

# Summing Up The Steel Election Battle

Steel workers are now taking a long and hard look at the elections that just took place in their union—at the lessons learned, the advances made and the position that the rank and file is in today now that the elections are over.

McBride beat Sadlowski by something less than three to two. Even though the Abel machine might have stolen votes in the South, Canada and other places, it appears that Abel's hand-picked successor, Lloyd McBride, would have won anyway, though not by the same margin. But in basic steel, where the issues were the clearest and the lines sharpest, Sadlowski beat McBride. Essentially, this vote was a clear rejection of the company-serving policies which have been shoved down the throats of workers in basic steel in recent years.

Chief among these is the so-called Experimental Negotiating Agreement (ENA) which robs workers in basic steel of the right to carry out a national strike at least until 1980. Signed behind the backs of steel workers by Abel in 1973, this agreement is one of the sharpest examples around of union misleaders serving the heads of industry. Abel refused to put the matter up to a vote, saying *he* knew the majority of steel workers in basic supported it.

But his claims of legitimacy concerning the ENA were dealt a hard blow in this election, along with his other pro-company practices like the establishment of the productivity committees—made up of union and company officials who plan further cuts in jobs by increasing job combinations and eliminations—and the denial of the right of the rank and file in basic to vote on contracts.

Despite the hundreds of articles in the pages of the union's paper, *Steel Labor*, despite the movies that were shown to steel workers around the country, despite all the speeches praising Abel's policies to the skies, basic steel workers voted no to the whole "what's good for the companies is good for the workers" line. This vote has made clearer where basic steel workers stand on these questions, and can be an aid in furthering the struggle around them. In fact, the vote would have been much more overwhelming, had it not been for some of the back-sliding and half-stepping Sadlowski engaged in around these and some other important issues during the campaign.

## Vote an Indicator

But while the vote in basic steel is an advance in shattering some of the illusions that were being created by the Abel machine and some of this machine's control over the workers, the vote in other divisions of the USWA also gave a clearer picture of where things are at among the rank and file. While all the totals have not been released, and a division by division breakdown hasn't yet become available, it is still clear that outside of basic steel, Sadlowski lost pretty big. And while some of this was due to some of the dilly-dallying around Sadlowski did, it would be a serious error to just write it all off to Sadlowski's campaigning.

It is important to determine why many steel workers outside of basic—in can, aluminum, and other divisions—and also a sizeable minority in basic, supported McBride. It wasn't because they liked job combinations, deteriorating conditions, layoffs or because they wanted steel workers to grovel in the dirt in front of the steel companies.

Many of these workers reasoned that the strength of the steel companies was so powerful and overwhelming that the best steel workers could do would be to take whatever Abel & Co. could negotiate out of the companies.

Could or couldn't the steel companies be fought? This is one of the main questions that was repeatedly struggled over around the elections. It was this question that was also the basis for the debate around the ENA—that maybe even strikes are ineffective in the face of the company strength.

The result outside of basic was a clear reflection that organization among the rank and file is still young and primitive and not very developed around the country. This has made it more difficult to overcome the divisions that exist between the different sections of the USWA. These divisions have been pro-



Fresh from consolidation of new gains in the Sadlowski election campaign, rank and file steel workers mobilized in Washington, D.C. on February 14, the opening day of contract negotiations to hit I.W. Abel and his sellout plans and put forward their demands. The demonstration was called for by workers around The Steelworker newspaper.

moted by the companies and union leadership in attempting to play different segments of the steel workers against each other by keeping steel workers in the dark about what the various struggles consist of, distorting many of the issues, telling workers outside of basic that basic steel workers have no reason to fight because they make more money than steel workers outside of basic, and in turn telling basic steel workers that workers in non-basic don't know what's going on and aren't even "real" steel workers.

Trade union elections often do not result in advances for the rank and file. Many times it's just a rubber

stamp for the machine and another knife in the back for the workers. But armed with a proper understanding of the situation, many times union elections can be utilized to overcome the obstacles that exist and advance the interests of the workers. Where the approaching elections tend to concentrate the experience of the workers over the previous period of time, the election can serve as a reference point to focus on the actual conditions workers are facing and the key battles going on in the shop and industry. Especially in such elections—though to a certain degree in almost all union elections

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## Student Rage Storms Thru Italy

Student demonstrations in Italy, which erupted over the high unemployment rate there especially among youth, and the poor quality and overcrowded conditions of Italy's universities—both indictments of the crisis of imperialism—reached mass proportions in early March following the murder of a student leader by police in Bologna. 60,000 students in Rome, their ranks swollen by trainloads of sympathizers from all over Italy, fought police. Chanting slogans like "You will pay for all our dead comrades," with rocks and firebombs and even returning police fire, they tried to storm the headquarters of the ruling Christian Democratic Party, the Ministry of Justice, the Chilean Embassy and other targets in Rome, including the sales offices of the Ford Motor Company, Fiat, and Gulf Oil.

