

Humphrey-Hawkins Just Around The Corner?

A White House press aide said this week that the Carter Administration was "very close" to giving its endorsement to a reworked Humphrey-Hawkins "Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act." How Close? "Very close," the aide replied, "no more than 10 days or two weeks away."

ENEMIES OF LABOR

Reminded that the White House had made similar announcements since the beginning of September and had yet to endorse the bill, she replied, "Well, this time we mean it."

An aide to the bill's cosponsor Rep. Augustus Hawkins (D-Calif.) confirmed the White House's optimism. The aide reported that almost all points had been settled after weeks of meetings between aides to Hawkins, Sen. Humphrey, and White House negotiators Stuart Eizenstat, Council of Economics Advisors head Charles Schultz, and Labor Secretary Ray Marshall.

In the past two years, numerous attempts by the AFL-CIO to produce mass support for the Humphrey-Hawkins bill have fallen flat, prompting Congress to shelve the proposal. Now compromises are underway so that the Fabian-led forces can gain some leverage, the aide reported. "It's likely to be Hubert's last fling, and he wants to go out a winner," said one source.

"If we need to do it with mirrors, we'll do it," Hawkins's office said. The staffer even went so far as to suggest that "everything really depends on how fast the economy goes to hell... if it sinks fast, then we'll be able to roll over our opposition in Congress."

Capitol Hill sources currently estimate that it would take a full economic collapse to create the climate to pass Humphrey-Hawkins.

Conyers Pondering Shorter Work Week Legislation

An aide to Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) admitted this week that their office had drafted legislation to "shorten the work week" by reducing overtime, though they had made no decision on whether to push it.

The bill, still in draft form, has five basic provisions, according to a Conyers spokesman:

1) It would amend legislation to raise overtime pay from one-and-one-half-times normal pay to double; this is intended to encourage employers to eliminate overtime.

2) It would similarly amend legislation reducing the "standard workweek" from its present 40 hours to 37.5

hours in two years and 35 hours in four years.

3) It would require written consent by an employee for overtime in any given week. "Some bugs in this section must still be worked out," the aide reported. Trade unions would have little involvement. "It would be up to the individual employee..." The aide said it was decided to handle the filing this way since "so many places are non-union."

4) The bill would not affect existing collective bargaining agreements for two years; after that, agreements would have to conform to the specifications of the legislation.

5) The Secretary of Labor would be empowered to waive the "written consent" provisions in time of emergency, "like a war."

Share the Misery

The bill has its roots in various "share the misery" schemes concocted during the 1930s depression and revived principally by the United Autoworkers during the mass layoffs in the auto industry in 1974-75. The UAW passed numerous resolutions supporting the concept of a shorter work week to extend employment.

A competent analysis of employment problems in the U.S. recognizes that their solution must start with major expansion of productive employment based upon a program of high-technology agriculture and nuclear energy development. The shorter work week scheme, as Conyers' aides admitted, would not expand the number of employed persons. "That's one of the things that are troubling us," the aide said. "I'm not convinced that it would put any more people to work. What's worse, we can't really legislate wage rates, so I'm sure it will amount to large drops in income and living standards for many workers...."

The Conyers spokesman also admitted that the "written consent" section would wreak havoc with the economy and production schedules, and actually reduce employment.

You Have To Be Kidding

Conyers's office stated that the bill at the present time has almost no support from the labor movement. Doug Fraser (UAW president) and William Winpisinger (IAM head) "have given verbal commitments, but nothing else," the aide said. He also identified the major backer of the bill as the Communist Party's "Trade Unionists for Action and Democracy" (TUAD), which some estimate to have a miniscule membership. TUAD sponsored a meeting in Detroit last week to discuss the idea organized by a local UAW official, but the meeting endorsed no specific legislation.

"We're going to watch and wait," said Conyers' office. "If a major mobilization develops around the bill as the economy grows worse, I'm sure that John Conyers will come out swinging on its behalf...we're counting on TUAD and the unions...."

Globe Democrat.
Short Work Week No Solution

The conservative Midwestern daily, the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, editorially scored the shorter work week proposal Oct. 27 in the editorial reprinted below.

Get Back to Basics

The collective wisdom of the labor leaders in Detroit who called for a shorter work week as a solution to unemployment could be put on the head of a pin.

Seldom have so many strained to hard to come up with so little.

This is the same nonsense that President Franklin D. Roosevelt came up with in 1933. Forty-four years later it makes no more sense than it did then....

There are three essential ingredients in a healthy economy. One is the availability of an ample supply of

capital. (...It takes \$40,000 in capital to create just one job.) Second is an adequate supply of labor. Third is a government that will promote the effective use of both capital and labor. (Emphasis in original.)

The problem in this country is that it has only one of the three — an adequate supply of labor. Real profits, from which capital comes, have been about cut in half in the last 10 years. The government is a thorn in the side of both labor and capital investment because it inflates the economy to pay for its huge deficits, imposes costly, time-wasting regulations and levies income tax rates that are much too high.

What is needed is enough pressure to force the federal government to change its economy-killing policies.

This is why labor and management should join forces because their interests are identical. Separately they probably don't have enough muscle to bring about a change. (Together) they could help increase employment as well as improve business....

Fight Emerging Over U.S. Steel Policy: The Good, The Bad, And The Stupid

As the crisis of the world steel industry deepens, two distinct approaches to the crisis have emerged. Some forces here and abroad recognize that the solution to the steel industry's problems lies in the very opposite direction of protectionism: in the rapid industrialization of the Third World, which will require massive inputs of

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advanced sector capital goods. The other side, typified by the United States Steel Corporation, is calling for retrenchment: rationalization of existing capacity to prepare for a period of slow or negative growth combined with protectionist measures.

Expressing the progrowth viewpoint, Hans Birnbaum, chairman of Salzgitter AG, the state-owned West German steel complex, outlined a real recovery program for West German industry at a business conference in Baden-Baden, West Germany last week. According to a report in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* Nov. 1, Birnbaum called for a five-point approach: 1) development of new markets, especially in the Third World; 2) meeting the Japanese challenge — which is not underpriced exports but high levels of productivity; 3) export of high-technology products produced by West Germany's highly skilled engineers and advanced research and development sector; 4) continuous modernization of West German industry; and 5) constant upgrading of the skills of workers and managers.

This approach has been echoed in recent weeks on this

side of the Atlantic by former Texas Governor John Connally, who called for a high-technology export orientation for U.S. industry and agriculture at a meeting of the Republican National Committee in Salt Lake City at the end of October.

Steel Communities Coalition

On the steel issue proper, a spokesman for the Steel Communities Coalition told a reporter recently: "Any orientation to solving the steel crisis eventually must come from an increase in the world market for U.S. exports."

The Steel Communities Coalition held its first working meeting on Oct. 25 in Pittsburgh where it began formulating a policy for halting the collapse of the industry. William Sullivan, who is the staff director of the Niles, Ohio-based coalition, made clear the group's orientation: "If the Administration continues to look at this as an industry problem instead of a national one, there can be no solution. This country must either develop a national goal to have a competitive, clean and independent steel industry or suffer the consequences of wasting one of our greatest resources, the steel communities which have made this country strong."

Fordham University's Father William Hogan, one of the nation's leading steel economists, and his staff in the Industrial Economics school at Fordham are formulating a program for modernizing the steel industry in Ohio's Mahoning Valley, the cradle of U.S. steel production and one of the areas hardest hit by layoffs in recent months. Father Hogan's program will include the construction of a giant new coking oven which would be utilized jointly by the steel companies operating in the