

Labor And The March On Washington

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not-so-subtle attempt by the Cold Warriors of labor was largely ignored by progressive and centrist elements within the unions.

Representatives of labor on the March's National Planning Council included Howard Samuel, President of the Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO; Willie Felder of the United Auto Workers; Robert White, President of the National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees; and Cleveland Robinson, Vice President of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. Locally, union activists and leaders independently took the initiative to build toward August 27. On June 13, a major press conference for

Coretta King was staged at the New York headquarters of District 65, UAW. Also attending the gathering were leaders of District 1199 of the hospital workers union; DC 37, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers. Henry Nicholas, the president of District 1199, donated \$10,000 to the March, and pledged that his union would "charter and fill 150 buses." The union also promised to appoint staff in fifteen cities to assist the campaign.

By the end of June, progressive unionists were actively building support for the March at the grassroots level. One of hundreds of examples was the individual action of Earl Keihl, district 4 director of the United Furniture Workers of America. The York, Pennsylvania labor leader sent leaflets for plant bulletin boards, urging members to sign up for buses and carpools. Keihl stated: "The struggle for JOBS requires little explanation. There are millions of workers who through no fault of their own, have been thrown out on the street.... The fight for

PEACE is the ultimate struggle, for without peace, we will continue to suffer the social cuts and finally, we will perish in nuclear ashes...The fight for FREEDOM is as necessary today, if not more so than it was 20 years ago. Black unemployment is more than twice that of whites..."

The Communication Workers of America endorsed the March at its June convention in Los Angeles; the General Executive Board of the United Electrical Workers (UE) called for "the biggest possible UE participation in the march." Leon Lynch, Vice President for Human Affairs for the United Steelworkers of America also urged members to participate. Lynch stated in a widely distributed memo: "We are still in search of a discrimination-free society. Now more than ever we need jobs. The callous policies of the Reagan Administration have had a devastating impact on workers, minorities and poor people."

It is only through the coalition of Blacks and the labor movement that the interests of all working people in this nation will be advanced.

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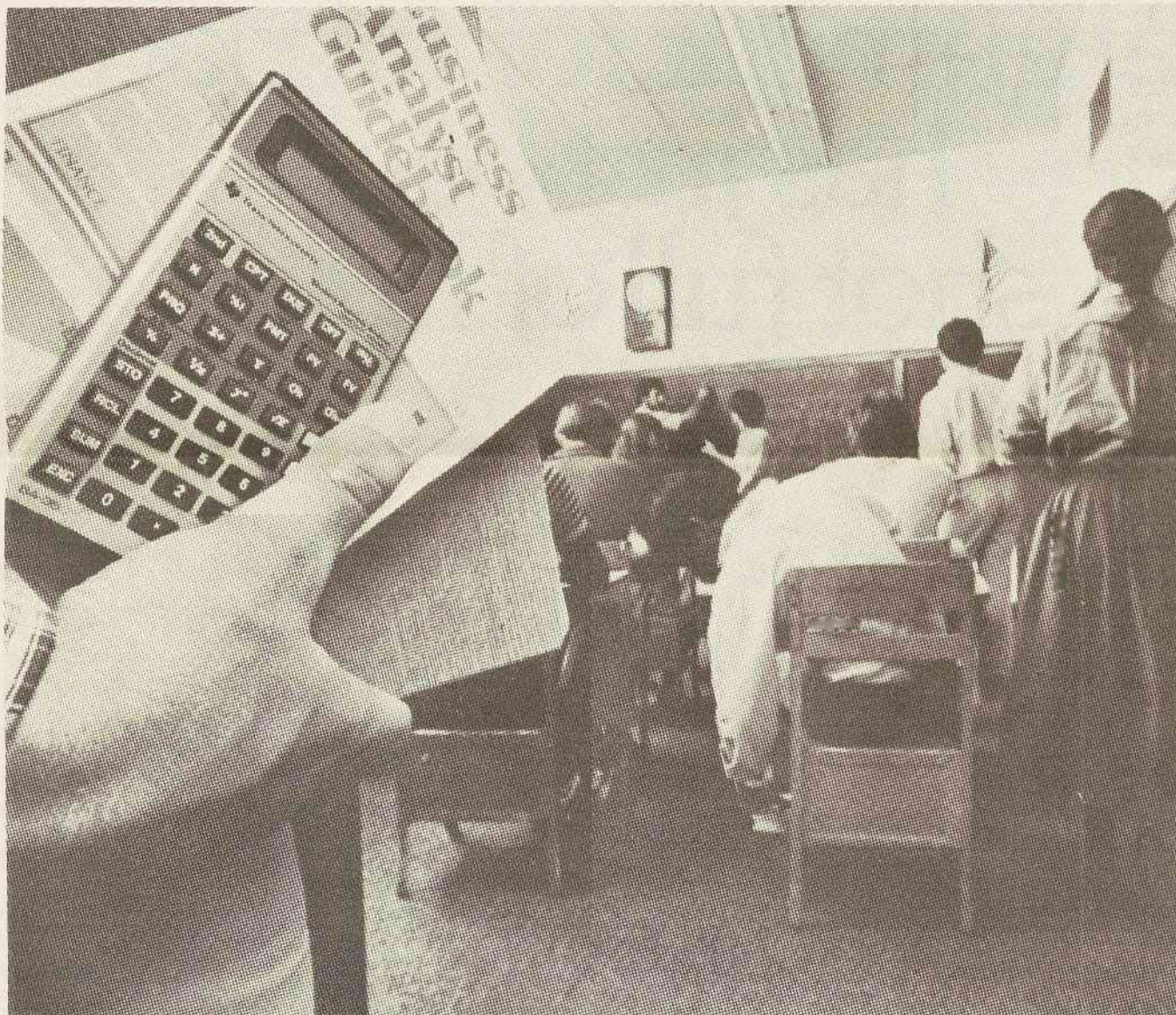
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