

George Meany And The American Federation Of Layoffs

With his keynote address — excerpts of which are reprinted here — to the biennial AFL-CIO Convention in Los Angeles Dec. 8, AFL President George Meany has fulfilled the fondest expectations of the extreme “left”-liberal wing of the Democratic Party, associated with City of London intimate Vice-President Walter Mondale.

LABOR NEWS

Meany's speech emphasized protectionist trade wars (including an end to the export of technology), labor-intensive Humphrey-Hawkins public works jobs, and a demand for an end to tax credits for industries which invest abroad. An outstanding omission in the speech, which has deeply disappointed AFL-CIO rank and file and local trade-union officials, was his failure to give even a nod to nuclear energy development and industrial development generally.

The zero-growth, antitechnology tenor of the convention represents no substantive change in the longstanding policy commitments of the aging Meany and Secretary-Treasurer Lane Kirkland. Although trade-union locals, particularly among the Building Trades, looked to this labor convention to launch a fight for industrial growth and nuclear development, Meany and Kirkland had signaled their intention to go instead with hyperinflation and Humphrey-Hawkins.

Meany's 12-page preconference report emphasized those programs, as did the outcome of the recent conference of the Building Trades themselves, which ended Dec. 2 in Los Angeles with an extremely weak resolution endorsing, not fission development overall, but solely the Clinch River breeder reactor program. At the time Building Trades President Robert Georgine, under Meany's thumb, announced he would exclude from his speech “important topics . . . like energy and the no-growth cult.”

The speakers' roster underscores the policy line of the Convention, filled as it is with addresses by Energy Secretary Schlesinger — who simply lied to the audience Dec. 9 when he announced he was pronuclear and progrowth, Mondale, HUD Secretary Pat Harris, Labor Secretary Marshall, Fabian Senator Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.), and Urban League head Vernon Jordan. A morbid sort of comic relief is to be provided on the

provocative “human rights” question by the so-called Soviet dissident Vladimir Bukovsky, and by California's Governor and solar power crank Jerry Brown.

Another potentially dangerous theme of the convention is Lane Kirkland's twin pet projects of labor law reform and Southern organizing campaigns. This thrust threatens to provoke a spurious and unnecessary confrontation between labor and management over the right to organize versus the right to work. That confrontation is rounded out by the activities of the right-to-work fanatics in the National Association of Manufacturers. NAM President and rabid anti-trade-union ideologue R. Heath Larry is barnstorming across the Midwest giving speeches on “How to keep your factory, shop or store free of unions.” Larry has lately recruited United Auto Workers President Doug Fraser to participate with him in Mutt-and-Jeff debates over labor's right to organize, and is now urging “austerity” against industry and labor alike.

The U.S. Labor Party has issued a statement on the significance of the convention which reads in part: “To the extent he pursues these policies, Meany does not speak for American labor. What he proposes would turn the AFL into the American Federation of Layoffs.

“The manipulated confrontation between labor and industry, into which the likes of Meany and Larry are leading the country, is a direct counter-organizing deployment to the efforts of the USLP and industrial spokesmen like Bill Simon to forge a labor-industrial alliance based on expanding industrial and nuclear energy development. R. Heath Larry's anti-unionism no more represents the interests of industry than Meany does those of labor. In fact, in an expanding economy it is in the vital interests of industry as well as labor that the working class be organized in trade unions.”

The official AFL-CIO response to Labor Party organizing was the passage Dec. 9 of a resolution slandering the Labor Party and warning trade unionists to stay away from that organization (see below).

The general response of unionists, especially in the Building Trades and International Brotherhood of Teamsters, has been that George Meany has no business dictating to them, on the basis of his obvious slanders of the USLP, whether or not they can work — as they have — with the Labor Party.

Teamsters leaders are reportedly considering a public statement dissociating themselves from the AFL resolution, which they interpret as an attack on the IBT for its relations with the Labor Party.

Meany Couples Export Curbs To Demand For Protectionism

Eighty-three-year-old AFL-CIO President George Meany is not only seeking stepped-up protectionist measures by the U.S., but now wants curbs on high-technology American exports as well, claiming such measures are the key to "full employment." This was Meany's message to the opening session of the labor federation's 12th biennial convention Dec. 8 in Los Angeles.

Excerpts from Meany's remarks follow:

... When we in the labor movement speak about human rights our definition extends way beyond the First Amendment rights of free speech, free press, and the freedom to worship. We believe in the human right to a job for all workers able and seeking work with decent pay and working conditions. That is why the greatest commitment that this nation can make towards human rights at home is full employment... To us unemployment is not only a waste — it is a denial of human rights...

... Foreign trade is the guerrilla warfare of economics and right now the United States is being ambushed. One

by one our manufacturing industries are being picked off and now the target is the steel industry. What is most galling is that the imported steel is cheaper not because United States wage rates are so much higher but because foreign countries subsidize their steel industries so they can undercut United States companies. Of course, when the United States steel industry is destroyed, the United States would become dependent on foreign sources and, without a steel industry of our own, the foreign countries could charge whatever they want.

... In an era of closed economic and multilateral corporations who operate like Barbary Pirates the United States sticks stubbornly to old policies that are no longer appropriate... When a United States firm sells its latest technologies to a foreign country... they are exporting jobs that technology could produce right here at home... Imports must be regulated. Antidumping laws must be swiftly enforced. Tax breaks that encourage United States firms to go abroad must be cancelled. The United States must make it clear to every other nation of the world: the use of tariff or non-tariff barriers to bar United States products will result in swift retaliatory by this government.

... Free trade is a joke and a myth. And a Government trade policy predicated on old ideas of free trade is worse than a joke — it is a prescription for disaster. The answer is fair trade, do unto others as they do to us — barrier for barrier — closed door for closed door.

Resolution Before AFL-CIO Bars Collaboration With Labor Party

Resolution Number 104 before the national AFL-CIO Convention which began in Los Angeles Dec. 8, seeks to bar collaboration between all AFL-CIO locals and affiliates and the U.S. Labor Party. The text of the resolution, submitted by delegate John J. Driscoll of the Connecticut State Labor Council and titled "Unmasking the U.S. Labor Party," reads as follows:

Whereas a group calling itself the U.S. Labor Party continues to masquerade in the guise of a political party which has some connection with organized labor. This organization is not recognized by any legitimate American union and has no connection with any real labor leaders in this country. Some union members have been deceived by the title assumed by this group and

have permitted its agents to address meetings of union members. The latest ploy of this group is to tell building trades union leaders that it is strongly in favor of nuclear power, and parades as "the only political party in favor of constructing nuclear power stations." The advocacy of nuclear power is a non-partisan issue and has the support of leaders in both major parties as well as the AFL-CIO;

and Whereas the national leaders of the so-called Labor Party have been identified as a small group of extremists one of whose stated aims is the overthrow of the present leadership of American unions on the basis of some pseudo-Marxist aim. This group seems to have plenty of money to spend although the sources of its funds are not known.

Therefore be it resolved that this Convention of the National AFL-CIO go on record as advising all of its affiliates to have nothing to do with the so-called U.S. Labor Party. And be it further resolved that the national AFL-CIO maintain a continuous monitoring of the activities of this group and expose its findings to all affiliates at appropriate intervals.