

## Labor policy

# A clever way to be anti-union

by L. Wolfe

Ronald Reagan's campaign strategists have spent long hours trying to figure out how to package their candidate as "pro-labor" to attract disaffected unionists, yet "anti-big unionism" to appeal to those tendencies within the GOP who think trade unions do the devil's work. The net result, as communicated through the events of last week's convention in Detroit, is that Reagan and his cohorts will sound "pro-labor" while remaining committed to anti-labor policies.

To be sure, the GOP platform is far more clever on the labor question than in past years. There is a firm statement of commitments to the fundamental principle of fairness in labor relations and professed support for the rights of unions to organize. These are statements telling working people that the Carter administration, not their wage demands, is responsible for inflation.

These are reinforced by statements by the candidate and his supporters, such as Rep. Jack Kemp (D-N.Y.), about bringing labor back into the Republican Party.

Most labor leaders think such pronouncements are cosmetic. They point to sections in the platform just beyond the ones mentioned that affirm the GOP's support for union-busting "right to work" laws and for an end to union dues checkoff privileges. The platform also calls for abolishing minimum wage protection for youth—a measure strongly opposed by organized labor.

Reagan, despite his appeals for working people's support, is firmly committed to these platform planks. His top economic advisers, people like former Federal Reserve Chairman Arthur Burns, former Treasury Secretary George Schultz, and economist Milton Friedman, are known as enemies of labor. Friedman, for example, has on more than one occasion declared that trade unions are the plunderers of the nation. Burns, at GOP platform committee hearings, attacked "high-wage settlements."

The platform also incorporates a scheme devised by the advisers and cabinet officials of the notoriously anti-labor Thatcher government in Britain to establish so-called "free enterprise zones" in slum areas. Under this scheme, which has been tried out in Britain and in Hong Kong, the government would let laissez-faire run wild,

suspending all government regulations—including protection for trade unions such as the Davis-Bacon Act, and minimum wage laws. Wherever they have been tried, the free enterprise zones have cut wage levels, and the idea receives its most vigorous promotion from the anti-labor Heritage Foundation.

For the most part, labor isn't buying the Reagan newspeak. AFL-CIO officials readily admit that many of their members will vote the GOP ticket in November if Carter is the Democratic nominee. They will do so in spite of everything they know and rightfully fear about Ronald Reagan, because they detest Jimmy Carter.

AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland, who says the labor federation will back Carter, described his view of the choice between Reagan and Carter: "There is an old saying. . . 'Beauty is skin deep, but ugly goes clear down to the bone.' "

## Fairness to the worker

*The following is excerpted from the 1980 Republican Party platform.*

The Republican Party is committed to full employment without inflation. We will seek to provide more jobs, increase the standard of living, and ensure equitable treatment on the job for all American workers by stimulating economic growth.

We reaffirm our commitment to the fundamental principle of fairness in labor relations, including the legal right of unions to organize workers and to represent them through collective bargaining consistent with state laws and free from unnecessary government involvement. We applaud the mutual efforts of labor and management to improve the quality of work life.

Wage demands today often represent the attempt of working men and women to catch up with government-caused inflation and high tax rates. With the blessing of the Democrats' majority in Congress, the Council on Wage and Price Stability has put a de facto ceiling of seven to 8½ percent on workers' wages, while the Administration devalues their paychecks at a rate of 13 to 15 percent. The government, not the worker, is the principal cause of inflation.

We recognize the need for governmental oversight of the health and safety of the workplace, without interfering in the economic well-being of employers or the job security of workers.

The Republican Party reaffirms its long-standing support for the right of states to enact "Right-to-Work" laws under section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act.

The political freedom of every worker must be protected. Therefore the Republican Party strongly supports protections against the practice of using compulsory dues and fees for partisan political purposes.