

Alliance for a Labor Party

By FRED VITALE

Douglas Fraser, former president of the United Auto Workers (UAW, from 1977 - 1983), attacked UAW members as being responsible for the re-election of Reagan. He made the remarks on the public television show "Off the Record," shown in Detroit, January 6.

Fraser claimed that UAW members are "conservative" because they did not vote for Mondale. (Nearly half of the members under 50 did not vote for Mondale.) He declared that they are therefore turning their backs on Blacks, young people, the "disfranchised elements." He claimed that workers are "conservative" because of their "recent prosperity."

First, let's make it clear who Doug Fraser is. In the history of the working class he will be remembered above all for the first concessions contract and first major plant closing in the US — the Chrysler contract and closing of Dodge Main in 1979 — which started the wave of concessions and plant closings that swept across the United States wiping out thousands of jobs and causing deep suffering among working people. That has been Fraser's "contribution" to US workers.

Second, the truth is this: it is Fraser and his successor, Owen Bieber, who are responsible for the current *weakness* of the unions, and the consequent deterioration of the "disfranchised" elements' standard of living. It is their constant and consistent *collaboration* with the corporations and the Democratic Party against the workers that has caused such misery.

The opposition to concessions in the UAW is strong and growing, especially since Reagan's re-election. In October, UAW Canadian workers struck Ford and GM and succeeded in winning more than US workers. Workers at Chrysler's Jefferson Avenue plant in Detroit walked out in November and won an unjustly fired worker's reinstatement. And last week

Picketing in Flint



UAW workers in Flint, Michigan struck over local work rules and won a settlement. On January 15, 800 workers of the second shift at Dodge Truck in Detroit walked out after learning that management was planning to discipline Black workers who were absent for Martin Luther King's birthday, celebrated on the January 14. Finally, in the voting on the con-

cessions contracts last September, Ford and GM workers registered substantial opposition with 36% and 43% respectively voting "no." But this opposition needs a program and a leadership.

The UAW needs a new policy. The unions today, especially the UAW, must win back concessions and found a Labor Party to win political power for the workers and oppressed.

The first and necessary step to make this policy come alive is an alliance of working class parties and organizations already active in the UAW and claiming to support both these goals — an *Alliance for a Labor Party*. Only such an alliance of Socialist Action, the Revolutionary Workers League, Fourth Internationalist Tendency, Internationalist Workers Party, and the Socialist Workers Party can organize the ranks of the UAW already opposed to concessions and disgusted by the Democrats.

Today these organizations collaborate but under the contradictory policy of the current union leadership (the AP Parts Strike in Toledo, Ohio and the Emergency National Conference in Cleveland). But such collaboration, if it is to succeed in organizing workers, must be based on a working class policy. An *Alliance for a Labor Party* committed to winning back concessions is the only way to transform the UAW into the weapon it once was, a weapon of the whole working class against Reagan, the Democrats and the auto corporations — a weapon in the formation of a Labor Party.

Stop the Trial! Drop All Charges!

By BARBARA PUTNAM

Another lengthy trial, more heartbreaking hours spent in the dim, barren corridors of the Frank Murphy Hall of Justice in Detroit, more interminable hours of the prosecution's insinuations, lies, distortions — when will it all be over for Karen Norman?

Charged with first degree murder, this young, Black mother of three is facing another grueling trial for killing Lamont Powell who raped her in her home. Despite torrents of lies and disinformation about this case the original



Karen Norman

jury was *deadlocked*. In face of this, the prosecution is attempting to orchestrate another trial set for February 4.

Wholesale denial of rights for working class people is the real question. This case has revealed with stark clarity that democracy in America is democracy for the bourgeoisie only. To stop the upcoming trial, make the state drop all charges and punish those responsible means class solidarity; a unified political struggle on the part of working class organizations, the unions, in working class neighborhoods — against the perpetrators of injustice.

Definite upholders of the status quo are responsible for Karen Norman's misery; Magistrate Marion Moore, Chief Assistant Prosecutor Elliott Hall, Beverley Jasper, the judge who tried the case — all middle class Blacks and cronies of Mayor Coleman Young; the cops, the investigators — all responsible for denying

Karen Norman the most elementary rights. One thing is abundantly clear — Black faces instead of white ones since Coleman Young took office has not changed anything for working class Blacks in Detroit.

"Innocent Until Proven Guilty?"

Working class people, above all Blacks, are systematically denied any rights by the authorities, white or Black. "Innocent until proven guilty?" Not Karen Norman, just the opposite!

