Solidarity Day

But workers' resistance is already visible in the action of the rank and file union members in many sectors. Coal miners soundly rejected the first sell-out, take-away contract that Sam Church and the UMWA leadership tried to shove down their throats, and forced a strike against the coal operators. Chrysler workers have conducted wildcats over the wage cuts imposed on them by the company, the government and the UAW leaders. Government workers have been waging an increasing number of strikes against the particularly sharp attacks coming down on them. Last year there were over 500 strikes by government employees, all of them officially "illegal." In local union halls around the country international union representatives and local union officials are being shouted down at union meetings when they promote capitulation to the employers' attacks on the workers.

The union bureaucrats are feeling the pressure from below within their unions and are acting to save their own skins and those of their capitalist bosses. Any union 'leader' who fails to put forward at least superficial opposition to the current economic attacks is likely to be quickly discredited. Workers, the majority of whom are already disgusted by the sell-out leadership of the unions, would walk right over them, creating their own new leadership and rank and file organizations to carry out the struggle. These new rank and file workers' organizations would be far more dangerous to the corporate kings and the government because the organizations would be out of the control of the capitalists' trusted "labor lieutenants" — the AFL-CIO bureaucrats. Militant *talk* about "fighting the rich" and demonstrations like Solidarity Day are only maneuvers to appease the more militant workers. This does not represent a new "class struggle" policy adopted by the AFL-CIO.

Workers who have experience with the maneuvering of the top union officials know that they are not to be trusted. They are still trying to lead workers down the road of capitulation and defeat. Experience has shown that:

1. *The sell-out union officials will never organize resistance unless there is pressure from the rank and file from below.* The more organized, determined and revolutionary the rank and file opposition is, the more "militant" stands the bureaucrats will take.

2. *Even when they are forced to organize resistance, the sell-out officials will always undermine these struggles, dividing the ranks of the workers and leading them to defeat.* Many times union officials will go along with rank and file demands to strike, but will purposely fail to prepare for the strike and fail to build solidarity among other workers for the strike in order to see the strike defeated.

3. *The sell-out union officials will always oppose the development of an independent working class political movement.* They will always try to tie the workers' movement to the Democratic Party, which is a party of the rich, not a workers' party.

4. *The sell-out union officials will always try to limit the workers' struggles to begging for reforms, and work to smash any movement towards revolutionary change and the abolition of wage slavery.*

Today, it is more important than ever that class conscious workers step up our efforts to build a revolutionary trade union movement. The workers' movement is re-awakening as it feels the blows of the ruling class. But as long as the sell-out union leaders are in charge, the movement will never realize the great potential that it has, but will remain handcuffed by the liberal labor policies of the bureaucrats. Our job is to make sure that the rank and file is fully organized and prepared for every engagement with the government and the employers, and that it is aware of the treacherous role of the sell-out union leadership. We must be prepared to act on our own initiative, in our own best interests. In the course of the battles that lie ahead, we must regain control of the trade union movement for the rank and file, and once again set it on a path of unrelenting class struggle.

Union Leaders, Company Collaborate

Workers Fighting for Union Democracy Laid Off

Bessemer, Alabama — Ironworker union members of Local 826 at Bristol Steel have been laid off because of their efforts to fight union-company collaboration in the recent contract ratification vote. Thirty workers signed a petition against the local union secretary who admitted that he handed out extra ballots to his friends during the contract voting, tipping the vote in favor of ratification. The sell-out union leadership attempted to pressure the workers not to reopen contract negotiations. Three days later ten percent of the workforce was laid off. This was done in order to rid the plant of the younger, dissatisfied workers and to scare the remaining workers into submission. Since the lay-offs, the company has continued to speed up the employed workers and has been operating on overtime.

The laid-off workers are continuing to work with workers still employed to reopen the contract negotiations and get rid of all of the bought-off union officials.

