

BAFSAM's Impotent Tactics

Reprinted below is the text of Militant Longshoreman No. 15, which was distributed to participants in a impotent BAFSAM-initiated "picket" of Pier 80 last January.

BAFSAM (Bay Area Free South Africa Movement) has had a leaflet out calling on enemies of apartheid to "Stop Nedlloyd Ship at Pier 80—Saturday, January 25 at 5 p.m." People who respond to this call thinking that they are supporting a labor boycott of South African cargo may be surprised to find no ship with South African cargo docked at Pier 80. So what is BAFSAM doing? Is this just incompetence? Ever since the 11-day longshore boycott in 1984, BAFSAM has pulled a series of small, ineffective picket lines at Pier 80 in San Francisco, sometimes cynically picketing the entrance even when no Nedlloyd Line ship was docked there! Meanwhile BAFSAM has continued its lunchtime picket line in uptown Oakland at Pacific Maritime Association offices.

BAFSAM Strategy—A Total Failure

Last fall at U.C. Berkeley, BAFSAM spokespersons reported that their "Peace Navy" and picket lines had stopped South African cargo in the Bay Area. The truth is that in the Bay Area not one ship carrying South African cargo has been delayed in either docking, discharging or loading. Free South Africa Movement token picket lines in other West Coast ports resulted in at most a single 10-hour delay of one ship in Vancouver, WA. In every case arbitrators ordered longshoremen to work the cargo; orders promptly obeyed.

BAFSAM has refused to build a picket line big enough and militant enough to shut down Pier 80 when a Nedlloyd ship is in port; meanwhile they have ignored the ten US Lines and three Lykes Lines vessels carrying South African cargo calling at least weekly in the Bay Area. BAFSAM has been at Pier 80 in order to whore off the credit gained by S.F. longshoremen's history making 11-day political strike. These friends of Archie Brown's are the same people who later went on to organize BAFSAM. They are the same misleaders of the working class who helped the S.F. police to break up a picket line at Pier 80 on Dec. 4, 1984—the picket line which had temporarily halted work on the *Nedlloyd Kimberley* the day after the Federal Court injunction against Local 10 longshoremen.

If BAFSAM had just held demonstrations off to the side of the pier entrance while issuing their appeals to the "individual consciousness of longshoremen," they would have been guilty of liberal ineffectiveness and political impotence. By putting up token picket lines

they have prostituted this traditional trade-union weapon. Their actions are counter-productive; the only result is to train longshoremen to go through and work South African cargo behind picket lines. These cynical and irresponsible picket lines are only making it harder to organize a new longshore boycott. Clearly, the last thing BAFSAM wants is well organized and effective labor solidarity actions with the embattled black masses in South Africa.

BAFSAM's Real Strategy— Beg the Capitalists...

BAFSAM's presence at Pier 80 has nothing to do with working-class or trade-union action against apartheid. This was made very clear at a West Coast Labor Conference against apartheid called by BAFSAM in August last year. The underground South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU—supported by the ANC [African National Congress]) had just issued an appeal to trade unions, especially transport workers, in North America and Europe urging them to refuse to handle cargo, mail, communications to or from South Africa. One of the conference workshops introduced a motion to send delegates to the various labor union bodies in the Bay Area urging a union-organized two-week boycott of South African cargo during the forthcoming national period of protest against apartheid. Franklin Alexander and the other BAFSAM spokesmen demagogically attacked this motion for concrete action and were successful in getting it defeated.

Instead of labor action the conference passed a carload of liberal motions for letters to Congress, appeals to local government bodies, petitions to Port Commissions, and research into constitutional law. Their strategy is dead set against *real actions of labor solidarity*, and is centered on making liberal moral appeals to the consciousness of the capitalists and their political flunkies. During the Vietnam war these same people refused to even try to organize labor strikes against the war. They were conspicuous in the ineffectual pacifist peace crawls. It was the courageous struggle of the Vietnam workers and peasants against U.S. imperialism that led the U.S. to finally pull out of Vietnam. It's not liberal appeals to the non-existent "moral consciousness" of capitalists that is causing banks and corporations to pull out of South Africa; it is the revolt of the black masses which is making their investments in apartheid too risky to continue.

- ***Smash the apartheid injunction through a mass labor boycott of South African cargo!***