A bourgeois newspaper account described the scene in Rome this way: "The thuds of exploding police tear gas grenades were punctuated by the staccato crack of pistol shots fired by both police and demonstrators." In Milan, students shot out the windows of the Lombardy Industrial Association and firebombed other offices. Thousands more protested in Bologna, while in Turin, a member of the police "anti-terrorist" squad died in a hail of bullets.

This massive wave of rebellion caught the bourgeoisie by surprise and put to the torch the myth propagated in recent years in Europe and in this country of the increasing docility of students and the death of the student movement in the Western capitalist countries. Demonstrations began to jump off in Italy in early February when rumors began to circulate that the Christian Democratic Minister of Education was planning to restore the limitations on university enrollment that were swept away by the student movement in 1968.

The concept of an "open university," where anyone with a high school diploma can attend, was a major victory in a country where, despite recent increases in the number attending, economic hardships prevent 87% of school children from getting a college education. But the granting of this concession, coupled with the economic crisis and no increased funding for schools, has led to vastly overcrowded classrooms, a very poor professor/student ratio, insufficient laboratory and library materials and overpriced books. For example, only a minority of the 150,000 students now enrolled at Rome University, originally built to accommodate 40,000, can regularly attend class.

A major problem and demand of students and youth in Italy is for jobs. As one Italian sociologist put it,

"Our universities no longer produce culture, research or science. They exist primarily in order to mask the true extent of unemployment among our youth." According to the official unemployment figures of the Italian Ministry of Labor, there are about 800,000 young people looking for their first jobs. Out of 72,000 college graduates this year, only about 30% are expected to be able to find work, and the rest will join the 240,000 earlier degree holders still out of work.

The Italian revisionist Communist Party has, as always, taken the side of the bourgeoisie in this struggle, a stand which has made them a target of the revolutionary wrath of the students. For years the Italian CP has promoted the treason that socialism could be accomplished peacefully through elections. More recently the ICP has taken their treason one step further by calling for "the historic compromise"—begging on their knees to be allowed to form a joint government with the Christian Democratic Party, the ruling bourgeois party in Italy. On some campuses violent clashes took place between the students and the CP.

The revisionists already run the government in the town of Bologna, the town where the student leader was gunned down, and the CP's hands are stained with his blood. Berlinguer, head of the Italian CP, made the Party's position on the police clear in 1974, saying, "We are far from making indiscriminate accusations and criticisms of the organs and apparatus of the state as a whole. On the contrary, we have recognized and recognize the loyalty towards the Republic and the Constitution, the self-denial, sacrifices, crowned with examples of heroism, of a great part of the police forces and the armed forces, not only of soldiers but also of their cadres [officers], not to mention the courts." (*Unita*, June 4, 1974)

The lies of the revisionists about the possibility of peaceful "democratic" change are being shattered in the streets of Italy as the "heroic" police prove their loyalty to the Republic by rampaging against the demonstrators. In sharp contrast to the traitorous attempts to lead the masses of Italian people into subservience to the bourgeoisie, events in Italy are revealing very clearly that the capitalist state exists to serve the bourgeoisie and to suppress the masses by force of arms.

The refusal of the masses of Italian students to passively suffer the effects of the capitalists' crisis and their fierce and courageous resistance to the police have delivered a heavy blow to the Italian ruling class and their aspiring partners in the Italian CP. ■



# Steel...

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—struggle and debate goes on among the workers about what the road forward for them is at a given time. The debate about who to vote for, or whether or not to vote at all, often revolves around how the candidates line up around the struggles being waged and whether the workers can advance *their* interests by supporting one or another of the candidates.

