

Contract Negotiations 'Entering Critical Juncture'

Labor-management relations in the U.S. are now entering what one spokesman for the Department of Labor called an "important if not critical juncture." As Undersecretary of Labor Robert Brown pointed out in a recent speech in New York City, almost two million unionized workers face contract expirations between now and next fall, with next week's expiration of the Miners' contract the opening round.

LABOR NEWS

It is important to look at such contract negotiations and contract settlements as signposts to determine if the country is headed towards a major labor-industry confrontation. In addition, such developments indicate how much a "depression mentality" has set in on both sides of the bargaining table.

We present below reports on three key — and ominous — situations: the Mineworkers' negotiations; the Boeing settlement; and the New York Bricklayers' voluntary wage cut.

Undersecretary of Labor Outlines Contract Expirations In Next Six Months

In a speech to a Symposium on Labor-Management Relations in New York City Nov. 14, Undersecretary of Labor Robert Brown outlines the crucial conjuncture of contract expirations and negotiations which will occur over the next six months. Excerpts of the speech are reprinted below:

While I'd prefer not talking too much about the coal negotiations, we can talk a little about other matters on the collective bargaining agenda for this upcoming year. The major industries with contract expirations next year are: the railroads, which involve 500,000 workers; the East and Gulf Coast shipbuilding industry, which involves 49,000 workers; the construction industry, which involves 409,000 workers; the offshore maritime industry, which involves 34,000 workers; the West Coast longshore industry, which involves 11,000 workers; the U.S. Postal Service, which involves 600,000 workers; and the airlines, which involve 77,000 workers.

Beginning on March 30, the construction industry will face the first of a series of contract expirations. By that date, some 48,000 carpenters, plumbers, iron workers, bricklayers, operating engineers, laborers, and others will be seeking an agreement on a new contract. But, collective bargaining in the construction industry, even more so than other significant industries, is extremely complicated and decentralized. During the course of any one year, approximately 3,500 labor-management agreements come up for negotiation. Next year, some

two-thirds of the negotiations will be taking place in April, May and June. Since virtually all the construction craft unions are involved and since most bargaining takes place on a local level between the contractors and the individual crafts, simply keeping track of the progress of the negotiations is difficult.

Nor, do I have to tell you that both parties will be approaching collective bargaining with a wary eye on the economy. Industry will want to know whether plant capacity utilization will increase. They will also want to know whether housing starts will be up and whether there will be an increase in the growth of capital spending, signaling an assurance that the economy is expanding. Workers will also want the answers to these economic questions and are concerned about high rates of unemployment in their industry. Both sides will be entering negotiations with concerns that we all understand — concern for security and concern for money....

Will Coal Strike Lead To Confrontation And Violence?

The United Mine Workers (UMW) and the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA) are conducting countdown negotiations over the Thanksgiving weekend in a final attempt to avert a national coal strike. No one seems to think they will succeed. Spokesmen for UMW President Arnold Miller emphasized on Nov. 22 that the union was not optimistic about reaching a settlement without a strike.

The BCOA has adopted an inflexible position on two crucial issues: the refinancing of health and pension benefits funds and granting UMW locals the right to strike by majority vote over grievances and safety disputes. Both these issues directly involve the UMW leadership's ability to control wildcat strikes that have disrupted production and to insure continuous production schedules. The union health and pension funds are near bankruptcy due to lost employer contributions that resulted from recurring massive waves of wildcat strikes over the past two years. Some of these wildcats involved half the miners in the country. UMW officials maintain that the wildcat momentum would be defused if individual locals were allowed to strike by majority vote.

The BCOA is fully aware that the UMW cannot compromise on these issues without provoking further, uncontrollable wildcats, according to one influential mine owner. "Hard liners in the BCOA welcome a strike, they feel that the union is too weak to take a long strike," he continued.

The major bourgeois press, led by the provocateurs at the *Washington Post*, have been taunting the Mineworkers and misleading their readers with news analyses alleging that a coal strike is a matter of indifference to the nation's economy. One recent *Post* article began: "What if they gave a coal strike and nobody

cared?" Rubbing salt in the wound, the *Post* is justifying its misreporting with statistics indicating that the UMW today accounts for only 50 percent of national coal production and has therefore lost the economic clout it exercised under the leadership of John L. Lewis. Even *Business Week* magazine has protested such "black propaganda," pointing out in a recent issue that this was "dangerous and wishful" thinking and that a strike could be disastrous.

