

STRIKE SOLIDARITY UPDATE

Trumka says labor is on verge of new era

By Bill Dennison

Standing before the sea of trade unionists who gathered in Greenwich, Conn., last Sunday to pledge support for striking Pittston coal miners, United Mine Workers of America President Richard Trumka spoke of a labor movement on the verge of a new era.

Saluting the dozens of different unions at the gathering and the solidarity they represented, Trumka declared, "We have come here today to tell corporate America that we are united. In the decade of the '80s they kept us divided, they kept our struggles separate. Today we're united. The decade of the '80s was theirs, but the '90s will be ours."

His words carried a sense of hope and optimism that stirred the crowd. Many observers see

the miners' militant struggles as the catalyst that has made solidarity a reflex action for the labor movement.

"All of them — Pittston, the courts, the state of Virginia — all are powerless in the face of workers united," Trumka said. Speaking of the miners' takeover of the Moss #3 preparation plant in Carbo, Va., a week earlier, he said, "What they are going to get is more of what they saw last week. We will continue to use peaceful, non-violent civil disobedience."

Trumka said, "They sent in the state police. They arrested us, fined us, told us they were going to take our treasury. They fined us billions of dollars."

"Take the treasury, but you won't break the mineworkers," he shouted. "You ain't seen nothing yet."

"We will come in the thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands. We will keep coming and we will not go back," Trumka told the cheering crowd. "There will be action on the streets in the '90s. The '90s are for us."

Trumka outlined an entire new agenda for the decade ahead, in sharp contrast to what he called the "corporate agenda" of the last decade.

He said the 1980s saw 38 million without health care, 34.5 million workers below the poverty level, 625,000 farmers evicted from their land, civil rights rolled back, our youth becoming users of drugs, one in 20 workers fired trying to organize.

"That was their agenda, their vision of America. But the '90s are for us," Trumka declared. "It's time to demand a national

health care bill that will provide health care for all of us. It's time to demand a shorter work week. It's time to demand better education. It's time to change the nation's labor laws.

"And if any labor leader says

that it isn't time to change the labor laws," Trumka added, "tell him to get out of our way. It's time to demand that political leaders stand up for labor. The '90s are for our agenda — our vision of America."

SHOP TALK

There's gotta be a better way

By a Virginia Pittston coal miner

I'm a fourth generation miner. For as far back as anyone can remember, my family has mined the coal out of these hills. And ever since we began, it has always been a fight with the companies. Back in my great grand-daddy's day they treated the mules better than they treated the men. Miners had no choice but to strike, else the operators would have kept the men and their families in total poverty, total sickness and total ignorance.

Things haven't changed much, I would say, as far as the operators are concerned. Through our union, the UMWA, we are higher paid — but everything costs so much more. Our children can go to school and there are laws that make the mines safer. But the operators still treat a man no better than a mule, and they would like to push us back. They take everything, including your self-respect.

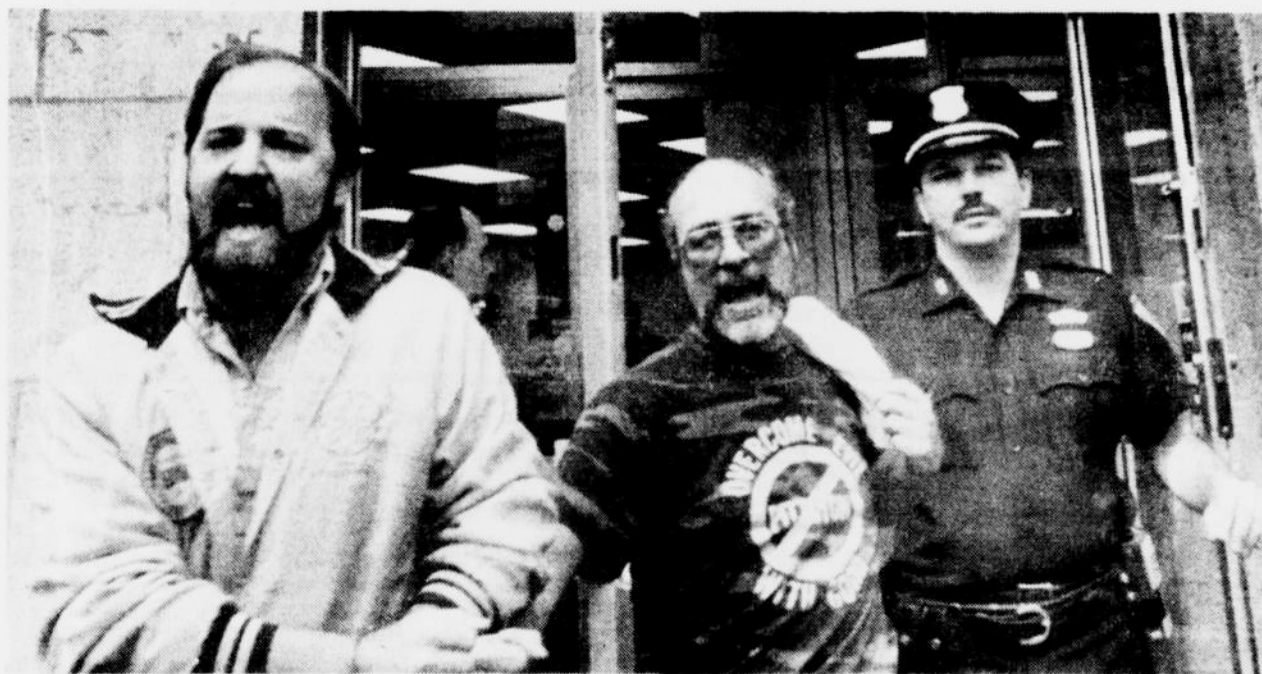
We had to go out during the long strike in 1977-78. That was hard times. And again through the '80s we've been on strike; more hard times. We go two steps forward and then take three steps back just to hang onto our union. There has to be a better way.