The investigator's office "knew" she must be guilty because a woman, in their view, particularly a Black working class woman, is supposed to be harmless. Only if she had died would there be the slightest sympathy. Her ex-husband, Gary Little, overheard an investigative officer say as a first response to the situation, "OK, first degree murder — let's get it together!" She was tried and convicted long before she ever got to court!

For lack of evidence, the prosecution was obliged to manufacture some. As a centerpiece of their so-called murder case they needed to establish a prior relationship; that Karen Norman plotted to kill Lamont Powell. Cops, already convinced of Karen's "guilt" used highly questionable methods of collecting "evidence" indicating the killing was planned. They made it unusually easy for Powell's uncle (who looks and acts like some kind of small-time gangster) to finger Karen Norman as the woman he had seen with Powell a year earlier.

A cop showed the uncle several pictures, being: three of secretaries at their desks, two old black and white photos and one new color photo of Karen up against a wall as in a line-up. Guess who?

In addition to this assistance from the police in making an identification, a relative, Dennis Powell, undoubtedly told the uncle what Karen Norman looked like beforehand because he had already seen her picture splashed all over the papers. The relatives' goal was to "give her the electric chair" or at least life in prison for killing their dearly departed regardless of the circumstances that led to Powell's death. The cops and the rest of the gang were only too willing to oblige.

Articles in the *Detroit Free Press* and *Detroit News* reinforced the idea that there was a question mark over Karen Norman, "Victim of Rape, or Brutal Killer?" queried the *Free Press* before the trial. Both the *News* and the *Free*

Press sensationalized the case repeating that Karen Norman begged a neighbor to help her "hide the body" and that "she stabbed Powell 47 times." Both these and many other lies were disproven in the course of cross-examination. The neighbor proved to be a completely intimidated teenager frantic to point any questions away from himself toward Karen; he contradicted himself dozens of times on the witness stand. The forensic specialist who did the autopsy disclaimed the "47 times" myth; she said Lamont Powell had only 10 or 15 deep wounds, the rest were superficial as in "pin scratches."

No Rights for Karen Norman

Excessive bail of \$50,000.00 was imposed for the "crime" of killing a rapist. Cruel and unusual punishments were inflicted throughout the ordeal. When Karen Norman went into the police station to report that she stabbed the rapist and that he died, the cops handcuffed her. When she went to the hospital for examination, the medical examiner refused to believe her when she said she was already pregnant, handcuffed her to the table and gave her a dangerous drug, DES. (It is unclear at this moment whether the infant she was carrying at the time will be permanently affected; premature at birth, he weighed only four pounds.)

Judge Beverly Jasper, would not allow Karen's attorney, Majorie Cohen, to present a favorable witness, an expert on rape who could have made the jury understand why Karen acted as she did after the rape and subsequent killing, her panic and disorientation, and why she stabbed Powell the way she did.

In irregular and unusual proceedings, the judge, (a Black judge who knows all the better how to turn the screws), ignored signs that the jury was having difficulty reaching a decision. She put pressure on them to keep talking, hoping that they would reach the desired guilty verdict. They deliberated a full seven days, finally telling her point blank they were a *hung jury*. Meanwhile, highly prejudicial articles spewed out that a jurist would have had to have been blind, deaf and dumb to ignore.

"The right of people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed." "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects . . . shall not be violated . . . nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be

twice put in jeopardy of life or limb . . ." "In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury . . . to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor . . ." Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted." If these words sound familiar they should, they are from the first ten amendments to the bourgeois Constitution supposedly guaranteeing rights of the individual — unless, perhaps, the individual happens to be a member of the underclass like Karen Norman.

How do these rights apply to Karen Norman? The prosecution argued that Karen's possession of a hunting knife to defend herself in her own home proved she planned to murder her attacker — so much for the right to bear arms. Throughout the trial the judge expressed extreme hostility to the defense counsel; there was intense (negative) publicity before, during and after the trial — so much for impartiality. Karen's lawyer was not allowed to present a rape expert in Karen's favor — so much for the right of the accused to obtain witnesses; excessive bail was imposed, cruel and unusual punishments and procedures were used, and finally, Karen is being *tried again for the same offence*.

Bourgeois democracy is democracy for the bourgeoisie.

Stop the Trial! Make the State Drop All the Charges!