As the elections approached in the steel industry much of this discussion went on daily among steel workers in the mills, shanties and locker rooms around what the state of things were in the industry—and to some degree where things are headed in the country as a whole. Among thousands of steel workers, Abel was an infamous figure. He and his machine had done everything they could to sabotage the struggle of steel workers against the companies. The ENA, the productivity committees, the dues increases, denying the right of ratification to workers in basic, the signing of the consent decree, which took the struggle that the workers were waging against discrimination and attempted to turn it back on the workers themselves—these things to a large degree began to turn I.W. Abel into a symbol for thousands—a symbol of how the companies have taken over the union through gangsters at the top. He was a symbol that concentrated all the abuses and attacks directed at steel workers and gave them visible expression in a union leadership that went so far as to even do advertisements for the largest steel company in the United States, U.S. Steel, saying that workers had to put out more for the very companies that were robbing and attacking them daily and literally killing large numbers of workers every year.

## Election Questions Based on Key Battles

The role that these policies of the Abel machine played wasn't just discussed by the workers in the abstract, but in terms of how they affected the conditions and the battles that the steel workers themselves were fighting. The massive layoffs that had been coming down in steel over the last couple of years, while jobs were being combined and eliminated; the harassment and abuse coming down on the steel workers daily on the shop floor from management; the continuing deaths and disabling injuries and the discrimination against minority workers in the plants and mills—the struggle around these key issues and the way to break through on them was the subject of that debate as the election approached.

In the past couple of years there has been the beginning of an upsurge among steel workers. Some of the bigger mills around the country have seen wildcats for the first time in years, over the job combinations, forced overtime, safety and harassment. Where whole plants didn't go out, departments and crews walked out, refusing to go along with the productivity drives that were costing them more jobs each day. In many parts of the country rank and file organizations and caucuses have sprung up, fighting to defend the interests of the workers in the daily attacks they face at the hands of the steel industry. While many of these organizations and caucuses have been short-lived and some geared to or taken over by office seekers, others have continued to spring up, with the steel workers driven by necessity to band together and organize in the face of the assaults being launched by the companies. A number of these organizations have stayed together, and are beginning to grow in numbers as well as in influence.

While the struggle of the steel workers has been intensifying, until recently it was still being conducted mainly on a local scale. As elections approached, this local by local struggle began to change as well. Steel workers, especially the more active, began, much more, to look at things from a national perspective—began to see more clearly how their own experience fit in with what was going on around the country. And as this happened, workers saw much more sharply the need to build unity and organization with workers from other mills and plants.

It was this situation and these conditions that helped give rise to the Sadlowski campaign. Any candidate that was serious about challenging the Abel machine was forced to deal with the issues that the steel workers were fighting and beginning to organize around, and Sadlowski was no exception.

## "A Step...And Not the Final Goal"

It was this same situation which made it a necessity for the rank and file to take up these elections and provided the possibility for advancing the movement of the rank and file by correctly taking them up. *The Steelworker*, a national rank and file newsletter in the steel industry, called on steel workers across the country to support the Sadlowski campaign, pointing out that the rank and file could utilize the elections as a vehicle to bust up the Abel-McBride machine, and make important advances for the demands steel workers were

fighting the companies around. "We must look at these campaigns from the point of putting more power in the hands of the rank and file and as a step in the development of the struggle and not as the final goal," the editorial in *The Steelworker* said.

*The Steelworker* constantly pointed out throughout the course of the election campaign that steel workers could not rely on Sadlowski to bring about the necessary changes that the steel workers were fighting for. To expect that just getting Sadlowski in office would make the changes would be to disarm the rank and file, reducing it to little more than a pressure group on Sadlowski. Far from making advances in taking matters into their own hands, this would have taken the initiative out of the hands of the rank and file and would have actually been a setback in the struggle.

Taking all these conditions into account, critical support was the correct course—in both its aspects, both support and criticism. The fact that the Abel machine had become a symbol of hatred and contempt, the fact that the struggle and organization of the steel workers was experiencing a resurgence, that Sadlowski's campaign was forced to speak to many of the key demands steel workers were fighting around, that workers were looking beyond what was going on only in their local, and were beginning to look at things from a national perspective and that many of the active and advanced workers saw the opportunities presented by the elections and the need to take it out broadly—all these things taken together made it correct and necessary to take up the election in this manner.

These specific conditions taken separately or together don't comprise a checklist or a magic formula for taking up union elections. Each case has to be taken up based on the specific situation existing in the industry. It is important to look at these conditions all-sidedly and deeply to arrive at a correct understanding of how to lead the struggle forward and what role, if any, a particular election can play in that, either by running or supporting a particular candidate, or by other means—jamming up the candidates, organizing a boycott, etc.

