

SIGNS OF PROGRESS

by Bruce Traven

Fifteen months ago I started riding the D train from Newkirk Ave. in Brooklyn into Manhattan every day. At that time the reconstruction of the Newkirk Ave. station appeared to be well underway.

The D train at Newkirk Ave. runs in what is basically an open trench. It is below ground level, but exposed to the air. The tracks are spanned by a hut which houses the token booth, the turnstiles and the stairway to the platforms below.

It is mostly this hut which was being rebuilt, and still is! The floor and some walls have been tiled, but the job is clearly unfinished and has been in the same state for months. The roof has been replaced, but the new lighting fixtures are still hanging precariously from their wires. On the platforms new lighting has been installed and several newly varnished oak benches are in place, as they are in most subway stations.

So what, you might say, if the work is interminably slow, at least something is being done, there are some signs of progress. After all, you might add, how much can you expect on a government job? The trouble is that the old lights were really perfectly adequate and one wonders what relative of what politician is in the oak bench business.

Meanwhile, the station is home to a large flock of pigeons who have thoroughly dive-bombed the new benches so that no one ever uses them. One minor advantage of this is that it seems to keep the graffiti artists away. The platforms are also coated with it and when it rains they are as slippery as ice. Maybe they could use pigeon shit in the Wollman skating rink, but the contract wouldn't be as profitable.

Also, the concrete walls along the tracks are a mass of cracks, peeling paint, and are filthy and ugly. Looking down onto the tracks is like looking into an open sewer. On the whole three block long platform there is only one trash receptacle, and since no one wants to walk a block to deposit their trash, it gets thrown on the tracks.

There's nothing wrong with replacing lights and benches, but what is really needed is someone to clean the place and keep it clean! This, of course, means hiring people and paying them, and the

subway management keeps telling us about the difference between the capital budget and the operating budget and why they just can't do that. Would you call me cynical if I suggested that the real reason is that politicians and their friends have more to gain by putting out big contracts than by giving people useful and necessary work?

WORKER-TO-WORKER SOLIDARITY NEEDED

--W.S.A.-N.Y.C.

Solidarity is the cornerstone of any workers' struggle. It can mean the difference between a victory and a defeat.

Since August of 1985, 1650 members of Local P-9, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), have been on strike against the Hormel meat packing plant in Austin, Minnesota. These brothers and sisters have taken on both the company and their International union in their struggle against wage-cuts and concessions. Currently the company is attempting to replace the strikers with "non-union" workers, that is, scabs. Local P-9 has maintained its picket lines in the face of company and National Guard harassment, as well as betrayal by its parent union. The strikers have threatened to expand the struggle by sending "roving pickets" to Hormel plants in other towns. Austin, like many other such towns, has only one major employer-Hormel.

In an effort to raise funds to support strikers and their families, Local P-9 is asking local unions to pledge \$100 to \$1000 per month for the next three months. This will cover all or at least a large part of the \$600 per month it costs to maintain each family in need. Unions which adopt a family will receive direct communications from a Local P-9 family, as well as regular strike updates.

The N.Y.C. area W.S.A. urges all our readers to get their local unions to make a pledge. We also urge our readers to make individual contributions in any amount.

Send all checks to "Adopt a P-9 Family Fund", United Support Group, Local P-9 UFCW, 316 N.E. 4th Ave., Austin, MN 55912.