

Visiting summer steel institute

Ted Pynos: a fine alloy

Editor's note: This is the fifth in a series of weekly articles which profile University students selected at random.

By RICHARD DYMOND
Collegian Staff-Writer

Ted Pynos, president of Local 1537, United Steel Workers in Latrobe, Pa., and a forge-hammer man at Latrobe Steel, has been a student at Penn State for one week during each of the past three years.

Ted and about 300 other workers from locals in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and Maryland take part in a continuing education program structured by the Department of Labor Studies at the University, the United Steelworkers of America and I.W. Abel, international president.

For some 28 years, as a result of the efforts of a generation of labor people at the University, the "summer institute" has schooled steelworkers in the skills of "rolling" ideas.

Jim McGeehan is an educational coordinator from District seven which includes Philadelphia area, Chester County, Lewistown and parts of Maryland.

"When I first got involved here 10 years ago we were

interested in what I could call the 'tool subjects,'" he said. "By that I mean teaching the guys how to do the primary things, like how to file a grievance against management, how to interpret a contract or how to understand rudimentary Union procedures. But now we believe that these things can be taken care of back home in the Union."

"Today, we're going directly into the matter of leadership, that means learning the subtle things. So the institute is a four-year plan. Each summer, for one week, fellows in each of the four grades go to their respective classes. These are men the unions have picked out by election because of work achievements or because of their seniority. The first year men take classes on the history of the union movement and communication skills. Second-year men have a week of economics. Third year is politics and class consciousness. And fourth year offers courses in logic, the problems of interpretation, gathering evidence, avoiding fallacy, understanding complex situations and making decisions."

Tuesday night I wandered

over to Hamilton in West Halls to meet a steelworker. As I approached the building the sound of male voices came from the open windows. I entertained terrible visions of Sandburg's "Chicago": "Maker of Steel, under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with white teeth... half naked, sweating..."

I passed an open door. The men inside were relaxing on the beds. Nobody was bragging that under his wrist was the pulse of the nation; nobody was fierce as a savage pitted against the wilderness. In fact, the only one that was "half naked" was Ted Pynos, and he had just taken a shower and was in his underwear by the fan drying off.

Ted J. Pynos is a tall, well-built gentleman whom everyone calls "cuz" and also looks somewhat like country singer Glen Campbell with those low sideburns and plump cheeks. He speaks in a soft voice that doesn't let out any stormy, husky, brawling laughter. When he smiles, it is very human and reserved, and when he laughs, it is usually a little splatter of high notes — nothing raucous. He invited me in, and we began to talk.

If anything about Ted showed he was a steelworker, it might be the "specialty" muscles he had formed above the breastbone and along his arms. That comes from forging presses and hammers. Ted is 36 years old, reads Playboy and Newsweek and has worked at Latrobe Steel for 15 years. He is married and the father of three children. His father was a steelworker at Latrobe and worked there 40 years, helped organize the union and once had to defend his home with a shotgun against scabs, strike breakers, yellow-jackets and management men from Cleveland during the fiery 30's. So Ted grew up in a steel mill town.

"We never had the best clothes or the fanciest, we wore seconds at times, but we were always clean and always had enough to eat. I guess unionism was once a bad word."

Ted's dad is 71 now, and his mother is still alive, too. But steelworkers do not retire without certain pains. He had both arms and legs broken on the job and he is surely one of the lucky ones. The job is still tough today.

"At times, when you're around steel that's 2200 degrees C, your gloves catch on fire or your shirt. At a job like that you can stay only so long and your body gets

exhausted," he said. "My job as a working president is to carry on the functions of the union and do my job in the forging department. If an individual has a grievance, say he thinks he should be paid for work another man has done with his tools or machine, he tells his steward, and the steward, if he can't settle the problem, brings him to us where we show him how to file a grievance."

Latrobe Steel is what you could call a "specialty" steel manufacturer. The company makes parts for lunar modules, submarine front plates and parts of jets. In World War II Latrobe was second on Hitler's bombing list.

"Abel has met with 600 basic steel presidents in Pittsburgh and they are going to start what they call, 'the new experimental negotiations.' For the first time in history, we're going to try to get prices down where they should be by not going for a big wage package but by holding the line at three per cent. We don't want to pay \$1 for a loaf of bread."

"But what will you do if prices still keep going up?" "We're wondering. What's the President doing with Phase 4? With the price of food going up, where's that going to leave us? We're going to start negotiating pretty soon, even though we've committed ourselves to our international president. But the way things are going we might be stranded. The country is in a hell of a situation. When you don't have respect for your national leaders, I don't know. It's worse than I've ever seen things in my lifetime, and I'm 36 years old."

Ted owns a little tavern outside Latrobe called T.J.'s. Friends come in after work to watch the Pirates and have some beer. One of those friends is Paul Houck, Ted's roommate in Hamilton and a second-year man.