## Struggle Over Campaign

This was especially true and necessary in examining Sadlowski himself and the campaign that was run by the various Fight Back committees he set up around the country. For, while he was forced to speak to the struggle that was going on among the steel workers, his campaign tended to limit the role of the workers to button wearers and poll watchers. While paying a lot of lip service to the necessity of the workers to run things and putting the union back in the hands of the rank and file, in practice this meant abandoning all other struggles and concentrating *only* on the election. As far as after the election was concerned, Sadlowski would tell people at rallies and meetings, "You guys be sure to keep your foot up my butt"—in other words remain at Sadlowski's tail and be a pressure group. Because Sadlowski operated with this kind of outlook, certain bourgeois forces promoted him—some disgruntled reformers in order to get a seat on the bandwagon and others because they see the handwriting on the wall and the need to try to mislead the workers' struggle—although many more capitalist forces, including the steel companies themselves, went all-out against Sadlowski.

## Focus on Demands and Battles

What does taking up the elections in a way to put more power in the hands of the rank and file mean? What did it mean in this case to utilize the elections as a vehicle to bust up the Abel-McBride machine and make important advances in the demands being fought around and in the organization of the steel workers? There was much learned around this and advances made in the course of the Sadlowski election. And the answers to these questions revealed themselves very sharply in the struggle between taking up the elections

from the above viewpoint and taking them up from the stand that said what was decisive were the two contenders and not the workers themselves.

First of all it means that the campaign must focus on the demands and battles that the workers are waging, and do so in a way that furthers these battles themselves and releases initiative around the elections as part of these battles instead of leading the workers to hold up their struggles and wait for the outcome of the election. Such was the case with the struggle around Local 3059 in Alliance, Ohio which was put into receivership by the International for being too militant. As the election campaign started to go into gear, the question came up, should the rank and file attempt to take this battle on now, or should things be limited to just pointing out that being in receivership was another reason to vote for Sadlowski and that the workers in Alliance should pin their hopes on Sadlowski winning, and after his victory he would take the local out of receivership.

Members and leaders of 3059 were determined to fight and the forces around *The Steelworker* decided that the times demanded that steel workers take action on this matter. At the same time forces leading the Fight Back committees were reluctant to act. Some supported it generally, while refusing to commit themselves to any specific action. In Chicago, a national spokesman for the Sadlowski campaign told workers that the fight to free Local 3059 wasn't that important and they had too much to do around the elections. All he could say was that Sadlowski himself was opposed to the local being in receivership and that things would be different when Sadlowski won.

A demonstration was held at the USWA's International Headquarters in Pittsburgh demanding to free Local 3059. The demonstration rocked Pittsburgh and police attacked the picket line and march in an effort to stop it. As a result of the demonstration and other actions, Local 3059 was freed two weeks later, as Abel and Co. recognized the explosiveness of the situation. But the demonstration and the fight around the Alliance, Ohio local drew things out sharper and released the initiative of the workers in Alliance and Pittsburgh, and also encouraged people in other places that heard about it, to take up the fight to bust the Abel machine.

Other, similar examples were true in other locals around the country in battles around health and safety job combinations and plant closings, like the takeover of Star Sprinkler by the workers there in the fight to stop the plant from closing. The takeover itself occurred a couple of days after the elections—but the workers there, as well as some people around *The Steelworker*, took up the battle and made plans around it during the final push around the elections.

These examples point out, not that the elections themselves weren't an important battle, or that they should only be treated as an "after thought" to other struggles, but that at all times the election campaign must be put in the context of the battles that are going on between the workers and the capitalists.

This approach to the elections was opposed by some people, particularly some leaders of various Fight Back committees around the country, who said that it was too radical and would alienate some of the less active workers. This led to a lot of sharp struggle within the Fight Back committees around the country.

In Cleveland, for example, the people who headed up the committee tried to ban *The Steelworker* from participating in Fight Back. One trade union hack heading up the committee said, "This is Eddie's campaign not yours. This door swings both ways," meaning that if these people just wanted to follow orders and pass out stickers and buttons, fine—maybe there would even be a union position or two for them—but if they didn't go along with that they could get out. This caused a very heated debate, especially since several of the workers came into the committee as a result of work done with *The Steelworker*. One of them got up and exclaimed, "What is this stuff about the door swings both ways? It sounds to me like there's some

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While Sadlowski refused to deal with the issue of Abel's takeover of Local 3059 in Alliance, Ohio because it wasn't "relevant" to his campaign, rank and file forces around *The Steelworker* saw it as a key battle. They took their demand straight to International offices in Pittsburgh.





