

# IN SHORT

## Through proper channels

If you don't have a TV set, you might consider bugging the living room of a neighbor who does. You won't want to miss *The CIA*, a new show that CBS plans to uncover in 1981.

Following in the gooseteps of ABC's long-running but now defunct series *The FBI*, *The CIA* will present its heroes as staunch members of "a wonderful outfit fighting that never-ending battle for truth, justice and the American way," according to Gary Deeb of the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

"Ideally, we'd like to show that the people in the CIA are American citizens with families and a job to do," said Larry Thompson, executive producer of the proposed program. He explained that the series would get "technical assistance and advice" from the Association of Former Intelligence Officers, a group with a large contingent of ex-CIA agents.

"America's moving to the right," noted an astute CBS exec. "No matter who's president, the people want the United States to protect its interests abroad. The time is right for this show."

If only J. Edgar Hoover were alive to watch the new series; maybe, somewhere down there, he's tuning in.

## Cops and robbers

An internal report of the New York City Police Department, obtained recently by *The New York Times*, reveals commanders' fears that the economic crunch could lead cops into a life of corruption.

From the report, which drew from an annual survey of supervisors in charge of the city's 73 precincts and 200 other investigative and support units: "Numerous unit commanders stated the opinion that their personnel, despite second jobs and working spouses, are under considerable financial stress. This gives rise to an ominous atmosphere conducive to demoralization and the rationalization of marginally corrupt activities. They also see an even greater danger in the possibility that this attitude might spread upward through the ranks."

The survey found that commanders were concerned about such abuses by officers as the theft of property, the use or sale of drugs, and the sale or disclosure of confidential information obtained from department computers.

Do you know where your coppers are?

## Unsafe at any age

On July 31, as the official period of renewed draft registration drew to a close, a federal judge in Chicago rejected the argument that the sign-up illegally discriminates against 19- and 20-year-olds, and refused to halt it.

Nicholas Kitsos, the lawyer who filed the suit on behalf of an unnamed 19-year-old man, charged that, as the Military Selective Service Act allows for the registration of all males between the ages of 18 and 26, the present program unfairly singles out a fraction of those who are eligible.

According to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Kitsos has vowed to carry on the fight to the U.S. Court of Appeals, and, if necessary, to the Supreme Court—which in the fall will be dealing with a challenge to the Selective Service Act itself, on sexual-discrimination grounds (see *In These Times*, July 16 and July 30).

## Nuclear families

On Aug. 4, Illinois prosecutors charged Commonwealth Edison Company and two of its employees with falsifying records to cover up "serious security violations" at the Quad Cities nuclear power station in the southwest corner of the state, according to UPI.

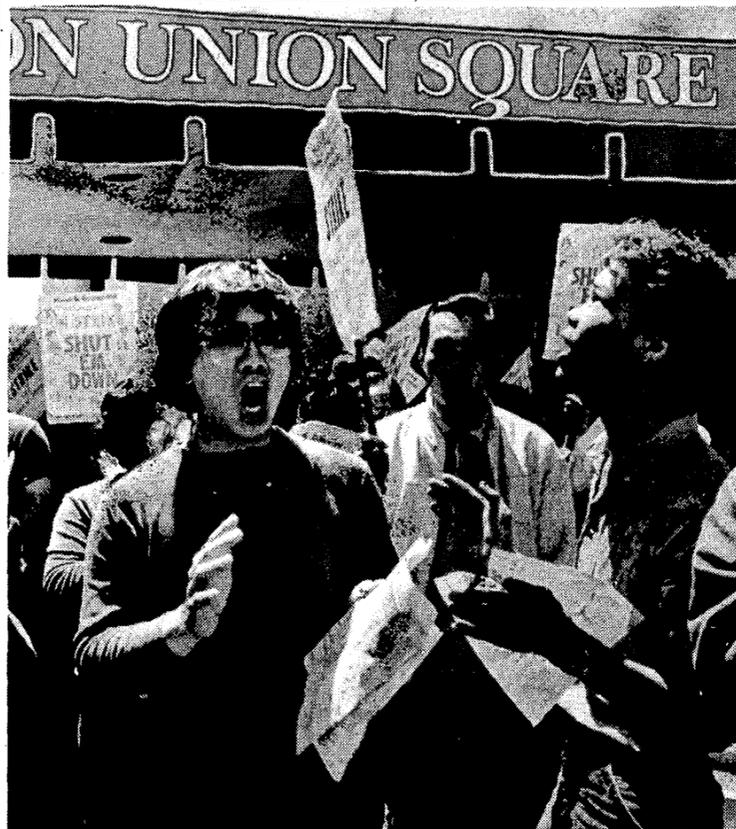
Federal grand juries have already found evidence that Commonwealth Edison ordered guards not to report such violations as unlocked and unguarded doors and unescorted visitors allowed to roam free through "vital areas" of the plant.

