Counter-offensive to Proposition 13 launched by labor, community groups

By JESSE LEE

JUNE 20—Labor unions, community groups, and organizations of the nationally oppressed in California are already beginning the counter-offensive to the severe cutbacks that are being dictated by the Propostion 13 property tax limitation.

Proposition 13 was initiated by two right-wing landlords—Howard Jarvis and Paul Gann—who are in the hire of a giant real estate association. It is a boon to the banks, big business, and landlords in the form of a walloping **$4.6 billion** cut in property taxes. With sharp rises in real estate and taxes on homes, Proposition 13 has been supported by the middle class and those workers with homes. However, this bill will take away from the poorest far, far more than it will provide for home owners.

The effects so far in California from the Proposition 13 cuts include a freeze in state workers' pay, layoffs in several cities, and elimination of all "special" services such as summer school and transportation for the elderly.

"Affirmative action programs are being axed," Edsel Matthews of the Third World News Bureau in Oakland told **Workers World.** "Seventy-five percent of the minority workers in Oakland face layoffs because of Proposition 13. The projects that they were forced to set up for minorities are now being cut."

Patty Segal of the Child Care Switchboard in San Francisco told **Workers World** that 3,000 children in San Francisco will be affected. She added that "Women will be forced out of the job market."

California Gov. Edmund "Jerry" Brown said yesterday that while needed services are being cut, there will be no cuts in the number of cops who will get "top priority" from the state.

LABOR AND COMMUNITY FIGHT BACK

Those who will be most affected, especially in the Black, Chicano, Native, and Asian communities and women, are not taking this attack sitting down.

Labor unions in San Francisco have initiated the Save Our Services coalition which includes many unions and community groups.

Across the bay, in Oakland, the Labor, Community to Save Jobs and Community Services coalition includes over 100 organizations, from county workers' unions to the disabled, from senior citizens to Chicano and Asian community health groups.

CALL FOR GENERAL STRIKE

Following the announcement that state employees' pay would be frozen with no cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) paid, unions representing the 130,000 workers began to mobilize. The California State Employees Union has called for a general strike if wages are frozen. The larger California State Employees Association has called for mass meetings this week in 30 locations across the state to map out their strategy.

A spokesman for the Association, Keith Hearn, told **Workers World** that "state employees should not be forced to bear the brunt" of the tax amendment that only "helps the landlords and big business." Hearn added that various responses to the wage freeze will be discussed at the mass meetings "including job action such as a strike, which some of our members support."

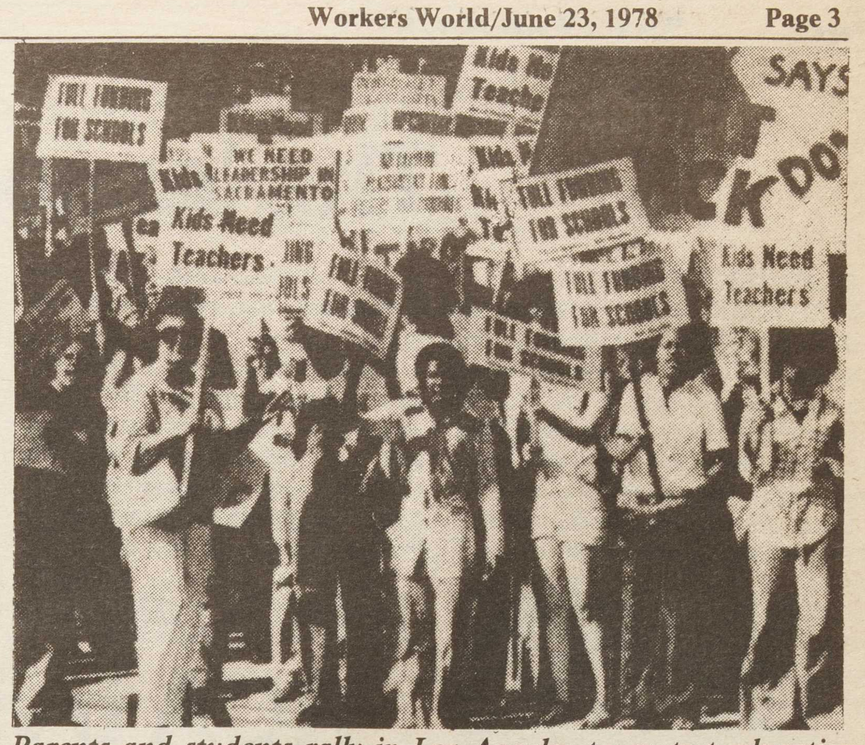
In Los Angeles, yesterday, teachers and parents demonstrated in front of the Los Angeles County School Board to protest the cutoff of special summer programs for the handicapped.

