, were not paid. An arbitration was again won handily. Again justice from a third party.

Jim Howard was hired to organize para-professionals. Shortly after the UFT won the election, Jim was fired. He had not served the one year period, so he could technically be fired without cause. Jim sought the reason, however, so he might strengthen those weaknesses which led to his dismissal. Al Shanker refused.

Marvin Rogers was hired shortly after Jim Howard. He too was to organize para-professionals. Marvin, however, was given special second class treatment. It was unilaterally decided, in violation of the TRU-UFT Agreement, to pay Rogers as a per diem without any union benefits. He would receive \$25.00 a day with no pay for holidays, no health benefits, no pension, no expense allowance—a one-man class of cheap labor. TRU, of course, went to arbitration. The arbitrator ruled that Rogers was a full time employee, and a bona fide member of TRU subject to all the benefits of the agreement; the arbitrator thought the parties should try to determine Rogers' salary through negotiations, but if they failed to reach agreement the parties were to return to the arbitrator. Negotiations were unreal. Al Shanker's spokesman tried to convince us that "these people" *should* be a class apart from us because "they" couldn't be expected to write, or argue grievances, or do any of the "sophisticated" work regular field representatives did. Negotiations reached impasse. TRU asked to return to the arbitrator for a determi-

nation. UFT refused. TRU insisted. Marvin Rogers was fired. This happened the day before he was to receive tenure. UFT owes him about \$5,000 in back pay, but Shanker still refuses to return to arbitration. The fact that Jim Howard and Marvin Rogers are black makes the situation somewhat more sensitive.

Dan Sanders, director of public relations and personal aide to Al Shanker, was a member of TRU when Al nominated him for vice president of the ESFT. This was done in direct violation of a non-political clause in our Agreement, the same clause that forced George Altomare to return to school so he could run for high school vice president. The fact that Dan Sanders was not a UFT member and the fact that the ESFT constitution states that a candidate must be a member of a local for at least three years notwithstanding, TRU filed a grievance. In a decision dated December 19, 1969, Al Shanker took the position that he could violate the contract since the clause in question was binding on TRU not UFT. When TRU filed for arbitration, Al changed his mind. In a letter written on February 9, 1970, Al Shanker admitted he had violated the contract, but Sanders remained in office. On September 16, 1969, Dan Sanders acquired an alternate common branches license, and was appointed to District 6 effective February 2, 1970. He served one day for the record and was given a UFT leave of absence. Technically in two years he will be eligible to run for UFT office.

On December 12, 1969 Charles Loiacono mailed invitations for a TRU Christmas party to district representatives. Four days later, quite by accident, it was discovered that Al Shanker secretly stopped the mailing without notifying TRU.

Early this year, plans were made to create new offices at UFT headquarters for field representatives so they might better service the members. When the field representatives showed their mettle in resisting the practices above, these plans were scrapped. It was decided by Al Shanker that field representatives would be better used if they were spread over four boroughs. It was also decided that seasoned field representatives with four to six years full time experience, some licensed teachers on leave with proven excellence in many areas, would not take up the helm at these offices. The positions would, instead, go to individual district representatives with one year part time experience who have shown "loyalty." The plan as revealed to us seemed vague, superficial, shabbily formulated. We asked to consult on this reorganization since it most certainly affected our working conditions. Al Shanker refused. We were advised by counsel that these changes were properly a matter for negotiations. We asked, Al Shanker refused. We filed a charge with the NLRB. Al Shanker agreed. We withdrew the charge. Al Shanker again refused. We re-filed the charge. Al Shanker still refuses. This time he relies on an internal schism which he nurtured.

DURING THE RECENT LOS ANGELES TEACHERS' STRIKE, Vincent Speranza and Joe Pacheco, both field representatives, were assigned to Los Angeles to aid and advise the striking teachers. They spent five weeks away from their families, and returned with accolades from everyone they worked with. On Sunday, May 23, one week after his return, Vincent Speranza was asked by George Brickhouse, Director of Staff for the AFT, to help the teachers of Los Angeles once more by returning there and lending his experience to this local which solely needed an organizer of Speranza's caliber. Speranza called Vito DeLeonardis, UFT Director of Staff and relayed the AFT's request. DeLeonardis, slighted by a breach in protocol, told Speranza that the AFT would have to ask his permission first. Speranza was assured by three AFT officers, including Dave Selden, that they would make the request formal.

