

RESOLUTION ON GOVERNMENT ORGANIZING AGAINST WELFARE RECIPIENTS AND TRADE UNIONISTS

Recent developments around the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) are of urgent importance to all of organized labor. Their outcome will determine whether or not we will defeat further attacks upon wages, working conditions and job security and be able to recover ground already lost on those issues under Phase Two.

The government--principally through the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is moving to reduce NWRO, the only national unemployed organization in the US, into a police apparatus for the administration of federal and state forced-work programs for welfare recipients. Through the use of discreet bribes and threats of police frameup, the government has enlisted to this effort significant sections of the NWRO national leadership.

"Workfare" comes into existence at a time when official unemployment is as high as 5.5% and expected to rise further under present governmental policies of deflation of the economy. The workfare programs themselves are being organized by the government in order to provide, states, municipalities, and capitalist managements with cheap labor with which to replace unionized workers and in order to force desperate welfare recipients into scabbing on the strikes of organized labor. A central aspect of HEW-FBI activity is to effect the purge from NWRO of those militants -- such as NWRO founder Jenette Washington--who refuse to be bought off and who are fighting the incipient forced-scabbing apparatus and organizing welfare recipients to unite with unionists in strike support and for a minimum income for all.

Unionized municipal workers in New York City's Department of Parks have seen their jobs vanish "by attrition" as union members are replaced by welfare recipients forced to work at less than half union wages. In an IUE strike last year against the Jiffy Manufacturing Co. in Camden, N.J., welfare recipients were forced to scab and the strike went down to defeat by the lack of unity between the strikers and the local unemployed.

However at one point in the strike, the efforts of NWRO leader Barbara Brown in supporting the strike temporarily halted the scabbing and dealt the government's scab-herding a severe blow. Other local welfare organizers across the country have similarly opposed workfare and supported strikes.

The attempts of the government to put an end to such pro-working-class activity within WRO has taken various forms, involving, in some cases, not only HEW and the FBI but also three other government agencies, Volunteers In Service to America (VISTA), the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and the US Department of Labor. Here are two examples of what has happened.

1) After Barbara Brown refused to cooperate with the forced-work "Demonstration Welfare Project" (DWP) brought into existence under the Talmadge Amendment, NWRO national leaders cooperating with the government set up a rival local organization to Brown's and immediately began administration of the DWP through it. Brown was subsequently forced from her position as acting state chairwoman of New Jersey WRO.

2) Virginia WRO is the pilot project for a Nixon-HEW scheme to replace WRO with bought and paid for "Client Involvement Committees (CIC) which will work under state welfare departments. The FBI has intervened in Virginia WRO to intimidate WRO activists from joining with the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) in strike support. Despite this several WRO members recently organized with the NCLC support for a local municipal workers strike. Such CIC "reorganization," slated by HEW to liquidate the entire East Coast WRO, has the implicit endorsement of several NWRO national leaders.

We of organized labor have also faced severe attacks under Phase Two, as exemplified by the brutal speedup and layoffs of the General Motors Assembly Division. All indications point to an even more vicious Phase Three, involving "joint labor-management productivity committees" in large industries and outright destruction of public employee unions. Such "productivity" committees will be the labor version of self-policing participation which faces NWRO activists in the form of CIC-type projects in Virginia and elsewhere.

The question before us today is whether we are going to sit on our hands while the government converts the only national unemployed organization into a scab-herding machine, or whether we will come to the defense of those pro-working class NWRO militants who are under attack from the government for their fight against scabbing.

their fight against scabfare.

BE IT RESOLVED, therefore, that we are in solidarity with the pro-working-class militants of NWRO in fighting the workfare programs. We denounce the efforts of the Nixon administration to take over NWRO and purge these militants. We call upon all other unionists to come to their aid financially, with publicity, and by passing this resolution themselves.

Orie Chambers, Organizer, New Jersey State Federation of Teachers

Executive Committee, Jobs, Opportunities, and Betterment caucus in UAW Local 647, Cincinnati

Stuart Haigraves, Zone Committeeman, USW Local 2610, Baltimore

Haines Brown, President, AFT Local 2316, Hartford

Joe Smith, United Rubber Workers, Passaic, N.J.

Jerry Menepace, President of the Baltimore Local of Amalgamated Meatcutters has endorsed the campaign with his own statement

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Return petitions to National Caucus of Labor Committees,
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