While we are in complete solidarity with the Karen Norman Defense Committee we must explain to the Committee and to our readers our political disagreements having the goal in mind of strengthening the Committee. The main policy pursued has been one of pressuring liberals for "our right to self-defense" or "against rape" in and of itself. This is a bad strategy and was proven so during the course of the first trial. For example, the Committee sent out a \$700 mailing to liberals and got very little in return. Most of the money that came in was not a result of the expensive mailing, rather it was small donations, not from wealthy liberals, but no doubt other working people. A reliable policy is to turn to the working class itself and the unions in a unified struggle to make the state stop the trial and drop all charges against Karen Norman.

The Working Class Needs Its Party!

As the sun rises in this country, a young high school student might put on his uniform and prepare to join his friends in the local neighborhood militia, preparing to defend against an invasion. His mother would be forced to stand in long ration lines waiting for food because a powerful nation to the North has boycotted food, medical and other supplies to her country. The country is Nicaragua, one of dozens of small nations of Black or Brown peoples that is threatened by the United States for daring to throw off the yoke of oppression.

Thousands of miles away, a young inhabitant of one of America's big cities might awake and peer out of his window at a forest of concrete and steel. This youth would prepare to go to a school that resembled more a battleground or a prison than a place of learning. She might be a young woman also trying to support a child. And her parents might be lucky enough to just be getting out of the debt they incurred during months and years of unemployment.

These two are a continent apart but, perhaps without knowing it, they share a common experience and a common oppressor. They are part of the class of working people that have to put up a daily struggle for survival against a system that is based on inequality, injustice and greed.

But there is an awakening taking place. Like a great bear the American working class is waking up and stretching its limbs. Trade unions that took massive cuts in their wages and benefits and faced massive unemployment have had enough, they are beginning to fight back. A movement to defend the people of Nicaragua against the US invasion is growing. Young students and workers are starting to look for ways to change the system instead of accepting the lies about the American dream. For thirty years the ruling class has been conjuring up a vision of "peace and plenty" that is for working people, especially Blacks, not a dream but a ghastly illusion.

What is needed now is a party, an organization of the workers and unemployed, to fight for the interests of the working class in its entirety. What is needed is a break from the

Democratic Party (they never delivered on a single promise to the workers) and the building of a Labor Party, a leadership independent from the ruling class — the capitalists.

Mansions and Ghettos

The rich and the poor have been and remain the reality of life in the United States. The American dream is just what it says — a dream. It is a dream that is based on the hopes and aspirations of working people, of young people for their futures and of their families for a better life, but as the difference between the rich and poor grows deeper with every economic catastrophe of capitalism, as more and more middle income workers are driven into poverty and despair, the dream is revealed as a cynical lie.

But even though the inequality between the mansions of the capitalists and the ghettos of the working class are the most obvious result of class society, they are not even necessarily the worst. Because not only the means of distribution and of money are controlled by the capitalists, but also the means of production,

the giant factories and industry, and through them practically everything else is touched by the driving force of the ruling class — their greed for profits and their desperate attempts to stop all challenges to their system. Because the vast majority of the population, the working class, those who produce all the wealth of this society, who make the cars, who pay for the schools and public works, are not in control of this wealth. The capitalists who are in control of it are interested only in preserving this system of inequality and injustice, the whole fabric of society is beginning to crumble.

America is supposed to be the "land of plenty." Plenty of illusions. For the second year in a row, the infant mortality rate in Detroit was as high as in Central America. The most powerful and technologically advanced nation in the world will not provide for the basic needs of small children in one of the largest cities in this country. Is it any wonder that the people of Nicaragua want to get the United States off their backs?

Ronald Reagan talks about preserving democracy all over the world. For this he justifies billions of dollars for the military and massive cuts in public spending. Yet, last month in Detroit a young Black woman named Karen Norman was put on trial for murder for defending herself against a rape. Is that justice?

The Democratic Party

Frederick Douglas once said, "Power concedes nothing without a demand." Reagan, and the system of inequality and injustice that he represents, will concede nothing without a demand from the working class. Building a party to fight for the demands of workers is not just building another party that claims to be for the needs of the poor and workers. In the United States, the Democratic Party has been making that claim for fifty years. But the Democratic Party is and always has been for preserving capitalism, it has never presented a demand that seriously challenged this system. Its campaigns and its candidates are supported and paid for by the rich. Building a party to fight for the demands of workers means a real

change — it means a complete break from the two capitalist parties, Democrat and Republican.

The organizations of working people that exist today, particularly trade unions, have leaderships that support the Democratic Party and still defend the system. Change, and a new party and leadership, will have to come from the bottom up. Change will have to come from the young, from the ranks of the trade unions. A new leadership must be built.