All signs point toward a long and bitter strike which will put the UMW into a very dangerous position. The phony "rank-and-file" groups known to be controlled by the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) will do everything possible to prolong the strike until the UMW is split into competing factions. There are some indications that an attempt will be made to destroy the union by eliminating the national master contract in favor of regional settlements.

The "wild card" in the situation is the gaggle of disruptors linked to IPS and West Virginia Governor Jay Rockefeller. These covert intelligence operations have developed a demonstrated capability to rip the UMW apart with wave upon wave of strikes.

The IPS crowd has already succeeded through eight years of subversion in making the union what one observer terms an "ungovernable mess." Even if by some miracle a contract settlement were reached in time to avert the strike, the IPS wrecking operation makes it unlikely that it could be sold to UMW members; this, in turn, has become a factor encouraging the BCOA's hardline stance.

More significantly, IPS networks, especially in sections of West Virginia and Kentucky, are known to be planning "violent actions" regardless of whether a settlement is reached. This violence, which could include the blowing up of major rail links, according to one source, would have the cover of "labor violence"; already there are reports from some coal mining districts that pre-strike terrorism has been attempted.

While such company representatives may wish to delude themselves that such "violence" is an "unfortunate, but normal" part of the coal negotiating process, sources close to the intelligence community point out that it is the IPS networks, who control a worldwide army of terrorists, which will be responsible for instigating and coordinating violence as a tactic; any terrorist acts, such as the blowing up of rail lines, would be coordinated with IPS and its controllers, especially those in James Schlesinger's Department of Energy. It is also known that Schlesinger has a covert task force dealing with contingency plans involving violence and sabotage in coal strikes; this task force operates under the cover of the so-called Winter Energy Emergency Planning Group.

While under "normal circumstances" the current miners strike would pose no immediate threat to the economy, the circumstances are by no means normal and a prolonged strike — with IPS-instigated violence — may give Schlesinger the excuse he needs to declare an energy emergency and militarize the U.S. economy.

New York Bricklayers Take Depression Payouts

The New York Bricklayers Local 37, faced with mounting unemployment, have taken a 10 percent voluntary wage cut in a desperate attempt to gain new construction jobs. This move, reminiscent of the 1930s depression, is part of a dangerous national policy pursued by Robert Georgine, head of the AFL-CIO Building Trades Department. Several other locals have already accepted payouts. This trend, if unchecked by a prodevelopment policy shift, will lead to the destruction of skilled construction labor in the U.S.

Local 37 business agent James Tirico betrayed the "depression mentality" which has infected his members in an interview in the Nov. 17 *New York Times*. "What's the use of \$17 an hour if you're standing on the street corner?" he said. "It's not an easy thing, choosing between helping the entire membership or keeping just 10 percent or 15 percent working ... half a loaf is better than none."

The Building Trades, with contracts for over 400,000 workers due for renegotiation this spring, are faced with some painful decisions. They can cave in to depression-induced wage cuts or move to foster an industrial recovery based on the development of nuclear energy.

Boeing Workers Accept Depression Settlement

Last week, the International Association of Machinists (IAM) accepted a depression contract settlement from Boeing, the nation's leading aerospace company, ending a 45 day strike. The terms of the settlement included pay raises of 6.9 percent in the first year, and 3 percent per year over the next two years. The new contract was approved overwhelmingly by the union membership despite the fact that Boeing increased its original offer by less than 1.5 percent. The contract represents a decided retreat from the last major industrial union labor accord, the "hold our pact" signed last spring by the United Steelworkers; it falls far below the 30 percent over three years government average for "large unions" wage gains over the last year.

One source reported three weeks ago that the "industry grapevine" had it that Boeing was going to teach the IAM a lesson and make it crawl. The source said that Boeing's strategy was to force the union out on strike, thereby cutting off wages and benefit payments for several weeks, and then to give back part of the company's "savings" in the form of a slightly sweetened wage and benefit offer. From all indications that is exactly what Boeing did; according to preliminary calculations, the average Boeing worker will not make back the pay he lost during the 6-week strike in increases in wages and benefits.

