

Labor in Focus by Lonnie Wolfe

Kirkland, DOL back racketeering bill

The Nunn bill could be used, not only to railroad union leaders, but also to "Reagagate" the administration.

The most important thing to take place at hearings of the Senate Permanent Investigations Subcommittee (SPIS) Oct. 28-29 and Nov. 2 was the endorsement by Secretary of Labor Ray Donovan and AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland of new labor-racketeering legislation.

Both endorsements came about for different reasons, but according to SPIS sources, both were anticipated. These sources claim that the endorsements will open the door for new attacks on the leaders of organized labor, the next phase of the witch-hunt begun by the Justice Department's Abscam and Brilab.

Donovan told the SPIS hearing Oct. 28 that the Department of Labor gives full backing to Sen. Sam Nunn's labor-racketeering bill S. 1785. Until Donovan had spoken, congressional sources thought the Georgia Democrat's bill was dead in the water. With administration backing, however, it could sail through Congress early next year.

The Nunn bill, which also has the backing of SPIS Chairman and Trilateral Commission member, Sen. William Roth (R-Del.), rips away certain constitutional protections against the wrongdoings of Brilab-style operations. It would remove a union leader from office upon court conviction, ignoring the whole appeal process; it would also ban a convicted official from holding union office for 10 years.

The legal thugs of the Abscam-Brilab apparatus have long desired

passage of such legislation, because it would allow removal of a targeted union official by means of simply obtaining a conviction on rigged evidence, without the worry over whether illegalities incurred in the frameup and evidence-gathering would result in a case's later being thrown out on appeal.

Donovan also announced that his Department has reversed its policy of pursuing only civil litigation of violators of those laws under its purview (such as union pension-fiduciary responsibilities) and would now pursue criminal litigation of union officials.

These statements won warm praise from Nunn, who is well known for his exploitation—coordinated with the Abscam-Brilab networks—of SPIS hearings as show-trials against selected union leaders.

Nunn also praised Kirkland's endorsement, delivered on Nov. 2. Offering only mild and helpful criticism of some parts of the bill, the AFL-CIO President nonetheless termed it a necessary piece of legislation. "We lack the ability to keep our own house in order," Kirkland told the Senators. "We do not oppose government investigations and convictions of corrupt elements of labor. . . . *We welcome a government policing-role,*" he astonishingly concluded.

Sources close to committee minority counsel Marty Steinberg, a former member of the Justice De-

partment's Organized Crime Strike Force, had worried that Donovan would close down the entire Brilab operation. But early this summer, the committee staff, speaking for its allies in the Justice Department boasted that they had the Labor Secretary between a rock and a hard place. The entire Brilab-Abscam machine had mobilized to go after Donovan during his confirmation hearings. Senator Edward Kennedy, whose brother Bobby had set up the notorious "Get Hoffa Squad" in the 1960s, put that squad's chief, Walter Sheridan, onto the Donovan case full time.

The well-publicized smears about his alleged ties to corrupt union officials have been used to pressure Donovan into going along with the Nunn legislation. Sources at DOL report that the Secretary was told by Solicitor General Timothy Ryan, Jr., a former member of Benjamin Civiletti's law firm, that if the Department backed the bill, it would reassure the press that Donovan was not soft on labor crime.

Donovan may believe the anti-labor racketeering operation will proceed fairly, but sources report that the "new" interagency task force of Labor, Treasury, and Justice officials is operating from old Brilab lists. Donovan himself is still on their target lists, as is Reagan ally Sen. Paul Laxalt of Nevada.

All this suits Lane Kirkland just fine. SPIS sources report that Kirkland was always one of their assets and that he fully backs the Brilab machine. The Teamsters, the Laborers and the Longshore unions have always been the targets of Brilab—not Kirkland and his Socialist International friends. Kirkland welcomes further smears against Reagan allies.