

Labor in Focus by Laurence Sherman

From the Teamsters convention

Joined by the Building Trades Council, the IBT launched a counteroffensive for economic expansion.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters convention, held June 1-3 in Las Vegas, provided a total contrast with the policies of AFL-CIO chief Lane Kirkland and United Autoworkers president Doug Fraser, two Socialist International liaisons who are bent on making U.S. industry into a replica of Britain's. The new Teamster president, Roy Williams, also took on the Justice Department's current effort to eliminate him.

In his opening speech before the convention, Williams stated, "As you are probably aware, the government tried to deal itself a hand in our proceedings . . . in the form of a so-called Senate subcommittee report, by issuing an indictment against me [that] . . . is so wrong and so false that I do not intend to dignify it with a response. . . ."

"I have been informed today that a federal grand jury in Chicago issued an indictment against me for attempting to bribe a United States senator in an effort to stop deregulation of the trucking industry. These charges are a damn lie.

"If you heard Senator Cannon . . . he only met me one time, and he had never talked to me, and he had certainly never discussed any sort of bribe. . . ."

"I have and will continue to fight deregulation with every ounce of energy in my body, in an open and honest manner, as every Teamster in America has. No indictment will stop me. And no indictment will stop me from fighting

for the economic survival of all of our Teamster brothers and sisters."

Despite the active counter-organizing by Kirkland and Fraser (the UAW president even stated that Williams should resign), AFL-CIO Building Trades Council President Robert Georgine addressed the convention to pledge that the 17-affiliate Building Trades Council would work with the Teamsters to defend labor "from within and without," as he outlined the fights against the repeal of the Davis-Bacon Act; against using the Hobbs Act to prevent union picketing; and to stop the onslaught of spurious charges filed against union officials by the Justice Department.

The convention was greeted by President Reagan in a videotaped speech: "As a former union president, nothing makes me more proud than to work together with my union brothers toward a shared goal: our current, common desire to revitalize the economy. When the economy is humming, it means your 18-wheelers are humming."

Of three major resolutions passed by the convention, one on deregulation stated that the union "shall present the evil results of airline and trucking deregulation in the strongest terms that they can, and urge the 97th Congress to reconsider . . . and make amends by repealing or drastically altering the ill-starred deregulation measure of 1980."

A second resolution stated,

"Unfair competition from foreign industry, spiraling interest rates, runaway energy costs, and other grave and adverse economic factors have assailed our country . . . and have combined to impose an unconscionable inflation and economic recession on the American people. . . . This convention shall advise President Reagan and the 97th Congress that maximum employment and re-employment . . . be made the first order of business of the present administration."

On media abuses, the Teamster resolution said, "Major segments of the news media have for 25 years conducted a willful and irresponsible campaign of vilification . . . and several recent incidents, notably . . . a barefaced example of news fabrication at the *Washington Post*, have . . . underlined the fact of media irresponsibility. . . . The [Teamsters] convention shall serve notice on the U.S. news media that the Teamsters . . . will no longer tolerate abuse of [constitutional] rights by the publishing and perpetration of untruths and injustices. . . ."

Finally, the Teamsters passed a resolution proclaiming: "The recent triumphant performance of the United States Columbia spaceship has reopened the heavens to new and unlimited traverse for the purposes of peace and commerce. . . . The development of an appropriate space program [is] the greatest challenge ever posed in the field of transportation. . . . The International Brotherhood of Teamsters . . . directs its international headquarters . . . to prepare a campaign ensuring the presence of our union in the organizing of men and women who are working and will work in the nation's space program of tomorrow."