

WSU Library Workers Organize

Fifth Estate Collective

1969

Wayne State University is a working class college in a working class town. It is located in Detroit, a city which has long since taken the United Auto Workers bureaucracy into its ruling class and blunted union militancy by cooptation.

Many of the students of WSU work in Detroit's factories and belong to unions. Almost all have come into contact with union experience through their parents.

Leonard Woodcock, a member of the WSU Board of Trustees, is a high official in the United Auto Workers

And yet, faced with the organization of a union of the part-time Wayne Library student assistants, the University has responded with repressive force. It has fired three of the Library organizers and attempted to postpone the day when it will have to deal with university employees as an organized and militant force.

Library student assistants are organizing in an attempt to better working conditions in three areas: wages, hours, and grievance procedure.

Library workers on the WSU campus start at \$1.35 per hour. Raises from this starting pay are made completely at the discretion of the supervisory personnel. As there are no criteria for raises, supervisors often decide solely on the basis of personality or other arbitrary considerations.

In contrast, part-time workers in the Detroit Public Library start at \$1.85 per hour. After three months, they automatically receive a raise to \$1.90, and after 6 months, to \$1.95 per hour.

Many library workers also do not work as many hours as they want. After working 10 or 15 hours a week, these workers are faced with the ridiculous prospect of paying their taxes, rent, food, and tuition out of \$13 to \$15 per week. To rectify this, union organizers are demanding that there should be a guaranteed minimum number of hours that each assistant can work.

Finally, supervisors can and do hire and fire completely arbitrarily. There is no way that a fired employee can contest that decision—or any other decision which his supervisor may come to. Because of this policy, three student organizers were fired, apparently solely for their organizing work, with no recourse to legal procedures. Clearly, a grievance procedure is necessary.

The library organizers are being aided in their struggle by Council 7 of the Michigan State Employees Union, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. Council 7 is acting in an advisory position, providing legal help and other forms of support.

But even with the help of Council 7 and student organizations like WSU-SDS, the library workers' union is hanging in the balance. The university has clearly shown its determination to break this attempt—and any other attempt to gather student employees into a union which will struggle against their inequitable working conditions

Anyone who can provide help in any way should contact Bill Dokianos at 295 Farnsworth, Detroit, Michigan 48202 or phone 833-4898.

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