

NATIONAL CAUCUS OF LABOR COMMITTEES
P.O. BOX 295
CATHEDRAL PARK STATION
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10027

JANUARY 8, 1972

Dear Friend,

Since the attached resolution was first circulated in early December, the government has escalated its organizing drive against employed workers and the unemployed by moving to destroy the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) within the next few months.

The government, its organizers, and its collaborators in the NWRO leadership are acting on a schedule set by the capitalists' need to step up drives against labor's standard of living in the weeks and months immediately ahead. As this drive intensifies Nixon wants no organization of the unemployed to exist--not even a bought-off NWRO-- that could possibly ally with trade unionists to resist such attacks.

To insure that no obstacle stands in the way of his austerity campaign, Nixon's first move has been to try to co-opt or eliminate all organized opposition to "workfare" forced-labor programs among welfare victims. As stated in the resolution, the ultimate purpose of this is not to facilitate welfare budget cuts or eliminate "welfare fraud," but to organize welfare victims and eventually the unemployed (i.e. laid-off trade-unionists) into a reserve labor force.

On the surface, it may appear that such reserve, actually enslaved, labor would be used "only" to break strikes or replace better-paid organized workers.

However, within the contexts of the past year's wholesale real wage cuts and grueling speedup, the government plans for the unemployed can only mean one thing: systematically eliminating benefits and depressing real wage levels by "recycling" those presently employed, unemployed and on welfare into and out of a diminishing number of jobs undergoing intensive speedup.

Nixon's plans to destroy NWRO --the first, crucial part of this process--have been executed by NWRO Eastern Regional Representative Faith Evans. Evans is a government agent funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Johnson and Johnson Foundation. In the past four months, he has been destroying Boston WRO with organizations funded by the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and has been dismantling key East Coast WRO chapters in Camden, New Jersey and Virginia.

under HEW schemes or "pilot projects." During past years these three chapters, among others, have actively supported strikes in their areas.

Since George Wiley's "resignation" last month as NWRO director, Evans has assumed national control of NWRO field operations as its new associate director. Evans' first act in his new job was to illegally suspend Jennette Washington, an NWRO founder and a leading strike support organizer, from her elected leadership position as Eastern Regional Alternate for opposing his policies. He has called an illegal "Special East Coast Meeting" for January 13 to certify his wrecking of the organization as well as this "suspension."

Serious trade unionists cannot ignore these attacks on NWRO--Nixon's "recycling" process is already too far advanced for that. In Detroit, for example, Chrysler is hiring former welfare recipients through the Work Incentive program (WIN) and reports indicate that it is no longer using the hiring hall. This is leading to erosion of the grievance system as WIN workers are required to report grievances to their WIN supervisor and not to their foreman. Welfare recipients are now manning GM assembly lines in Baltimore and replacing union park employes in New York.

In response to these developments, a caucus of anti-workfare NWRO leaders has issued a call for an NWRO national convention and a boycott of Evans phony January 13 meeting. In a statement issued December 30 these organizers called for "national discussions (within NWRO) on how we can link our struggle for jobs, dignity, and income with the battles of trade unionists, veterans and the unemployed." In preparation for the convention, the caucus is organizing a national faction based on Jennette Washington's November 8 letter sent out to welfare activists across the country and is calling for a meeting of that group within the coming weeks. (See New Solidarity, January 8, 1972)

These organizers represent a major bulwark against Nixon's plans to drive down labor's standard of living. Unless these activists are able to put NWRO back on its feet and resurrect the fight against slave labor, organized labor will not recover from the beating it has received under Phase Two.

So far several trade union leaders and many members have lent support to these activists by endorsing the resolution. A partial list of these signers appears at the end of the statement. However, any organization of welfare recipients or the unemployed that opposes workfare programs will not receive funds from government agencies, a major source of finances for NWRO organizing in the past.

Pulling a national organization back together will require money for numerous expenses that welfare victims cannot afford:

transportation to and from the projected national faction meeting and NWRO convention; rent for meeting halls; housing, food and day care for the participants; office expenses.

Unless these organizers receive funds to pay for these items, their attempt to oppose Nixon's recycling plans for labor will fail and their organizing alternative to collaborating with the government will lack credibility.

We are asking you to contribute to pay these expenses. no matter how small a contribution you can make, even a few dollars, just the fact that you do contribute will make it easier to obtain funding from other traditional, but non-governmental, sources of funding for NWRO, such as church groups. Furthermore, such contributions will make the caucus's policy of allying with trade unionists more credible to other welfare organizers. Make checks payable to: Fund to Reconstruct the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO). The fund is administered by Jennette Washington of NWRO and Steve Kohn of the National Caucus of Labor Committees. Send checks to NCLC, P.O. Box 295, Cathedral Park Station, New York, N.Y. 10027. An application is being submitted to the I.R.S. to obtain tax-deductible status for contributions to the fund.

Remember, your contribution to the work of these organizers will determine the outcome of their battle to save NWRO, and with that, the success or failure of labor struggles for many years to come.

Fraternally,

Steve Kohn
Fund to Reconstruct NWRO