Paul, who has thick, dark hair and very dark brown eyes, has a cousin who married Penn State football coach Joe Paterno. Paul handles grievances and other labor problems in his union. He explained the union.

"The industrial union works differently in respect to the trade and craft union — carpenters, pipefitters and plumbers. These unions actually hire people. In the steel industry, the employer — management — hires the worker. After that employee has worked in the steel industry for 30 days,

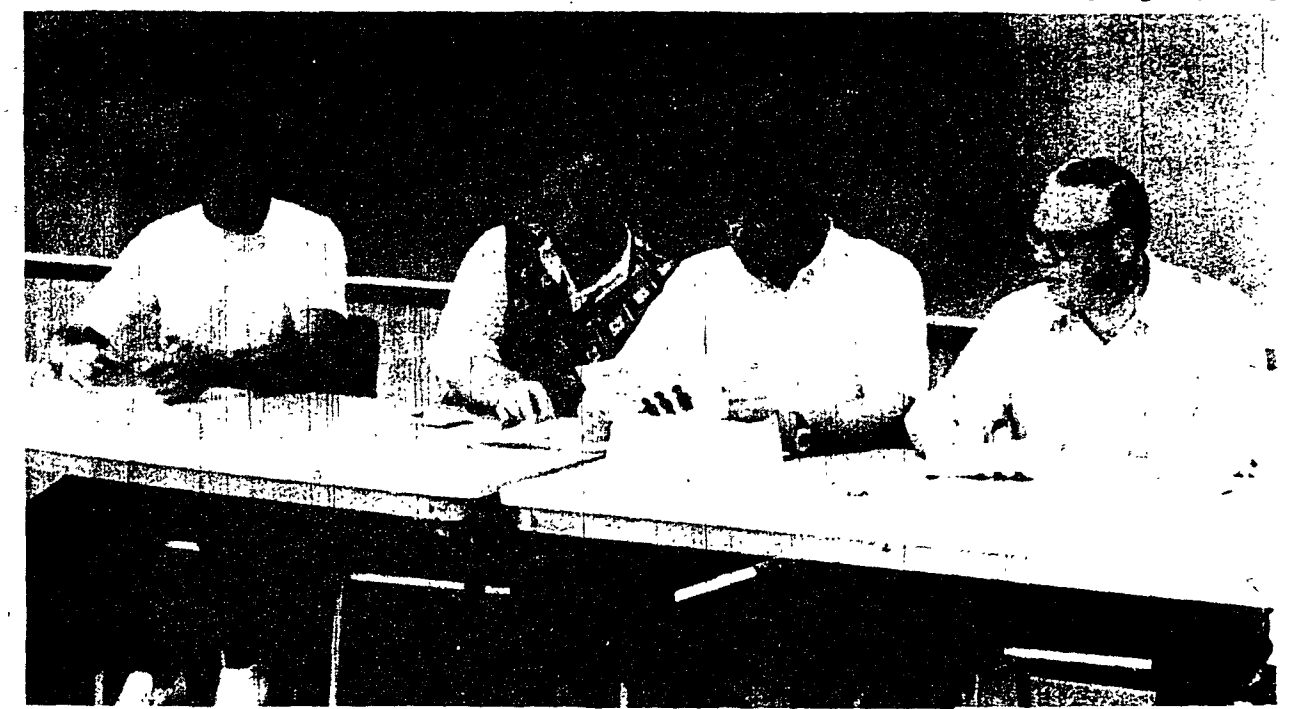


Photo by Ed Golomb

'Bulling' over labor-management problems

automatically he becomes a member of the United Steelworkers. At this time he has to pay an initiation fee of \$10 and then his union dues consist of two hours of wages per month. But the ceiling for those dues is \$10 a month. That's \$120 a year.

Ted began to get dressed by the mirror: gray chinos, black leather walking boots and a soft print button-down. He and Paul were going out for a sandwich. He combed his hair back.

"After classes, we like to go downtown to a movie or something. I think State College is beautiful. The food is terrific in the HUB. You have a beautiful Elks Club I noticed outside of town and a fine golf course."

"When I first came up here to Penn State, I was just going into office as president, so I needed the knowledge I got from meeting other people from the unions, learning what they do, how they handle affairs and what their benefits are. The knowledge I got during that first year I can never replace."

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Wednesday at 10 a.m. the lobby in the J. Orvis Keller Building was occupied with steelworkers and University faculty members. On the third floor, in a seminar room, I located Ted and 12 other men seated behind long tables facing each other. I walked in and was introduced to the moderator, Mike Parzanane, a union man from Reading.

The discussion on class consciousness continued.

"All right, what are some American values?"

"Well, religious freedom."

"Education and privacy and vacation."