At this point, it is too early to tell whether the Boeing strategy will be adopted by other industry sectors or even other aerospace companies; if it is, a period of

intense labor-industry confrontation will likely result.

Although the Boeing settlement was expected to set a pattern for the aerospace industry, the IAM is continuing to strike Lockheed. Negotiations were broken off today amid reports that Lockheed was resisting the terms of the Boeing settlement. The United Autoworkers Union, representing 60,000 workers, is also in negotiations with

the aerospace industry. The UAW has extended its old contract to avoid a strike.

Said one aerospace industry analyst, "It is about time that the companies figured out that in the long run they can't crush the unions and that forcing strikes will eventually hurt everybody...."

Carter Under Hoover Pressure As Fight Over Humphrey-Hawkins Begins

With reworked, Carter-endorsed legislation still not formally introduced into Congress, the forces behind the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act have begun their mobilization to get it passed by taking pot shots at their "ally" in the White House. An aide to a leading member of the Congressional Black Caucus told a reporter; "We are in for a knock down dragged out fight ... everyone knows that even if we get this watered down version of the bill through Congress, we will have scored an impressive victory ... we will in effect, be able to dictate policy to Carter and if he doesn't go along, then it's goodbye Jimmy ..." And while his allies try to box him in, Carter's enemies on Humphrey-Hawkins have begun firing away in the press and on the Hill at both him and his "economy-sized" version of the hated bill. "It's (the endorsement) a red flag to us conservatives," said one aide in the office of a leading Congressional opponent of the bill. "If Carter thinks he's fooled people with all his talk of private sector jobs creation and fighting inflation, well at least around here, he hasn't..."

We reprint below excerpts from an article appearing in the Nov. 23 *Baltimore Sun* announcing the first phase of mobilization. As was pointed out last week, the so-called Full Employment Action Council was totally unable to mobilize anybody for its Labor Day festivities on behalf of Humphrey Hawkins, with angry workers dubbing "the events, "pick and shovel week." It should be noted that despite the optimism expressed by Humphrey and others, many of the organizers of the abortive "full employment week" activities have expressed doubt that "people will be stirred."

"I'm beginning to think that the average American worker doesn't want a Humphrey-Hawkins bill — in any form" said one former full employment organizer.

"Mrs. King Predicts 'Serious Trouble' For Carter If He Slacks On Jobs Bill"

Washington — The widow of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., warned President Carter yesterday he would be in "serious trouble" politically if he failed to pursue the goals of the Humphrey-Hawkins full-employment bill.

Coretta Scott King said at a press conference that the

controversial employment bill basically embodies the goals her husband outlined shortly before the civil rights leader was murdered nearly a decade ago...

She said the nation's civil rights movement has reached the point in its demands for full employment "where we can focus on a specific piece of legislation."

Mrs. King is co-chairman of the Full Employment Action Council, a coalition of civil rights, labor, church and liberal activist groups supporting the Humphrey-Hawkins bill.

The President, after nearly a year of trying to skirt the issue with black congressional leaders, has endorsed a compromise version of the legislation sponsored by Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.) and Representative Augustus F. Hawkins (D-Calif.) . . . the AFL-CIO was throwing its full political support behind the bill for passage in 1978.

Kenneth Young, associate legislative director for the AFL-CIO, said "the AFL-CIO has pledged its full resources to pass this bill." He said he was optimistic about its chances in Congress next year.

The action council, in the meantime, is expected to devote most of its resources to building grass roots support for the proposal.

— from the *Baltimore Sun*

Press Scorns Humphrey-Hawkins

Seattle Times, editorial "A Hollow Jobs Bill" November 21:

Watch the Humphrey-Hawkins bill sail through Congress, through President Carter's in and out baskets and into law — the new Humphrey Hawkins bill, that is.

In negotiations this month between administration officials and the bill's sponsors, a new compromise Humphrey-Hawkins bill was worked out ...

What was achieved? The *Wall Street Journal* probably provided the best answer when it observed 'that a utopian measure had been watered down to a nearly unworkable one.'...

The truth about the problem that Humphrey-Hawkins purports to solve was stated in a press conference this month, "There is no easy answer to the unemployment question."

That, of course does not mean that the government