

LABOR PERISCOPE

A faction fight over Meany's successor?

Certain individuals at the AFL-CIO headquarters in Washington, D.C. are circulating the rumor that a "political battle" may take place over who will succeed retiring AFL-CIO President George Meany.

As the rumors, which have found their way into the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* and elsewhere, describe it, two building trades leaders—Martin Ward of the Plumbers and J. C. Turner of the Operating Engineers, are testing the waters for possible AFL-CIO presidential bids. They would oppose the only announced candidate, New York Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) member and AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Lane Kirkland.

While Turner and Ward may be making a few phone calls, people familiar with the workings of the AFL-CIO Executive Council regard the talk of a "real political battle" between Ward and/or Turner and the CFR's Lane Kirkland as just so much hot air.

On basic "political questions," there is little difference between Kirkland, Ward, and Turner. All three are leaders within the Zionist-dominated Social Democrats U.S.A.

Kirkland and Ward are both members, along with James Schlesinger, of the warmongering Committee on the Present Danger. All three are members of the Trilateral Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations offshoot

that helped create the Carter administration.

On every issue of significance, Ward and Turner have staunchly followed Kirkland's lead. This has included following the Kirkland-dictated AFL-CIO energy policy which at last summer's Executive Council meeting downgraded the Federation's support for nuclear power and emphasized the need for sacrifice and conservation. Most recently, Ward and Turner enthusiastically endorsed Kirkland's recent economic deal with the Carter administration. The Kirkland-authored policy statement approved by the Executive Council gave the AFL-CIO's approval to what was described as a period of great "sacrifice."

The AFL-CIO Executive Council is already being run by Kirkland, and has been for at least the entire time of Meany's recent infirmity. No one has disputed his role.

Insiders at the AFL-CIO headquarters laugh at the talk of a "political battle." What is going on, they say, is a jockeying for positions within the forthcoming Kirkland rule of the powerful trade-union confederation. The building trades, one of the most powerful groupings within the Federation, want to make sure that they are properly represented within the bureaucracy. There is talk of placing one of their people in the number two slot, the Secretary-Treasurer post now held by

Kirkland. The rumored challenge by Ward and Turner is merely a bargaining pressure for deals.

Their phony challenge covers up something more fundamental, though. The policies of the Council on Foreign Relations, pushed by Kirkland and endorsed by the Executive Council, are at variance with the interests of labor. This fact is becoming acutely obvious to many secondary leaders, especially in the building trades. They cannot sell the Executive Council's repeated calls on labor for more sacrifice, and its rejection of a fight for a nuclear-centered economic development program, to union members who rightfully fear a new depression. The only thing the AFL-CIO has offered is the promise that a Ted Kennedy presidential candidacy will somehow make everything better.

Add to this the widespread distrust and hatred of Lane Kirkland. Meany may have been a pie-card, but at least he once was a union member and an elected union officer. Kirkland never served as an elected union official and owes his position to no one except the Council on Foreign Relations. Given this, there is a real constituency for a groundswell of opposition against Kirkland. But for this potential to become a "real political battle," it will take more than backroom maneuvering.

—L. Wolfe