With that, Speranza was asked to fly with all deliberate haste to Los Angeles. He left his family Monday morning and flew west. It seems, however, that DeLeonardis was dissatisfied with the belated request from the AFT, so he phoned Los Angeles and told Speranza to return. This he did with equal haste.

On Friday, May 29, a telegram arrived at the Speranza home telling Vince not to report to work on Monday since he was being suspended, without pay, until further notice for going to Los Angeles. There is no suspension in our contract. (Shades of Ocean-Hill).

On Saturday, May 30, Charles Loiacono called Al Shanker at his home and asked that this latest breach of humanity and contract be discussed. Al Shanker refused. The fact is that before all these matters mushroomed, TRU tried to hold periodic consultations sessions with Al Shanker in order to avoid confrontation. Al Shanker refused.

So here we stand—ready to hit the streets. Seven of us are teachers and UFT members. There are only eight teachers in TRU. We are fighting the very things we fought as UFT members in the schools, and have fought, with every ounce of stamina, as field representatives. We have given of ourselves completely to the ideal of teachers' rights. We have fought long and hard for the dignity of the individual teacher—sometimes against the UFT Administration itself. We have seen this Administration commit acts which would cause all self respecting teachers to cry shame. We have had to swallow indignities as petty as having the staff director dictate with whom we must eat lunch.

We see this behavior on the part of the present Administration as a sign of philosophical and attitudinal decay. Where is the belief in collective bargaining? Where is the pledge to protect the rights of the individual? Where is the cry to preserve the dignity of the worker?

Can we survive as a union if we turn our backs on this perversion of the very tenets we hold so dear? Of Dubinsky's attempt to crush FOUR, Norman Thomas said on May 11, 1961, "How can it be incon-

sistent with the well-being of a strong union to grant its employees the privileges which it has won for its members in relation to their employees? . . . It will not further the organization of the large mass of the unorganized if a great union turns against the right of its own employees to organize."

On May 9, 1961, Murray Kempton wrote, "All these are examples of great tactical skill, but then, it is always easier to break a union than to organize one. Still, it would be odd if there did not come a time when Dubinsky, with the common sense I had until now thought normal of him, remembered that history has always been kinder to the organizers than to the breakers of unions."

And finally, a quote from a labor leader named Al Shanker, ". . . it is a basic question of civil rights and human dignity as to whether your employer will sit at a table and bargain with you."

Will the real Al Shanker stand up!

[signed]

CHARLES LOIACONO VINCENT SPERANZA JOE PACHECO ED KOCHIAN

## White Paper II

*[Issued by the Four after they were fired in June—Ed.]*

### IN DEFENSE OF DUE PROCESS

DUE PROCESS IS THE MOST PRICELESS protection that a democracy can provide to its citizens. Our founding fathers recognized that the will of the majority can occasionally conflict with the rights of the individual and for that reason gave to every American "certain inalienable rights,"—rights that could never be legislated away by the majority of its representatives. A Field Representative of the United Federation of Teachers was denied his inalienable right to due process, and Albert Shanker, his employer, justified the denial on grounds that the majority of his employees supported his abrogation of one of their colleagues' rights.

Since Al Shanker had broken the staff union so that no union action could be taken, three field representatives decided to stand with their colleague and protest this denial of due process. This right has been UFT policy since its birth. Indeed in the cases of 88M, 98X, Andrew Jackson H.S.Q., and Ocean-Hill Brownsville, Al Shanker insisted that the action be taken by those teachers willing to risk dismissal and refused to have UFT vote on the walkouts as a union. In 88M, some 30 teachers out of 85 voted to sign a mass resignation petition to protest an insubordination charge against their chapter chairman. The next morning Al Shanker and Charles Loiacono, representing the UFT, supported a picket line in front of the school. When Charles Loiacono, Joe Pacheco and Ed Kochian took the same action to support Vince

Speranza's demand for due process—the same action Al Shanker has asked teachers to take in support of paraprofessionals—Al Shanker fired all four representatives.

