

TEAMSTER POWER

By Mike Alewitz

The following edited remarks were given to a spirited rally at the tenth annual Jobs with Justice meeting, held at Teamster City, Chicago. The rally was held to dedicate the mural 'Teamster Power.' The mural, measuring 20' x 130' was painted during September, 1997, at Teamster City, mto commemorate the UPS strike victory.

It would be nice to say that this mural is the work of myself and some assisting artists. But this mural, like all art, is the result of a social process.

THE TEAMSTERS WERE LED BY REVOLUTIONARIES

When I was a campus activist at Kent State in the late 1960's, I had a chance to meet and learn from Farrell Dobbs and V.R.Dunne. They were leaders of the general strike led by the Teamsters union in the Twin Cities. All of these midwest Teamster locals exist because of the massive movement that was built out of the general strike in Minneapolis in 1934. This union did not come into being as a gradual process. It was built as a modern industrial union, as a powerful force for working people, through a massive struggle that shook this country to its foundations. The Minneapolis strikes, along with San Francisco and the Toledo Auto-Lite strikes, laid the basis for the formation of the CIO. That's where our industrial unions come from.

What motivated Farrell Dobbs, and Marvel Scholl, who led the women's auxiliary, was not a buck-an-hour more, or that they would have a period of relative peace with the boss. They weren't interested in quality circles. What motivated them was the idea of building an organization that could change society from the top to the bottom. And that is what they did.

They were ordinary workers like you and I. They were no smarter or talented than us. What characterized them was their tremendous confidence in the ability of working people to change the world. They never doubted that. And so they were able to make historic changes. There are going to be fights in this country and we are going to have the opportunity to do the same thing.