

# Film on Black Workers' Struggle

## "Finally Got the News"

Jim Jacobs

1970

a review of

Finally Got The News, A Film by Stuart Bird, Peter Gessner, Rene Lichtman and John Lewis, Jr. Produced by Black Star Productions

"Finally Got The News" is a one-hour film about the activities of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and its politics. It is an important film for all people concerned with changing the Detroit area to see and think about. In addition it is a film that raises the art of political propaganda to a new and significant level.

For both whites and blacks in this city, the League is one of the most important political organizations. Blacks will soon be in the majority within the city of Detroit, which despite white moves to the suburbs remains the economic and political center of the metropolitan area, making it possible to talk about political control over certain institutions now.

Most important is that the growing majority of black workers in the city's auto plants give blacks a grip upon the heart of the American political economy. As auto goes, so goes the nation. Finally, the League's political program is not geared solely for the liberation of black people, but recognizes that it is in the interest of the large majority of white people to overturn the present system.

Taking over a year to complete, "Finally Got The News" contains some beautiful footage of industrial Detroit. The opening shots of the Ford Rouge assembly plant will be uncomfortably familiar to all who slave in the auto factories. The trip to Ford headquarters to hear management praise the new era of labor-company cooperation nicely supports the arguments of the League why they should smash the present UAW union structure.

The contradiction of the old Southern workers who understand they are getting screwed by the rich, but indicate that part of their real enemy are black people, painfully makes obvious the racism most white workers possess. The brief, but moving shots of the demonstrations after the murder of nine-year-old Danny Smith by the Highland Park pigs indicate the energy and seriousness of the struggles of black youth.

More important than a description of what the League does, is the heavy emphasis of the film on the politics that underlies their programs. Unlike most Newsreel and other independent radical films that shoot demonstrations, sit-ins or strikes, "Finally Got The News" is a film which offers some sophisticated political education. The remarks of various members of the League Central Staff make clear the relationship of material conditions to the League's politics. The success of the League as an organization is based on the understanding of these material conditions.

In the film we learn about the key role blacks played in creating the surplus necessary to build this country's industrial empire, the central role they now occupy in the American political economy, the reasons why organizing at the point of production is essential for any revolutionary change, the position of black women in the society, the racism of white workers and much more.

The film lacks much of the action that marked previous radical films, but it leaves the viewer with a real sense of a revolutionary organization who is seriously building a movement around struggles over the conditions of people's lives.

Since the film is about the lives of working people in Detroit it should be shown widely to ordinary people. One note of caution, however. People who do this should recognize that the heavy verbal emphasis plus the use of Marxist terminology might make it difficult for some to understand the film. If possible the film should be stopped and questions answered about specific parts of the movie and shown again. Much of the raps, however, are from workers and other non-students and with the visual scenes of the factory, the film has a clear impact upon working people both black and white.

The important message the film has for whites is that we must relate our actions to the struggle of the League in this city if we are serious about winning.

For us in Detroit, "Finally Got The News" is particularly relevant for it is a depiction of what it means to live here. When we listen to Ron March describing the League at Dodge Main, the old Southerners talking about conditions in the plants, or the Macomb College students talking about their school days under a system that tracks them right into the factories; all of these are ordinary people talking about their struggle for survival in this society.

For information about screenings of the film write Black Star Productions, 5705 Woodward, Detroit 48202 or call this newspaper at 831-6800.

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