According to the TRU-UFT agreement, just cause must be given and a hearing must be held before an impartial arbitrator before a tenured employee can be dismissed. Since there is no provision in our contract for suspension, and since no UFT employee has ever been suspended, the suspension of Vince Speranza “without pay until further notice” was an attempt to avoid the just cause guarantee in the contract and create a new managerial weapon over all staff employees. That weapon, of course, would be the boss' right to declare any employee guilty without giving him the right to defend himself. This concept has been rejected by every labor union in the country, and we could not stand by while the leadership of the UFT stewed in the corruption of this illegal power. Therefore, we struck in protest and we were fired in reprisal.

We are confident that the rank and file members of the UFT deplore the desecration of a sacred right, the right to oppose tyranny. Because we still hold this right most dear, and because we cannot permit our great teachers union to be so corrupted, we have taken our cause directly to you, the members, and hope that you will return the UFT to its original purpose of fighting for justice for all—including its own employees.

But we need the help of our fellow teachers. If we lose this fight, then our union, the UFT, inherits a tyrant. Help us. . . .

Send a telegram or petition signed by your faculty to Al Shanker. Ask him to reinstate the four field representatives or run the risk of having the leadership stand as a living contradiction to all the UFT stands for. Arrange a chapter meeting and we will send a speaker. . . .

Let us leave you with an appropriate quote from *Animal Farm* in which George Orwell summarizes the end result of what has begun to happen to the present UFT leadership:

The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but it was impossible to say which was which.

ED KOCHIAN



# The Aging of Saul Bellow & John Updike

Joan Mellen

IN THE PRESENT MORIBUND STATE OF AMERICAN FICTION, few novels appear which are inventive either in form or substance, and which treat the crucial issues of the day with perception and insight. Unfortunately, the most recent novels of John Updike and Saul Bellow, two of the "grand old men" of the contemporary American novel, are no exceptions: *Bech: A Book* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970) and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970) are strikingly similar, most obviously in their dependence upon "ideology," with the subjective impressions of the hero carrying the progress of the narrative. Each, possessing no more than a loosely episodic plot, exaggerates by necessity the person of the hero, endowing him with the self-confidence of an *übermensch*. But neither hero has experience or insights credible enough to grant verisimilitude to his generalizations. For all Bellow's attempts to create in the aged Mr. Sammler an archetypal figure for the twentieth century, a survivor of the Nazi experience, his hero seems pretentious and out of date. This charge is leveled at Mr. Sammler by other characters whom Bellow makes particularly unattractive and therefore unreliable moral judges. Yet it is true even within the novel's terms, despite Bellow's intention to make the charge appear malicious. And for all the comedy of Updike's creation of Bech as an ill-faring, ill-used American writer, what emerges from the portrait, unintentionally on Updike's part since he obviously is fond of Bech, is a self-indulgent, bigoted and uninteresting has-been. Because neither Bellow nor Updike displays any substantial distance or ironic attitude toward his hero, it is reasonable to assume that they sympathize with the philosophizings of their characters. A clue to the failure of both of these novels to sustain interest and to enlarge the reader's view of his own world lies in the nature of the response Bellow and Updike are making to the current American scene.

Each is suspicious and actively hostile toward young people and each rejects outright, from the heights of *a priori* reasoning, any legitimacy in the demands youths are making for a more authentic culture (a counter-culture) and a more just and less exploitative society. Bech, meant to be a composite of the Jewish writer in America but possessing none of the personal elan of Mailer or Roth or Bellow, once taught at Columbia, for him an unsatisfying experience. There, at the scene of riot and disruption, if at a safe distance, he was able to observe the moral degeneracy of the young:

Languid and clever, these young people had lacked not only patriotism and faith but even the coarse morality competitiveness imposes.