Where Trotskyists Stand

The Labor Party will not be built automatically. It must begin from a leadership in order to be a mass party. The Trotskyists are a working class leadership that has advanced the demand for the Labor Party and wants this party to have program to defend the class independence of the workers and their movement. We Trotskyists are calling on our young supporters to build a revolutionary leadership for the Labor Party.

How a society treats its youth is a sign of its health. In America, the working class youth are fighting for survival before they even have a chance to learn and contribute to human science and culture. Without anything to look forward to in this society, it is no small wonder that so many come to accept the worst that capitalism has to offer — drugs to deaden the senses, hopelessness and despair.

A Trotskyist fights for the interests of the working class, because it is the working people who hold the key to the liberation of the human race. A young person in the Trotskyist party does not put him or herself above the interests of the working class, but rather prepares and educates friends and family to look out for the interests of the working class. A young person in the Trotskyist party does not see him or herself and the party as being above the rest of the working class but rather as an important part of the class as a whole; as the brain is to the human body.

Students and working youth!

The working class needs its party; build it with us.

Build an Alliance for a Labor Party!

Lessons of the workers struggles

10th Anniversary of the Founding of the Trotskyist Organization

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Cleveland Conference and Beyond

By MARGARET GUTTSALL

Many working class organizations and militants are beginning to turn their attention toward building the April 20 demonstrations against US intervention in Central America, initiated by the Cleveland Conference in September 1984, and this is absolutely correct. An all-out effort to build these demonstrations as *working class demonstrations* is imperative for very little has been done in this direction since the Cleveland Conference.

The working class is the only class that can "stop US intervention in Central America" or, more correctly, *defeat US imperialism* in Central America. It can do so with volunteers for Nicaragua, boycotts, strikes and, above all, a mass Labor Party to fight for political power.

It took the organized anti-war movement and the Vietnamese *fifteen years* to drive the US out of Vietnam. This would not have been possible at all if American and European workers had not entered the struggle in the late 1960s and early '70s, with the postal workers strike, the GM workers strike and the Teamsters strike, among others. And it would have happened much sooner if the movement had actually oriented itself toward mobilizing the working class.

What is more, the working class is the only class that *will* work consistently to defeat US imperialism. Only working class organizations continued the struggle against imperialism in Vietnam during the 1972 elections (Nixon vs. McGovern) while the petty bourgeois, pacifist organizations campaigned for McGovern (who, on the eve of the elections hailed Nixon's accord with Hanoi as a great victory, an accord that was followed by the *most massive bombing in history*, the "Christmas bombing"). Only working class organizations continued the struggle after Nixon signed the "Agreement on Ending the War" in January 1973, an agreement that permitted the US to continue to advise and arm the reactionary Saigon regime until it finally fell in April 1975.

And only working class organizations continued the struggle against US imperialism in Central America during the 1984 elections while petty bourgeois pacifist organizations campaigned for the party that started the wars in Vietnam and Nicaragua.

Working class organizations — trade unions and political parties — took the initiative in building the Cleveland Conference, the first and largest since 1981. Working class organizations and militants dominated this conference — not "small sects," as

the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) claimed, not "independents," as Jerry Gordon, Conference coordinator claimed, and not "only the Internationalist Workers Party," as the IWP claimed.

Working class organizations took the lead in carrying out the first actions planned by the Conference. The SWP, the Internationalist Socialist Organization (ISO) and the Trotskyist Organization collaborated with radical nationalist organizations in the Grenada Martyrs Foundation to build a demonstration in solidarity with Grenada in a working class neighborhood in Detroit on October 27. Socialist Action (SA) and others evidently collaborated with other participants in the Cleveland Conference to build demonstrations in Minneapolis and Los Angeles November 10.

And the working class is the only class that has taken any mass action against the Reagan regime since he was re-elected — the Chrysler workers' walkout, the butchers' strike and the Flint auto-workers' strike in the Detroit area, or the teachers' strike in Chicago, to name only those with which we are the most familiar.

This shows that working class organizations and militants must devote their energies entirely to mobilizing *their own class*. All propaganda, slogans, tactics, organization and methods must be subordinated to this goal.

Nevertheless, many of these same working class organizations that have played a leading role in and make up a large part of this movement, continue to ignore this fundamental Marxist truth, a truth affirmed by the entirety of the experience of the working class, from the Russian Revolution in 1917, to the Vietnamese Revolution, to the Nicaraguan, Polish or South African Revolutions today.

Instead of uniting *working class forces* and devoting their energies toward mobilizing working class forces, they orient toward petty bourgeois and liberal bourgeois forces that exist in the solidarity, pacifist and nuclear freeze movements (the leadership of CISPES, Mobilization for Survival, SANE, the Churches, etc.)

