

tactics. The sad fact is that many union leaders, including several of our own, are being taken in by the sweet talk of the Quality Circle Crusaders. Our local leaders have not even taken the precaution of demanding that union reps be in all the Quality Circles as watchdogs. Langford and Schmitt gave their blessing to Quality Circles without the slightest pretense of democratic debate by membership about what stand the union should take on Quality Circles. It's time to have this debate take place.

DEFEND OUR UNION

We unionists have to defend our union to make it a forceful organization which deals with management from the position

UNIONS WARN MEMBERS ON QUALITY CIRCLES

On December 30, 1980, the United Electrical Workers (UE) sent out a circular letter to all union locals stressing the union's position on "the danger of participation in company organized and sponsored 'Quality Circles'". They say, in part, "We should reject participation in any of these employer-organized groups which by-pass our regular union structure with the goal of, by use of advanced psychological techniques, brainwashing workers into making suggestions that will result in speed-up, combination of jobs, downgrading and layoffs".

A Research Report put out by the machinists' union (IAM) warns that Quality Circles "can be a key instrument in Corporate America's continuing attempt to convince workers that, by cooperating with management, they do not need a union". They urge members to seek improvements through collective bargaining rather than "some vague participation with management".

of strength, which in the final analysis depends on the ability to carry out and win strikes. We should demand that the union be the primary channel for the membership to make demands on the company, including those concerning the "quality of work life."

If the outlook of our union leaders makes it impossible to stop the Quality Circle Crusade at Briggs, we should still oppose any actions which build up the Quality Circles at the expense of our Bargaining Committee or in any other way undermine our union as our sole bargaining agent.

Big Business and Fred Stratton may shove this Quality Circle poison down our throats, but we do not have to swallow!

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT BRIGGS WORKER

JUNE, 1981

QUALITY CIRCLES

SLOW POISON FOR OUR UNION

Big business is currently in a drive to pull the teeth out of the labor movement. It is now becoming clear that two main strategies are being used to try to destroy our unions. The first is the right-wing traditional hard-line union-busting approach. Most unionists are familiar with this problem because so much has been written about it in the labor press. Violence, intimidation, slander, racism, plant closings and a whole host of other immoral tactics are used by the bosses who either try to defeat unionization drives or to get unions ousted from places where they already exist. This is a real danger, especially since so many high officials in the Reagan administration are backing it. But recent feature articles in the Big Business mouthpiece, Business Week magazine, provide evidence

that a second major strategy is being followed to destroy the labor movement, and that is the whole "Quality of Work Life" or "Quality Circle" movement which Big Business is promoting so heavily. This strategy is extremely dangerous because it is full of pretty talk about using the workers' brainpower and "enhancing the work environment".

Of course Business Week does not dare come out and reveal its designs openly. They disguise it by saying that labor-management relations in the U.S. are "outmoded", "obsolete", that our system of collective bargaining is "creaky" and that "confrontation" between labor and management is a bad thing. What they say they want instead is what they call the "New Industrial Relations", a major part of which is Quality Circles.

LABOR HAS LEARNED ITS LESSON

Over the last one hundred years working people have learned that our only real hope for having decent wages and working conditions is through the collective power that comes from being organized into unions which can use strikes or the threat of strikes to force the owners to bargain. We have learned through bitter experience that we can't trust our well-being to the good will of Business. The basic conflict is always there; Business wants to squeeze as much profit out of our labor as they can and give it to the stockholders; We want to be paid as much as possible for our labor in order to support our families and better our lives. But if we are not organized, we have no power to get what we deserve.

Ever since workers first wised up and formed unions to fight for them, there have always been some labor leaders who get too comfortable or too short-sighted and forget where they came from. They preach the idea that workers are better off "collaborating" with the bosses rather than relying on the threat of strikes or confrontation as the only final guarantee of better wages and working conditions.

It is in this suicidal tradition of collaboration that the "New Industrial Relations" and Quality Circles are being promoted by Big Business and some labor leaders. This latest crusade has a few new twists, half truths, and exaggerations to justify it. We are being told that American productivity and product quality is slipping, and that we can not compete on the world market without this "cooperative" relationship between labor and management. We are told that management wants to use our brainpower and that is why we should go along with their schemes. The

BUTTON FOR A BUCK

We are selling this button for \$1.00 to raise money for the movement against Quality Circles at Briggs.



Actual size as shown,
in red on white paper.

Available from Briggs Worker

fact that in Japan Quality Circles are used as a means of controlling workers is kept quiet in order to sell the idea that Japanese style labor relations is the wave of the future.

CIRCLES THREATEN INDEPENDENT UNIONS

This Quality Circle Crusade is a very big threat to the survival of our unions. Think of what a Quality Circle is. It is an organization of workers organized by the company. It is not elected. It is paid by the company. The company can abolish it at will if it does not achieve the company's aims. Its proposals are subject to veto or approval by the company with no further appeals. It is an organization through which the company can grant favors, make changes in working conditions and so on which they refuse to grant to the union's Bargaining Committee. Obviously it has most of the elements of a "company union."

CIRCLES UNDERMINE UNION REPS

By building a system of Quality Circles in a plant, the company can promote the idea that if you want to get something done, you should try to get it through the Quality Circle and not through the union. We

can expect that for a while, the Quality Circles at Briggs will get a lot of things done. But these gains will be temporary. The dangerous long-term result will be that the role of the stewards and Bargaining Committee will be undermined and people will get used to the idea of working through the Quality Circles rather than the union. The unity of the work force will be weakened and when the time is right (probably in 1983 or 1986) Briggs will be able to shove takeaways down the throat of a weakened union.

In short, Big Business has found a long range strategy to destroy the unions that it cannot wipe out through traditional union-busting

THANKS!

We would like to thank all those who donated money to send a laid-off member of Local 232 to the conference on Quality Circles at the UW-Extension Management Institute. The \$90 fee was raised in a few days from Local 232 opponents of the Quality Circle program. The conference gave us a valuable inside look at the workings and goals of the Quality Circle Crusade. A report on the conference was given at a meeting sponsored by the United Workers Organization.