

leadership. The Experimental Negotiating Agreement (ENA), by which the union gave up its right to strike in basic steel, was decried by Sadlowski because it "stripped the muscle out of our collective bargaining," but the issue was handled delicately: instead of demanding that ENA be repudiated, he simply urged that it "be voted on by the members."

Sadlowski and his organization, Steelworkers Fight Back, issued no ringing cry for a labor party, no call on the nation to cut back on its military budget, no innovative proposals on how to rehire the 55,000 workers laid off in basic steel or how to deal with inflation. The social problems that beleaguer ninety million working people were ignored. By the standards of yesteryear, when Emil Mazey, for example, demanded that the United Auto Workers (UAW) help launch a new political party or Walter Reuther urged "equality of sacrifice" in World War II, the Sadlowski campaign was a tea party.

Yet it unnerved the labor establishment, on one side, and greatly heartened thousands of left-of-center people, on the other. "What I know about the 1930s, I've learned from books," a young man told me at Sadlowski's headquarters the night the ballots were being counted, "but that's the kind of labor movement I'd like to see again. If Eddie wins the steelworkers' presidency he'll revive that spirit."

The same message, in different form, was heard from old-timers who *had* been around in the 1930s. At a fund-raising function near Chicago, one former steelworker, now a successful businessman, told his audience, "We always say during a crisis like Vietnam or Watergate that if only we had progressive allies in the labor movement our task would be much easier. Well, here's our chance to create one." Instinctively, despite the tepid Sadlowski plat-

form, there was a general recognition that this campaign for leadership of the largest affiliate in the AFL-CIO could be a turning point in the history of the labor movement—that it might rekindle a sense of idealism that has been on the wane for three decades.

Perhaps there was an element of wishful thinking in these expectations; it has been a long dry spell for those who dream of the revitalization of a labor movement that has lost its spirit. More importantly, however, there was a mystique around Sadlowski which conveyed that "good old union spirit," as the ancient labor song has it. He projected earthiness and empathy with those he represented. His father had been a steelworker in the turbulent days of 1937, when Chicago police were shooting down Republic Steel strikers on the South Side, and one of Eddie's early memories was of Eddie Sr. describing the Memorial Day Massacre. His grandfather, too, had worked in the mills. His wife, Marlene, was the incarnation of a Labor Women's Auxiliary—she operated the telephones in the campaign office and cooked Polish sausage for fund raisers at the headquarters of Local 65.

Sadlowski's public image was of a "tough guy," but in person he is warm and gracious. ("Have a cup of my bean soup," he pleaded with a visitor. "I just cooked it myself.") He is a voracious reader, self-educated, shrewd, wise in the ways of the street. Though he is not affiliated with any radical group, and I think never has been, he did not hesitate to describe himself as "a socialist in the tradition of Eugene V. Debs." Thousands of workers who came in contact with him on a one-to-one basis were impressed. Even his weaknesses—he is a less than gifted speaker, for instance, who seldom turns a neat phrase—reinforced the rank-and-filer mystique.