

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

MURAL DEDICATION SPEECH

LOCATION: LOS ANGELES, CA

1993



An Injury to One is an Injury to All

By Mike Alewitz

The following are excerpts from a speech given by Mike Alewitz at the dedication ceremonies for the new mural at the Communications Workers of America, Local 9000 Building in Los Angeles, August 26, 1993.

THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE of the Los Angeles rebellion was the brutal beating of Rodney King. What we saw on television was not new to the labor movement. We have seen these same police during the P-9 strike. We saw them during the Pittston miners strike. We saw them right here in Los Angeles during the Justice for Janitors strike. We have seen these swaggering cops before, in South Africa, Birmingham, Selma, and in El Salvador. They are all trained to protect private property and defend inequality.

The underlying cause of the rebellion in Los Angeles was racism, unemployment and poverty. Those conditions will continue to exist until we build a society that respects labor. It will continue until there is a recognition of the particular contributions of African-American labor, slave and black wage-worker, to the building of our society.

Until that happens, nothing is going to be done to rebuild Los Angeles. They have not done anything about Newark, and that's been over twenty years. It will only begin to happen when labor has some power. Then we can use our power to create jobs. We could use our power to reduce the work-week. We could use our power to organize all workers into unions.

To do this we must rebuild our own movement. Until there is a union movement strong enough to lead sit-downs and strikes, workers will be driven to unorganized destruction. Until a labor party exists to challenge the Democrats and Republicans we will be voiceless in Washington D.C., in Sacramento and in Los Angeles. People will feel that they must burn down their own city to get a simple act of justice.

To rebuild our movement we must relearn our traditions, like what a picket line is for, or how to stop production. We must also relearn our cultural traditions. The cultural and spiritual concerns of workers is a union issue. That is what the Labor Art and Mural Project is about, the real tradition of a singing and painting movement.

This mural came from the contributions of many, to say that we are in solidarity with the victims of racism, unemployment and police violence. I am dedicating this work to those victims. I do this with the confidence that the justified rage which fueled this explosion will find expression in a reborn, militant labor movement that will organize the unorganized to rebuild this city and the entire country.