"Right. That's an interesting point, Jim, why does

the 'leisure class' think that they deserve their leisure? Don't they think that in order to be credible they have to stand above the working class because they are the decision makers? You know, what happens is that they get divorced from the people. The management in China was supposed to spend a number of days working so they would never forget who the masses were."

"Hey, remember the peasants of Russia petitioned the Czar and they didn't get nothing except the Cossacks."

"Well how about in Chile — they're trying to give the people money that's not worth anything. It's like trying to have a social revolution without destroying classes."

Most of these men are from Pennsylvania Locals, notably local 1212 in Midland. Jim Lentto, an Italian from Midland Local, remembered class interaction.

"When I was a kid the Italians and Germans lived on Spring Lane. Then slowly we moved up to Sixth Street pushing the elite farther up. Then we took Seventh Street and the elite moved up to Knob Hill," he said.

"Hey, that's not a union cigarette."

"What do you mean — yours ain't a union cigarette." Mike tries to realign the discussion.

"Listen, we're talking about class. When we see a ghetto we see race, not class. That's wrong. The problem in the ghetto is one of class. If the black man made the same money as the white he would not live in a ghetto: it's not his blackness, it's his class, and that's not the same."

"That's right Mike. Why, some of the blacks I work with, I mean my peers, why, they have same values I have. It's the establishment."

"Hell, there ain't no establishment," Jim Lentto said. "There are some colored I wouldn't give a dime for — some whites, too. It's the decent human beings that make life worthwhile. That's why we're here, to be decent to one another. Anything else don't exist."

"Solidarity, baby." After class we take the elevator to the ground floor for lunch in the dining room. The University has provided spaghetti, soft rolls, fruit salad, iced tea, milk and coffee. Everything is fine. Ted takes good care of me, making sure I get enough to eat and introduces me among his friends.

Halfway through dinner, Ted and I are joined by Jim Lentto and a few of his pals. Jim tells stories over dinner about the steel industry.

"You know, there's different grades of steel. We make high carbon steel and low carbon. It depends on the temperature and materials used."

"What kind of incentive program you guys have?" asks Ted.

Jim explained. "Okay. Our base production is 17 tons of steel an hour per 36 tons a day. If we produce that much, we get our flat rate \$34. Now, say we do 50 per cent more a day. Our pay goes up 50 per cent. So don't talk to me about workers not having pride. I know when I get those bars rolling I'm helping another guy further down the line."

"Steel can be a mighty mean business. Hell, once I seen a bar that was red-hot jump itself off the line and wrap around the belly of a foreman like a piece of spaghetti."

"You wouldn't believe it. This new kid, only been there two weeks or so, he goes over and just untwists that bar from around that man's waist (when they're hot, they bend) with his gloved hands. He burned himself doing it, but after a year in the hospital that foreman lived." Solidarity, baby.



Photo by Ed Golomb

Two hands in Union

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UNIVERSITY CALENDAR
Friday-Monday, August 3-6

SPECIAL EVENTS

Friday, August 3 — Commonsplace Coffeehouse, 8-11 p.m., Room 102 Kern.
Friday-Saturday, August 3-4 — Folk Dance Festival, 8 p.m., HUB ballroom. Spectators welcome.
Friday-Sunday, August 3-5 — Festival of American Theatre, "Little Murders," 8 p.m., Pavilion. Matinee, Saturday, 2 p.m., (Sunday curtain, 7:30 p.m.).
Friday-Sunday, August 3-5 — Festival of American Theatre, "Damn Yankees," 8 p.m., The Playhouse, (Sunday curtain 7:30 p.m.).
Saturday-Sunday, August 4-5 — Final trials, World University Track and Field Games, 1:30 p.m., Beaver Stadium. Saturday, all events; Sunday, finals of decathlon.
Sunday, August 5 — Black Worship Service, 11 a.m., Walnut.

FILMS

Friday, August 3 — HUB Summer Series, 8:45 p.m., Schwab. "The Peter Tchaikovsky Story," Walt Disney. 9:15 p.m., "Interlude," Oskar Werner, Barbara Ferris.
Saturday-Sunday, August 4-5 — Student SF films, 7 and 9 p.m., HUB assembly room. "Captain Horatio Hornblower," Gregory Peck.

RECREATION

Sunday, August 5 — Interlandia Folk Dancers, 7:30-10 p.m., HUB ballroom.
Monday, August 6 — Bridge, 6:45 p.m., HUB ground floor lobby. Duplicate play.

INTEREST GROUPS

Chinese Student Association, Sunday, August 5, 6:30-11:30 p.m., Room 121 Sparks, film.
PSU Sport Parachute Club, Monday, August 6, Room 169 Willard.

EXHIBITS

Museum of Art — Gallery A, Prints and Drawings by Penn State Faculty. Gallery C, Permanent Collection.
Kern Gallery — Brenda Slack Binns, watercolors and drawings. Barbara Kizanis, ceramics.