While those people were being indicted for fraud and conspiracy, on the opposite side of Illinois a juvenile court judge in Chicago was refusing to restore custody of a 12-year-old Ukrainian boy to his parents, who are planning to go back to the Soviet Union.

Walter Polovchak and his 17-year-old sister, Natalie, ran away from home for a variety of reasons, including parental insensitivity. But the press has focused on Walter's enchantment with bicycles, ice cream and other commonplace American items.

*Ice cream!* In the Ukraine—at least as of a few years ago—ice cream sold by street vendors is so creamy it makes Haagen Dazs taste like Hamburger Helper. Of course, there's usually only one flavor...

—Josh Kornbluth



"Do Not Disturb" signs failed to keep the pickets away.

**SAN FRANCISCO**—The hotel workers strike here is not an ordinary labor action. The Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union has not struck America's favorite tourist city in 40 years. But since July 17, the minorities and women who make up over 70 percent of Local 2's membership have been marching, chanting and banging silverware, pie tins, trays and other noise-makers in front of San Francisco's posh landmark hotels—the Hyatt Regency, the St. Francis, the Fairmont and Mark Hopkins. How the pickets got there is the story of the union's powerful rank-and-file movement, which both hotel owners and the union's International officials seem eager to crush.

The rank-and-file movement grew up around two key issues—the delay of union elections and the iron-fisted rule of local president Joe Bellardi. When the union finally held presidential elections in 1978, the rank and file were ready. David McDonald, supported by the Alliance of Rank and File (ARF), upset Bellardi for the presidency. But the Bellardi gang retained a majority of the business agents and executive board. Bellardi loyalists repeatedly disrupted union meetings. Instead of turning to his supporters, McDonald turned to the more conservative International for assistance.

Citing local chaos and dissension, the International imposed a trusteeship on Local 2. They claimed to be assisting the rank and file, but they fired the elected vice president and then fired McDonald when he sued the International. In what could prove a landmark case, lawyers for rank and file won a ruling overthrowing the trusteeship. The judge ruled that by re-hiring Bellardi business agents, dispatchers and organizers, the International had sought to negate the election. But instead of restoring McDonald to office, the judge ordered new elections—in which rank and filers split into two rival slates, allowing the old-line ticket headed by president-elect Charles Lamb to win.

According to union members, Lamb proved to be as bad as Bellardi. "Not only did he give away owner-paid sick leave," complained one rank and filer, "but he reneged on election of business agents and had his goons intimidate people at union meetings. When he saw he'd lose a vote, he'd signal for adjournment."

But Lamb could not back a rank-and-file takeover of the union's negotiating committee. Rank and file slates won almost every seat they ran for, compiling an overwhelming majority of 20 seats on the committee. Negotiators proceeded to draw up a list of demands:

- improvement of working conditions and safety
  - comprehensive affirmative action and training for all levels of workers
  - a 58 percent pay raise over the paltry union average of \$4.74 per hour.
  - an increase in holidays, including Gay Pride Day. Before the last arbitration, Local 2 had only three paid holidays during the entire year.
- The negotiating team unanimously backed a strike. President Lamb opposed it and did nothing to prepare the union for the action that members voted for by 2,845 to 197.

The confrontation of noisy third-world workers and well-off hotel patrons has sparked much anger and some police violence. One Burns guard attacked four women picketers, inflicting a variety of injuries. Forty-odd other demonstrators have been arrested.

The strike thus far has cost hotel owners more than \$2 million. Hotels claim to be operating at or near capacity. Hotels apparently are being staffed with management and scabs flown in from as far away as Miami. But the scabs are reported to be stealing much of the hotels' supplies.

Meanwhile, the rank and file are again being threatened by their International, which has flown its own team into town. Despite the local negotiating committee's opposition, the International's negotiators

are seeking to commit the union to mediation-arbitration.

One dissident admits, "We can't beat them now," but he believes the rank and file will keep growing. "People see how the International uses trusteeships to fight democratic unionism," he says, "not just here, but also in Minneapolis, Las Vegas and Alaska. But in San Francisco we have a real chance to win. We won before and we'll win again!"

