

# THIRD FORCE

Newsletter of the Center for Third World Organizing

Summer 1983



Members of New York City Local 37 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees picket courthouse in support of anti-displacement lawsuit.

## Reagan's Labor Initiative vs. Minority Labor Rights

Over the last 3 years, the Reagan Administration has initiated a series of proposals which, if implemented, would have a disastrous effect on low-income people of color in the United States. Permanently anchored in a secondary sector of the labor market, these proposals will work at low-wage (and, in some cases, no-wage) jobs. In most cases, these initiatives reduce or eliminate low-income people's ability, legally or economically, to exercise basic political rights.

The Reagan proposals are as follows:

- **WORKFARE**, an attempt by the Reagan Administration to make welfare benefits contingent upon forced work.
- **SUBMINIMUM WAGE**, an Administration proposal to lower minimum wages for youth.
- **IMMIGRATION POLICY** in the form of the Simpson-Mazzoli bill which would establish a massive worker importation program with no worker protections for non-permanent residents.

- **FREE ENTERPRISE ZONES**, or urban free-trade zones where occupational health and safety and EPA standards would be lowered.

Taken together, these four initiatives form a labor policy which will (1) systematically force unorganized groups (welfare recipients, undocumented workers, minority teenagers, and women) into a low-wage market with few worker protections or political rights; (2) undermine the bargaining power of public sector labor; (3) lower the health, safety, and environmental standards in inner-city industrial zones.

These proposals forge a policy destined to coercively increase the availability of cheap labor, while lowering the wages and denying the political rights of over 3 million work force participants. As an analyst for Consumers Opposed to Inflation in Necessities (COIN) notes, "Wall Street is willing, for the time being, to suffer reduced sales as long as higher unemployment softens up the rest of us for givebacks and lower wage demands—social programs have been slashed and unions are on the

### NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY ETHNIC STUDIES, INC. (NAIES)

NAIES invites interested persons to present papers, media productions, or panels on the theme "Ethnicity: 1984 and Beyond." Cross-disciplinary and multi-ethnic approaches are encouraged. Appropriate topics include, but are not limited to the following: human services, affirmative action, feminism, bilingual education, school desegregation, political redistricting, strategies for social change, ethnic conservatism, human rights, racism and crime, sterilization, historical and contemporary roles of ethnic leaders and politicians, immigration and migration patterns. Contact Gretchen Bataille, 221 Ross Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011, (515) 294-3448. Submission deadline: 11/15/83

defensive." Over 70% of those affected by the workfare mandates will be women, and, given the geographic location and economic status of the majority of people of color in the United States, these proposed measures will have a particularly devastating effect on Asian, Black, Latino, and Native American families.

The wide range of the proposals makes it difficult for unorganized groups to address these policies as a coherent whole. Each proposal attacks a slightly different constituency, and groups therefore respond to a particular aspect of the initiatives. It is imperative that we develop an analysis of these labor policies and formulate alternatives which we fight to implement.

pg1: continued page 6