Unions have organized demonstrations in several cities. Teachers' unions have stated that if funds were cut for schools they would go on strike rather than work in a "concentration camp." Students in special education programs have been picketing the state capital all week.

San Francisco trade union activist Mary Merrill detailed to this reporter in a telephone interview what a human tragedy the cutbacks could mean statewide.

"Playgrounds, libraries, day care centers, and so on will be closed," Merrill said. "Proposition 13 is an attempt to pit the lower middle class against the workers at the time of an economic crisis."

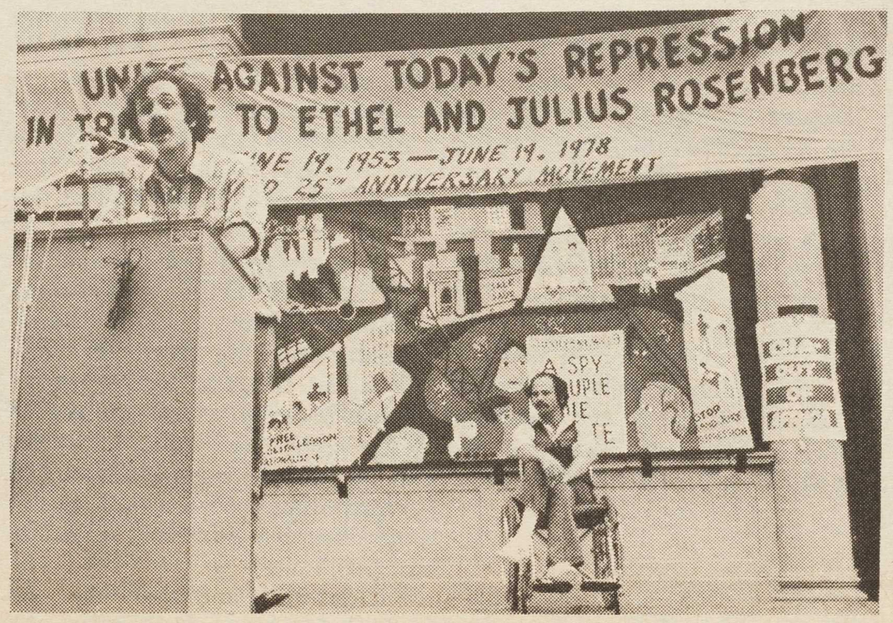
Merrill had good news, however. "There are actions all over the place," she said. "In fact, my friends tell me that organizing has never been easier."



Parents and students rally in Los Angeles to protest education cutbacks due to the passing of Proposition 13.

On 25th anniversary of execution

5,000 in NYC honor Rosenbergs



Robert Meeropol, one of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg's sons, introduces Vietnam veteran Ron Kovic at a Union Square rally on June 19 in New York City. *WW photo: G. Dunkel*

By KATHY DURKIN

NEW YORK, June 19—Exactly 25 years ago today, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were murdered by the U.S. government, in one of the most calculated political frame-ups in history.

The Rosenbergs were the victims of Cold War repression, anti-communism, anti-Sovietism and anti-Semitism. Their case was used by the U.S. government to try to stifle all dissent to their Cold War policies and war of aggression against the Korean people. It was part of the McCarthyite attempt to squash the progressive and working-class movement of the time.

On the evening of June 19, 1953, thousands of people gathered in Union Square to protest the execution of the Rosenbergs. And this year, over 5,000 people again gathered in that spot to pay tribute to the Rosenbergs, to hold the U.S. government accountable for their murders, and to protest the growing cold war drive being engineered by Carter and Brzezinski today.

SPEAKERS WARN OF NEW WAR DRIVE

The slogan for today's rally was "Pay Tribute to the Rosenbergs—Unite Against Today's Repression." Many of the over 20 speakers at today's rally, who represented a wide-range of groups within the anti-war and anti-racist movements, as well as many who had themselves been victims of the 1950s witchhunt, warned of the cold war danger and the need to fight against it. Speakers from the Black, Puerto Rican, and Native movements, as well as the women's and gay movements, told of the links between the Rosenberg case and the wave of political repression today.

The rally was co-chaired by Michael and Robert Meeropol, who are the Rosenbergs' sons, and Morton and Helen Sobell. It has largely been through the work of the Meeropols in their campaign to clear the Rosenbergs that the nature and extent of the government's frame-up is being uncovered and brought to public view.

