

Labor in Focus by Elliot Greenspan

AFL-CIO backs Mondale and freeze

The General Board meeting in Florida featured Henry Kissinger as guest speaker.

The AFL-CIO General Board, meeting at the Florida Gold Coast resort of Hollywood on Oct. 1, officially delivered the U.S. labor movement into the arms of Yuri Andropov's "peace movement." The Board rammed through an endorsement of Walter Mondale for President, breaking with traditional AFL-CIO policy against early endorsements. As one veteran of the building trades told this reporter, labor is now committing its resources to Jimmy Carter's Vice-President, a man so liberal as to be the recipient of the backing of the Green Party USA.

"I've been trying to bet people \$3,000 that Mondale wouldn't win the Democratic nomination and \$7,000 that if he did he wouldn't beat Reagan. But I don't have any takers," the long-time international union leader complained. But still the Mondale nomination sailed through.

The convention also passed a resolution backing "a verifiable, bilateral nuclear freeze"—a shift from the original Executive Council resolution which merely reported that some AFL-CIO members favor a freeze while others do not. This last-minute amendment was a victory for Democratic Party Chairman Charles Manatt, who endorsed the nuclear freeze on Sept. 20.

During the week before the convention, two score labor officials had signed a resolution circulated by the National Democratic Policy Committee, a political action committee which opposes the Manatt regime. The NDPC resolution charges that Manatt's call for a nuclear freeze, cutbacks

in defense spending, and opposition to nuclear energy development amount to "appeasement worse than Neville Chamberlain's and treason against the vital national security interests of the United States."

To make sure that such views received no public airing, the convention was carefully stage-managed by AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland. Kirkland invited fellow Trilateral Commission member Henry Kissinger to address the assembly and lobby with much fanfare for his Central American Commission—of which Kirkland is also a member. Kissinger in fact credits Kirkland with getting him the appointment to head the Commission.

Other speakers at the Hollywood meeting included Commission member Sen. Charles Mathias (R-Md.) and Costa Rican President Alberto Monge.

The "unanimity" which Kirkland produced was achieved by weighting the vote of each union according to its membership, giving Mondale 12.8 million votes, 470,000 to John Glenn and 2 million abstaining or voting "non-endorsement." The 15 million union members actually did not vote at all. A series of polls published by news agencies around the time of the convention showed that far from a 90 percent backing of Mondale, Glenn and Mondale are running virtually even among Democratic voters, including unionists.

This flagrant disregard of the views of union members was covered over with fervent speeches about "unprecedented new processes of participatory democracy." But as one unionist

commented, "This was all crap. They said they did their best to find out what their members thought. But there was no referendum—this was no democratic process." Instead, everyone was whipped into line by the rabble-rousing against President Reagan, the alleged source of all evil. This and the insistence upon unity kept dissent to a minimum.

One leader from an abstaining union emphasized, "There's a lot of bitterness seething here. You won't see it though until after the convention." Others insisted, "The endorsement doesn't mean too much."

Apart from the enormous resources in money and manpower that the AFL will expend for Mondale, Kirkland will use this mandate to demand fealty from affiliates and force them to work for Mondale or, if they refuse, to sit on their hands.

Kirkland's controlled environment was so meticulously constructed that Murray Seeger, his information director, denied *EIR* correspondents credentials for the convention on the grounds that this press service "criticizes our leader Lane Kirkland" and therefore is not accredited with the AFL-CIO!

After using such tactics as would have made Joe Stalin blush, Seeger ran up to our correspondents in a fury demanding to know if we knew "H. Bruce McColm," who he insisted was using "LaRouche tactics" to try to gain entrance, "lying that he was a correspondent for *Business Week*." *EIR* determined that not only is McColm an employee of *Business Week*, but he was part of the official program of a session sponsored by the AFL-CIO's Latin American affiliate, AIFLD, the day before the convention. McColm must have been surprised when Seeger accused him of being a "LaRouche agent."