

## LABOR PERISCOPE

### New UAW-GM pact a feather in Fraser's political cap

The new tentative three-year contract between the United Auto-workers and General Motors is being viewed by labor and industry insiders as a feather in the political cap of union President Doug Fraser who figures prominently in the machine being put in place behind the 1980 presidential candidacy of Edward Kennedy.

As we go to press, members of the UAW's General Motors Council are meeting in Detroit. They are expected to approve the contract which was hammered out last weekend. The pact will then go before a special delegated conference in Dallas later in the week. Once ratified, the contract will become the basis for negotiations with Ford, which has given some indications that it will reluctantly accept a comparable contract. The UAW has said that it will work out a "special accommodation" with the financially troubled Chrysler Corporation.

While the details of the agreement have yet to be made public, preliminary reports indicate that the UAW leadership came away with most of what they were asking for—and certainly more than most people had expected without a strike.

Sources close to the negotiations report that the new contract, which is well beyond the Carter administration's wage-price guidelines, has the following features:

- Major increases in pension payments to retirees. This had been a demand of union negotiators and had been thought to be a stumbling block in the way of a settlement.

- Retention of the standard 3 percent Annual Improvement

Factor wage increase, plus an unspecified one shot, cost-of-living payment at the start of the contract period.

- An improved cost-of-living formula, which union negotiators claim will give workers 100 percent protection against inflation.

- A significant increase in the number of paid personal holidays.

An agreement that the company would recognize the UAW as the bargaining agent in all new plants, a move which in the past has been bitterly contested by General Motors. It is expected to open up the south to a UAW-led organizing drive.

#### Some labor for Kennedy

The contract is a rearguard action. It is by no means a contract which attempts to face or answer the fact of the continuing depression conditions confronting every autoworker and the auto industry itself. More than 84,000 autoworkers—more than 30,000 of them at General Motors—are laid off. With a curtailment of Chrysler's operations in the offing and with auto sales predicted to plummet, more layoffs are expected by winter.

What the contract is more successful in doing is in boosting Fraser's ability to act against the economic interests of his own union—as he has done in his stand against nuclear energy.

With William Winpisinger of the International Association of Machinists, Fraser is in command of a coalition of environmentalists, Naderite consumer advocates, and others who will become the street machine for antinuclear Kennedy's push for the White House.

The Oct. 6 environmentalist demonstration at the Seabrook, N.H. nuclear facility is the event that will give the movement a new look. On the one hand, plans have been set to make Seabrook the scene of "Europe-style" environmental terrorism. This will split the movement, sending the more moderate into a peaceful mass movement for which Fraser will be the most prominent spokesman.

Their day will be Oct. 17, a national day of protest against the oil multinationals. The protest is being organized by the Fraser-led Progressive Alliance and the Winpisinger-led Citizens Labor Energy Coalition of which Fraser is a director. Late last month, the same crew organized a 5 minute, UAW-sponsored work stoppage in the auto plants to send postcards to Washington attacking OPEC and the oil multinationals and supporting a program drafted with the help of Sen. Kennedy's staff and Ralph Nader.

Observers have termed the August strike a political show of force for Kennedy who reportedly has privately encouraged Fraser's actions.

Both the Progressive Alliance and the Citizen's Coalition are officially neutral on presidential politics, but spokesmen for both have privately admitted that they see their organizing as furthering a Kennedy candidacy.

Thus, Fraser was handed the GM pact to enhance this organizing effort. A long strike would have cost autoworkers—the majority of whom by no means back Fraser's antinuclear policies—dearly. It would have set up Fraser to take the blame for a strike-induced economic tailspin. Now the "class warfare" advocate can present himself as a labor statesman, negotiating the first auto contract without a strike in two decades.

—L. Wolfe