I'm not saying to give up any of our rights, like the right to strike — don't get me wrong. But there has to be a way so that once we win something, the operators can't just come along and take it off us. Like medical insurance for the retired miners. Pittston just decided, no more, and they took it away from miners who have Black Lung disease because they made Pittston rich.

Or take these state troopers who will arrest you at the drop of a hat for just driving on the roads. That's our tax money that pays them. They're supposed to protect us. And who do you think pays the judges' salaries? There has to be a better way.

Our union will be 100 years old next year, in 1990. There has to be a day in the next 100 years where we don't have to go to the wall every time to live a decent life and work like a human being.

Putting the heat on



Two of 14 union activists being arrested in Boston after they took over a manager's office at a Shawmut Bank branch last week. They were demanding the bank put pressure on the Pittston Co. to settle the miners' strike.

Circuit Wise strikers seeking support of public

By Joelle Fishman

NORTH HAVEN, Conn. — Strikers at Circuit Wise Inc. brought their struggle against a lawbreaking company to the public in the second week of their struggle. Members of Local 299, United Electrical workers, struck Sept. 9 after 16 months of fruitless bargaining for a first contract.

Strikers went to North Haven Town Hall last Friday to protest police restrictions limiting picketers' right to leaflet strikebreakers going into work. Instead of allowing strikers to approach each car, as many as 20 cars were being waved through the line at a time. "Is this North Haven or South Africa?" asked the signs the workers carried.

"North Haven residents should ask: Why are our town officials siding with corporate criminals and using our tax dollars to deny workers their rights?" the union said. It is estimated that \$40,000 a week of

taxpayer money is being spent to subsidize the police force to protect the strikebreakers.

The company, owned by Jack and Rollin Mettler, has been charged with committing more than 40 unfair labor practices. Circuit Wise has been fined repeatedly, most recently last week by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. In addition, the State Attorney General and Department of Environmental Protection are suing the Mettlers for polluting the Quinnipiac River by illegal dumping of chemicals.

The strike at Circuit Wise is of key importance to the Connecticut labor movement. It was cited by United Mine Workers President Richard Trumka as a national example of union-busting tactics the labor movement will no longer tolerate.

At a March for Justice to Pittston corporate headquarters in Greenwich on Sunday, several thousand area workers were addressed by representatives of

workers in a number of key strikes. UE International President John Hovis spoke on behalf of the Circuit Wise strikers.

Union members from Hartford and New Haven had stopped first at the Circuit Wise plant gate to show their solidarity. About 40 strikers and their families, supplied with sandwiches and picket signs, then boarded school buses for the trip to Greenwich to unite their cause with that of the Pittston miners.

The union election at Circuit Wise in May 1988 was the biggest victory for industrial unionism in Connecticut in over a decade. The company employs 400 people who make circuit boards, primarily for the Ford Motor Co.

Observers here say it is likely that, because of the company's effort to keep the plant running with strike breakers, defective boards will be shipped to Ford plants in Pennsylvania and Canada. UAW members at those plants have expressed solidarity with Circuit Wise strikers.

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