SUPPORT THE PATCO STRIKE

The Reagan administration has used some of the most reactionary anti-union maneuvers to try to smash the strike of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO). The union members were all fired. Scabs have been brought in from across the country to replace the striking controllers. The Pentagon has transferred military flight controllers to work as scabs and uncertified student flight controllers are being used to keep the airways open. PATCO's strike fund was impounded through multi-million dollar fines and union leaders were jailed. Injunctions were issued against picketing and moves were made to deny food stamps and unemployment to striking PATCO members. The National Labor Relations Board decertified the union. This is the first time in U.S. history that a union has been decertified by the government for allegedly breaking the law.

The air traffic controllers are among the highest paid workers in the country. An average salary for a flight controller is $27,000/a year. It is no surprise that this upper strata of the workforce has failed to support other strikes, or that the PATCO union leadership allied themselves with the most reactionary sectors of the government and big business when they supported Reagan during the last election. However, all trade unionists and democratic-minded workers should support the PATCO strike. We are witnessing the most blatant strike-breaking, union-busting government action in recent history. The move against the PATCO strike by the Reagan administration is a model for what will occur against other groups of government employees and all workers in the future. It is a highly organized and determined assault on the right of all workers to organize unions and strike.

The PATCO workers have encountered difficulty getting broad trade union support because of their history of failing to support other workers' strikes and operating along craft lines. However, the main reason that the PATCO workers have been left isolated is because of the refusal of the other union leaders to organize any effective solidarity actions in support of the strike. Rank and file taxi-cab drivers and bus drivers displayed their class solidarity by refusing to cross the PATCO picket lines at the airports but have received little or no support from their union leadership. Air traffic controllers in Canada, Portugal, France and New Zealand refused to handle U.S. flights in solidarity with PATCO but the International Association of Air Traffic Controllers actively sabotaged an effort to organize an international boycott of U.S. flights. Similarly, the aircraft mechanics and machinists could have shut down the flights almost completely through a solidarity strike but William Winpisinger and the leadership of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) and the AFL-CIO actively worked to prevent such a strike.

Many PATCO members are beginning to realize the severe damage done to their strike by upholding craft unionism, which has resulted in their isolation from other workers. It has become clear to the more advanced workers that militant class struggle and united action by workers in the U.S. and other countries is essential if the PATCO members want to win their strike.

Workers On Strike Against Jim Walters Corp.

140 members of the United Steelworkers (USWA) are on strike at the Jim Walters Celotex plant near Birmingham, Alabama. The company forced the strike by attempting to do away with the seniority system and now wants the workers to pay for insurance. Celotex insisted on scheduling overtime and transferring employees at whim, without regard to seniority. The strikers rightly state that this would have been a major step towards doing away with the union altogether.

The strikers have stood firm against company attacks so far. Scab truck drivers from Ross Neely Co., speeding through the picket line, have hit two workers. One striker was semi-conscious, almost suffered a heart attack, and has back injuries as a result of being hit by a scab truck. Several strikers have been arrested for their attempts to stop the scabs, but no charges have been brought against the scab drivers or the trucking outfit.

The working conditions at Celotex, as at the other Jim Walters operations, are extremely dangerous. The workers manufacture asbestos and fiberglass insulation and the company refuses to provide adequate health and safety protection. Many workers suffer from skin irritation and lung problems as a result of exposure to these cancer-causing materials. In recent years, Celotex has refused to give all workers physicals, as they did in the past. And last month, a serious fire broke out in a Celotex plant in Louisiana injuring several workers.

Striking Celotex workers have recently made efforts to build support for the strike among other workers at Jim Walters operations, including its coal mines near Birmingham. Soon after the Celotex strikers took this action, Jim Walters backed down on the proposed seniority elimination. Several agents for Jim Walters within the local union and the USWA district leadership promoted a company contract proposal that included insurance cuts, and petitioned to get it approved. But the strikers firmly rejected it.

The effectiveness of the strike has been hampered by the fact that Jim Walters owns several Celotex plants around the country. None of these other plants is organized by the USWA, and all have different contracts and different contract deadlines. This has been greatly to the benefit of Jim Walters Corporation which has been able to shift production from Birmingham to other plants. Through the strike, the need for working class unity and solidarity has been impressed upon the workers. Their efforts to win the support of other Jim Walters workers in the Birmingham area has been an important first step in the direction of building this unity.