As contract negotiations started, grinning traitor I.W. Abel and his partner representing the steel bosses warmly greet one another. But Abel wasn't grinning during the recent election campaign marked by rank and file struggle. The growth of that movement and organization against his sellout plans will soon wipe the smiles off their despicable faces.

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creeping Abelism coming into the Sadlowski campaign."

In Chicago, when workers raised the necessity to organize a demonstration with Abel or McBride coming to town, a leader of Fight Back proclaimed, "The only demonstration we're concerned with is the one of February 8th" (the day of the election). The reasoning behind this was that these type of actions are too militant and might turn off potential voters. But instead what was happening was that some of the more active workers were getting turned off because of the unwillingness of Fight Back to do much more than make promises about how things would be different in the future. These workers, and their activity in the plants and mills in taking the election campaign out to their fellow workers was crucial in turning out a large vote for Sadlowski. While most of them voted for Sadlowski anyway, they lost much of their initiative and enthusiasm in going out broadly in the plants and struggling with other workers about why it was necessary to support Sadlowski.

The outlook Ed Sadlowski carried into the election campaign revealed itself sharply in a number of instances. One of these instances was the signing of the Consent Decree with Inland Steel in Chicago by Sadlowski and Balanoff, local president at Inland and Sadlowski candidate for District 31 Director, which was opposed by many of the workers. Many remembered the promises made by Sadlowski and Balanoff never to sign an agreement without first taking it to the membership. McBride then attempted to come out to Inland and align himself with the workers who were picketing the plant calling Balanoff and Sadlowski "sellouts," while never mentioning the fact that McBride himself was part of the leadership that signed the Consent Decree with nine other companies in 1974.

Sharp debate broke out among the advanced forces that were backing Sadlowski's campaign as to how to relate to this. Some felt that it had to be ignored, or at most called a mistake. If Sadlowski were sharply criticized, they reasoned, then the workers wouldn't vote for him. Others saw things quite differently. Supporting Sadlowski for president could not take precedence over the struggles being waged by steel workers, and, far from turning workers off to the campaign, it provided a real basis for uniting people around taking up the campaign from a stronger position—that it was the rank and file that was the decisive force, and that while it was important to bust the Abel-McBride machine, the signing of the Consent Decree showed more clearly that workers couldn't pin their hopes on Sadlowski to turn things around. Only the workers themselves could do that. Further, while supporting the campaign, the workers should take up the struggle against the Consent Decree itself, which in the name of fighting discrimination allows the companies to continue discriminating while at the same time allowing the companies to attack seniority.

Another sharp example was the now infamous statements that Sadlowski made in an interview in *Penthouse* magazine on the question of automation and loss of jobs. Basically Sadlowski negated the fight that has to go on around the thousands of jobs lost to automation and said that the workers displaced by automation from the coke ovens and other hellholes could just go out and become doctors and lawyers. Of course what was missing from what he said is that under the profit system the workers are forced to pay for technology and are a million times more likely to become unemployed than doctors or lawyers.

Of course, McBride put out statements saying that if Sadlowski were elected he would go along with job eliminations. Coming from a machine that did literally nothing in the face of literally hundreds of thousands of jobs lost in previous years, McBride's position on job eliminations could be hit easily, but Sadlowski's statements had to be fought as well. These things pointed to the necessity of criticizing

Sadlowski whenever what he put out and did went up against the interests of the masses. Where this wasn't done, or wasn't done well enough, the campaign suffered from it. Where it was done well, people got better armed and more united.

The Milwaukee Fight Back committee is a good example. Milwaukee has no basic steel, and judging by the results around the rest of the country, would figure to deliver the vote to McBride. But the Fight Back committee there was led by people involved with *The Steelworker*, and also workers who were members of the United Workers Organization, an organization made up of workers from various industries in Milwaukee to take up the fight against all oppression.

In taking out the campaign, the workers in Milwaukee put out the need for steel workers to get themselves organized to fight the companies, and dealt with the Sadlowski campaign as a step to be better able to do that. They organized plant gate rallies and demonstrations when McBride tried to slip into town. They continued to fight around the battles that were going on daily in the plants while at the same time bringing out the need to bust the Abel machine and support the Sadlowski campaign. And even though the election took place in a non-basic district, Sadlowski defeated McBride in Milwaukee and the way the Fight Back committee operated there was one important reason.