—Mike Berkowitz

## Church & state vs. gay rights

**BALTIMORE**—A combination of ignorance and church opposition led the Baltimore City Council to kill a gay rights bill by a two-to-one margin July 21. Originally sponsored by a majority of council members, the bill spurred unheard-of controversy in this provincial Maryland port city.

Designed to include "sexual orientation" among other characteristics in the city's civil rights law, the bill was seen by opponents as an official endorsement of homosexual practices.

Gay activists, combining for the first time to form potent political groups, lobbied relentlessly on the bill and kept the hearings packed with supporters.

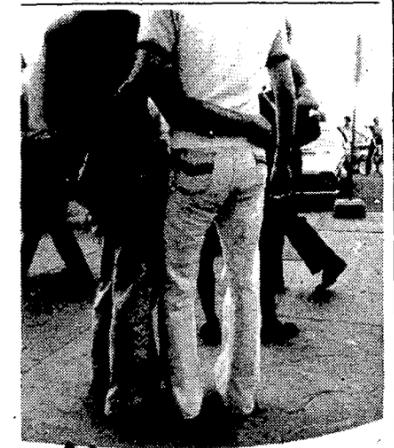
Despite opposition by the PTA and the raving testimony of Christian fundamentalists who quoted the Bible to demonstrate the immorality of homosexual behavior, the bill seemed close to passage before it came up for the final vote.

In the last week, however, the region's Roman Catholic archbishop sent a letter to key council members opposing the gay rights bill on grounds that "it would be improper to legislate" on matters of sexual practice.

Although a furor broke out with this high-level intrusion of church in the affairs of state, several council members who had supported the bill changed their tune. "There's no way it's going to pass," said one prominent former sponsor. "Mr. and Mrs. America seem to be against the bill," said another. "I'll support it if you get the approval of the archbishop," a third deserter claimed.

Of the council's six black members—60 percent of a majority—four supported the bill when it came to the floor. Of those, two explained their vote as support for a civil rights issue.

Gay activists, angered by the quick loss of allies but encouraged by the liveliness of the debate and the publicity their struggle received, plan to introduce similar legislation as soon as they have lined up enough supporters. —Cliff Welch



Outside Baltimore City Hall before hearing on bill.

# IN THE NATION

By Pat Aufderheide

**T**HERE'S MORE AT STAKE IN the current strike by the Screen Actors Guild and the American Federation of TV and Radio Artists than whether or not you'll be watching reruns during the fall TV season.

The strike marks the coming of age of new distribution systems for film and video. A precedent-setting conflict, the strike will decide how creative talent in film and video get paid for work shown, re-shown and shown again, on pay TV, videocassettes, discs and overseas.

SAG and AFTRA demand that producers give actors 6 percent of their gross receipts. (That money would go to the union, which would parcel it out to actors according to their contracts. Actors' salaries would be counted against their share of the gross.) Producers—the major film studios, TV networks and major independent TV producers, MGM and Disney, all represented through an *ad hoc* committee—have offered instead 3.6 percent of the gross—only beginning two years after the product is released, or after 360 hours (15 24-hour days) of broadcast play. This means producers would normally have to pay only negligible amounts, if anything. In effect, the offer was a rejection.

The producers are not even talking about when they might begin to bargain. Perhaps, they hint, they might consider it after their negotiating team finishes contract negotiations with the American Federation of Musicians—which should happen momentarily. Or perhaps...if only the SAG/AFTRA spokesmen would come up with a compromise on the key issue of a percentage of the gross for home video sales. (SAG has already come down from 12 percent.)

Meanwhile, Lew Wasserman at Universal Studios, the industry leader in TV production, has shut down the studio. Twentieth Century Fox has laid off everyone associated with fall TV season production. Independent producers are affected: Norman Lear's Tandem Productions' new production has ground to a halt. (Two dozen productions have SAG waivers, granted because they agree to SAG's negotiating terms; Playboy Productions' TV film, Jane Fonda's current film, *On Golden Pond*, and the new Zoetrope production, *Escape Artist*, for instance, continue in production.) Not even anguished murmurs from ad agencies faced with plummeting demographics for the fall season on TV are budging producers.

## Stubborn.

You can see familiar faces—Walter Matthau, Jack Klugman, Kathleen Nolan, Carroll O'Connor, Ed Asner, Loretta Swit, and others—on the picket line roving from studio to studio, or on the talk shows. "I have never seen a strike so unified," said SAG's Kim Felner. On the other side of the fence, it would be hard to find a management more intransigent. Or, as a Writers Guild spokesman termed it, "obstructionist."