Representatives of the Committee to Re-open the Rosenberg-Sobell case spoke at today's rally and demanded that the prosecuting attorney in the case and Judge Irving Kaufman, who sent the Rosenbergs to the electric chair, be held accountable for their part in the conspiracy to frame the Rosenbergs. Other speakers included Ossie Davis, disabled Vietnam war veteran Ron Kovic, Puerto Rican Socialist Party leader Jose Alberto Alvarez and American Indian Movement leader Russell Means. Anti-war activist Dave Dellinger linked the current phony espionage case of Ronald Humphrey and Truong Dinh Hung to that of the Rosenbergs and said both cases were trumped up to whip up hysteria.

SPEAKER FROM ZANU

Tirivafi Kangai, a representative of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) criticized Washington for charging that Africa was being colonized by the Cubans and Soviets and he said, "That is a lie! We have a right to receive weapons from our friends. We are suffering from threats of a renewed Cold War from people like Brzezinski."

The Rev. Ben Chavis, one of the Wilmington Ten, sent a message to the rally from his North Carolina prison cell which called on people to "honor the Rosenbergs by constant struggle against the racism, anti-Semitism and anti-communism that brought about their execution."

Stevye Clostreschiu, a representative of Dykes and Tykes and the Committee of Lesbian and Gay Male Socialists, told of the history of repression against lesbians, and particularly, lesbian mothers. She was present at Union Square on June 19, 1953, the night the Rosenbergs were executed, when she was ten years old, and said that while she had been raised to think that the government respected the sanctity of the family, she realized it was a lie when she saw the Rosenberg family being destroyed. She drew a parallel to the deliberate destruction of the families of lesbian mothers by the government and especially against those who speak out to defend their rights.

The Rosenbergs were falsely accused of conspiring to steal the A-bomb plans for the Soviet Union. Despite the protests of millions of people world-wide, the Rosenbergs were executed in this lynch-mob atmosphere and Morton Sobell, their co-defendant, was sentenced to 30 years in jail, of which he served 19 years.

In the 1960s, the government admitted that the alleged sketches of the "A-bomb" which were used to convict the Rosenbergs were worthless. Through litigation the Meeropols have gained FBI and other government files which reveal the extent of the frame-up: that the FBI and prosecution manufactured trial testimony and contrived evidence and coerced witnesses; that the trial judge, Kaufman, collaborated with the prosecution and the FBI before and during the trial to get convictions and the death penalty.

"The Rosenbergs," said Black leader W.E.B. DuBois on June 21, 1953, at their gravesites, "were killed because they would not lie." They would not cooperate with the government's attempt to smear the progressive and working-class movement at that time.

In a poem written to her sons on January 24, 1953, from Sing Sing prison, Ethel Rosenberg wrote,

Work and build, my sons, and build
a monument to love and joy,
to human worth, to faith we kept
for you, my sons, for you.

It is past time to exonerate the Rosenbergs. And it is time to free Imani, the Wilmington Ten, and all political prisoners and victims of the racist, anti-human courts.

While threatening postal workers with austerity

Carter aide praises steel price hikes

By JAQUI O'SHAUGHNESSY

JUNE 19—While inflation is ravaging people's buying power and living standards, the huge steel monopolies announced yet another price increase.

Last week, U.S. Steel Corporation said, according to the New York Times, "that it would increase its prices on steel by 3% effective July 30." This hike, the Times goes on, "has been endorsed by the leaders of the Carter Administration's drive to limit inflation.... " Strange that Carter's idea of "limiting" inflation is one that has allowed steel prices to soar **30%** from April 1976 to April 1978!

Since steel is essential to most other industries such as construction, auto, railroads and others, galloping steel prices have heavily fueled the flames of inflation—flames that burn workers' frozen earnings almost before the paycheck is cashed.

The slap-in-the-face irony of it all, is that Robert S. Strauss, Carter's chief inflation fighter, according to the New York Times, "welcomed" the 3% price increase for steel. Meanwhile, on another page of the same newspaper, Strauss was described as willing to "lean hard on the 600,000 postal workers to sign a new contract that would slow wage gains." (!)

So Carter, on the one hand, is all too cooperative with the steel companies' price hikes while, on the other hand, he is threatening to call out troops against the postal workers if they strike. Carter wants to force the Postal Workers Union to accept a 5.5% wage increase, which will amount to a wage cut, the way prices are skyrocketing. The administration is seeking to make an example of the Postal Workers Union by forcing a settlement that won't even pretend to bridge the inflation gap.

So while smilin' "Jimmy" and Strauss are happy to accept 30% steel price jumps in two years, the program to curb inflation won't work "if we don't get that restraint on the part of labor."It becomes all too clear that what the Carter administration means by fighting inflation is more give aways to the rich, and more cutbacks for poor and working people.