### Advancing Interests of Working Class

But even though Sadlowski would have done better in the vote with a more correct approach to the campaign, this is not the fundamental point. As important as defeating the Abel machine was, it does not stand above advancing the interests of steel workers and the whole working class in their battle against the rule of capital and the dictates of capitalist labor lieutenants like Abel. Even if, in some cases, Sadlowski might have lost votes by challenging more directly the attacks by the companies and the union officials, for the rank and file that can not be the sole or even primary standard by which this election campaign is judged. Much more central to judging the elections are questions such as how much knowledge, experience and strength did the workers actually gain in arming themselves to better deal with the bosses and their agents. To what extent did the rank and file make advances in taking things into its own hands and in building unity and organization with other members of their class? To what extent did steel workers view the elections in the context of the battles being waged today throughout the country against the same class that owns the mills?

All these questions bring out the necessity for the

advanced forces to not restrict the struggle that goes on around the elections to the confines of Fight Back or any other caucus set up for the purpose of electing someone to union office. While it is important to unite with the rank and file workers active in such organizations, and raise their level of consciousness, if the struggle is left there the broad masses of workers will not be sufficiently armed and able to advance.

One of the advances gained in the course of the work done by advanced forces in the Sadlowski campaign was that key issues—the ENA, the right to ratify contracts, etc.—were dragged out into the open and widely and sharply debated. At the heart of these issues is the question of whether the line of "company-union cooperation" promoted by Abel and McBride is the way forward for steel workers, or whether the Abel machine has been digging the workers' grave with this line and the policies that go with it. While the question is far from resolved among the broad numbers of steel workers, as the results of the elections show, still a lot of workers came to see that the only thing steel workers can do is fight the companies every inch of the way.

Some broader social questions also came up in the election because of the way the campaign itself brought class forces to line up. While some Democratic Party politicians and their wealthy backers encouraged Sadlowski to run, increasingly the majority of the capitalists and their henchmen came out against Sadlowski, not because they particularly feared him or the brand of unionism he espouses, but because of what the campaign became for the rank and file and the encouragement that breaking up the Abel machine would have given other workers who find themselves shackled by business unionism.

This is what George Meany, the big frog in the AFL-CIO, had in mind when he blasted Sadlowski for being a threat to "trade unionism." Similar statements followed from Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers and Murray Finley of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers—and support for the Abel machine came in the form of \$\$\$\$ as well as words. Not only capitalist mouthpieces like the *Wall Street Journal*, but even open company representatives like Vice President J. Bruce Johnstone of U.S. Steel came out to defend their man Abel. At the same time, the steel elections had a different meaning for workers in other industries all over the country. Many watched the USWA election and drew their own parallels between the situation there and in their own unions, built through great sacrifice and struggle by the workers, and now taken over by company men getting fat on the union payroll.

In taking this up, the committees formed in various areas that were united around *The Steelworker* pointed to how sides were lining up around the questions steel workers face, and how when things start getting hot workers go up against more than the company and/or the company men who run the union, but up against a whole class of owners whose power extends throughout society. As workers came forward to grasp that, it was also pointed out how steel workers had to join with other workers, fusing their strength with that of the working class in general, to take up battles not only in their own industry but also throughout society.

On this basis, not only the understanding but also the organization of steel workers grew in scope. Area-wide steel workers organizations were founded in the Chicago-Gary area and the Cleveland-Northeast Ohio area in large part off the successes of work in the Sadlowski campaign as well as other work such as the Local 3059 demonstration and other local actions. In the East Coast the campaign, handled in this way, provided the first opportunity in a long time for workers from different plants and different divisions of the union to discuss their common struggle and unite in battle.

It was off of these advances and the growth of *The Steelworker* as a pole of resistance among steel workers nationally that rank and file steel workers were able to pull off their picket line in Washington, D.C. as the contract talks between the USWA and ten big steel companies began February 14 (see *March Revolution*). This demonstration and the meeting of steel workers that followed it are the opening shots of a campaign to make this contract into a real battle and mobilize the rank and file to fight for their interests. The fact that there is a possibility of turning what is usually a signed, sealed and delivered sellout into a battlefield in which the rank and file can further advance shows very clearly that the rank and file has come out of the election stronger and better organized than before.

During the course of these battles, through forging links between these and other struggles against the same class enemy, and with a scientific summation of this, steel workers have been won to stand alongside brothers and sisters from many industries in taking up the fight against the capitalists on every front. Some have come forward to become conscious fighters for the emancipation of the working class and all those held in capitalism's chains. The working class has moved forward in the course of the election campaign in steel, overcoming obstacles and seizing opportunities to advance in organization, in consciousness and in developing its leadership. ■



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