At stake is a principle. How will creative talent be paid for work distributed through new systems like pay TV, video discs and cassettes? Huge amounts of money are involved. Pay TV, carried mostly through cable—franchising for which is termed a "gold rush" in trade magazines—is the major way we can all expect to see sports and movies within a few years. Cable is presently installed in 20 percent of American homes, and people in the business expect it to become a necessity once 30 percent of all homes carry it. Right now five million homes carry pay TV, many of them more than one company's programming. And a million videotape recorders are presently installed in people's homes, with more than 100,000 new ones sold each month.

"Ancillary markets" are about to become major markets. Further, there is



Charles Durning, James Farentino and Michele Lee picket film studios.

## STRIKE

# Hollywood actors demand cut of home box office take

considerable overlap in programming; the number of times a single product can be repackaged and resold on a different system is multiplying. And these new markets are not covered by current actors' contracts.

Creative talent in all aspects of film and video are feeling the consequences. "One of the principal reasons for lack of

**Screenwriters and directors are right behind the actors, with similar contract proposals.**

security in the entertainment industry," said Michael Franklin, a negotiator for the Directors Guild (DGA), "is technological unemployment. Programming produced in earlier decades is sold and resold today in all kinds of packages and in various media but yield not one dime to most of the creators of the product. New techniques could only make it worse."

The way actors see it, the issue is simple: producers' greed. Pay TV is a money machine, and the producers don't want to cut the talent in on the profits. The producers maintain that pay TV is a risky business and that they need to cover their costs before they can afford to share the wealth.

Actors, however, don't want to let producers "cover their costs"—that is, give actors a percentage of the net. The practice of keeping double and triple

books is too well known. Just recently, for instance, *Alien*, Fox's most successful film last year to the tune of \$50 million, was reported to the producers, writers and director as having incurred a loss. They can expect no returns on it without an external audit.

Given the combination of corruption and the vast potential for resale, "the only way actors can be guaranteed a share in the profits is to demand a cut of the gross," said Felner.

"We are looking realistically at the needs of the producer," said AFTRA national representative Stephen Chipps. "There is a method of recoupment—salaries are counted against the gross."

If there were any doubt of the importance of this precedent, both sides could look to history. In 1960, when Ronald Reagan was president of SAG, the union struck over the issue of residuals payments for actors when their films were shown on TV. The deal that was finally struck offered actors a low percentage, only after a period of time, and it cut out old movies—from before 1960—from payments altogether. Many actors thought they got burned.

Then, producers told actors that TV would never be a big market for movies, and that they couldn't risk cutting actors into a new arrangement. This time, industry negotiating spokesman Phil Meyers, an exec at Twentieth Century Fox, told *In These Times*, "Pay TV is a business that's just starting. To give a percentage of the gross from first dollars, when you don't even know if this industry is going to be profitable, wouldn't be good business. But the producers are willing—after this business gets going—to review the whole situation about grosses."

But actors have only to look at 20 years of negotiations since the 1960 strike—20 years in which they have been unable to change the low-percentage deal

despite skyrocketing profits from old movies on TV—to know the power of precedent. Producers know it too—they borrowed their 3.6 percent opening offer from the percentage they presently pay on TV residuals.

## Solid front.

There's another reason why the producers are making their stand here. The precedent doesn't just go for actors. It applies to all creative talent. The Writers Guild and Directors Guild contracts come up for negotiations next year. Both unions have come out strongly in favor of this strike. Further, they have both proposed settlements that look a lot like what the actors demand. The writers call for 6 percent of the gross, while directors want 5 percent.

Writers Guild negotiator Leonard Chasman said, "The pattern set in any deal with SAG will have a great effect on our negotiation." Directors Guild negotiator Michael Franklin agrees. He also pointed out that the DGA has been fighting this issue through the courts—DGA members cannot presently work for Home Box Office—and eagerly welcomes a contract decision that takes a stand on home video.

Only some locals of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees—whose picket-line-crossing tactics have enraged other unions in the past—have sided with the strikers. But other unions, including the clerical workers' union in Los Angeles, the OPEIU, have endorsed the strike.

"We are concerned that the secretaries are sent home and that cameramen are out of work," said Felner. "It's our hope that they will focus their energies on the producers—the enemies we all have to deal with."

In the meantime, everyone is settling in for a long strike.