

counted as a dependent, since he ate a lot of dogfood. "I'll try for you," said the union guy. So I queried, "Can I get money for the roaches in my kitchen?" "Maybe," he replied, "but only if they join the picket line."

ARMCHAIR TYPES

It was a small room, but it was full of armchairs, and the strike meeting was about to start. I tried to get the most desirable armchair (the Russian-looking one nearest the radiator, since it was a very cold night) but was beaten to the plunge by a Trotskyite. Then I raced three Maoists to the comfortable oriental-decorated armchairs, but they were quicker, and meanwhile four pro-Irish WASPS sat down in the only clean green armchairs. A foul-smelling anarchist invited me to share his moth-eaten sagging black armchair, but I lost my balance and fell into the lap of a communist in a red, ungiving armchair, with a hardon, so I quickly got up again. Then I looked around to see all the armchairs were taken.

Since I was the only actual striker there (the rest were so-called agitators who'd enticed me with the promise of good beef stew), a middle-class feminist went on a special errand to get me a stool by the drafty door.

RED LABEL

When I was 15 in England I had a communist boyfriend and one night he took me to a Communist Party social gathering at headquarters. Walking into the place was like re-entering the womb: the walls were red, there were red flags, red books, red-dressed women and red men wearing workmen's clothes and red neckties. In fact it soon turned out I was the only non-communist in the place, and the Party Secretary, an Indian guy with teeth that stuck out sideways, said, "we're having a raffle in a minute and here's a free ticket. I think you should seriously consider getting involved in more of our party activities, a pretty young girl like you."

The prize in the raffle was a bottle of Johnnie Walker Red Label whiskey. I won it. And after five large swigs and a few giggles I joined up.