Thus Socialist Action, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (FIT), and the Internationalist Workers Party (IWP) all voted for the majority resolution at the Cleveland Conference that called for:

"... massive action joining together anti-interventionist trade unionists, peace groups, solidarity networks, the religious community,

the women's rights movement, minorities, seniors, students and all others who oppose the governments' interventionist policies."

"... organizing the anti-intervention movement on a non-partisan and non-exclusionary basis."

"... unity in action between the anti-intervention movement and the anti-nuclear movement."

Socialist Action and the FIT rejected the Trotskyist Organization's resolution "For a *Partisan Movement, a Workers Front to Defend the Nicaraguan Revolution*" on the grounds that it would exclude Democratic Party supporters.

The Cleveland Conference Continuations Committee has devoted itself almost entirely toward reaching an agreement with petty bourgeois forces and Socialist Action, the FIT and the IWP have simply applauded this activity in their press. The IWP even goes so far as to say that "the Cleveland Conference was important because it pressured the 'official' leadership of the solidarity and pacifist movements to carry out activities" and announces "for the first time the solidarity and anti-nuclear movement have come together" (*Working Class Opposition*, No. 14, December 1984).

At the same time, virtually nothing was done on the national level to build the actions on October 20-27 and November 10 planned by the Cleveland Conference. The Continuations Committee did not issue a call, a leaflet, a poster. It did not even issue a proposal, a suggestion or a report of activity.

And, unfortunately, while the working class organizations and their elected representatives have been devoting the bulk of their resources toward reaching an agreement with petty bourgeois forces, the petty bourgeois forces have been devoting their resources toward building... the imperialist Democratic Party, toward subordinating the independent, working class movement to this party. The pacifist and nuclear freeze movements sponsored very partisan, very large demonstrations in Detroit and Chicago in favor of the imperialist Democratic Party before the elections. In negotiations, the pacifist and nuclear freeze organizations opposed an open committee, opposed including PAM, opposed including local representatives, for fear that the movement might get out of control.

Do comrades see now why we, Trotskyists, said at the Cleveland Conference that our movement *must* be partisan, working class or it will not be at all?

Many working class organizations, particularly Socialist Action and the FIT, defend this policy of building a cross-class, non-partisan, all-inclusive movement, without much thought, on the grounds that this was the policy of the majority of the anti-war movement or the SWP in the '60s. It worked then, it will work again, they say.

But it took *fifteen years* to end the war in Vietnam. Vietnam itself was nearly destroyed. And here we are again with US imperialism about to give it another shot, this time in Central America.

In fact, when the SWP entered into the anti-war movement in the early '60s it fought *against the exclusion of working class organizations, against the petty bourgeois pacifist forces*, at a time when the movement was very heterogeneous and still under the influence of the Democratic Party. And without this struggle there would have been no movement to speak of. But in 1968 the SWP began to fight *against the exclusion of petty bourgeois forces, against working class youth and militants breaking with them*, using the very same formula of "non-exclusionism" just as SA and FIT are doing today. And this disarmed the movement, paved the way for its virtual disintegration in 1972 and allowed US imperialism to prolong the torture of Vietnam for 7 years, until 1975.

There is nothing wrong with making temporary or conjunctural agreements with radical or revolutionary petty bourgeois organizations, but not at the expense of the independent mobilization of the working class.

The fight to build the April 20 demonstrations as working class demonstrations is a fight against this policy and orientation toward petty bourgeois and liberal bourgeois forces known as "non-exclusionism." It is a fight for a complete break with the policy of the anti-war movement and the SWP after 1968. It is a fight for a *working class policy*, to continue the working class traditions of the anti-war movement and the SWP.

The Trotskyist Organization led the fight for a class policy at the Cleveland Conference with its resolution "For a Partisan Movement, Workers Front to Defend the Nicaraguan Revolution." This resolution called for: volunteers, arms and other forms of material aid to defend the Nicaraguan Revolution, a union boycott of aid to the contras, an end to union support for the Democratic Party, a Labor Party and a vote for working class candidates in the elections. And we got a great deal of support and sympathy for this resolution. But support and sympathy are not enough. We need a majority if we are going to win the war against US imperialism in Central America and everywhere, now, in our lifetime, once and for all.

Think it over fellow workers, comrades. What do you want your organization to do this time?

Working class demonstrations in solidarity with the Nicaraguan Revolution April 20!

A Workers Front to Defend the Revolution!

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