

USLP Fusion Call Backed By Midwest Trade Unionists

The president of the powerful Northwest Indiana Building and Construction Trades Council, G. Russell Bassett, and Harold Hagburg, business agent of the region's largest International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers local, Local 697 in Hammond, Ind., this week joined in an emphatic endorsement of the U.S. Labor Party's call for a crash program of nuclear fusion development. The two, leaders of the nation's largest and most active pro-growth labor-industry coalition, Indiana's Help Implement Regional Employment (HIRE), also pledged a general mobilization of the 25,000 union members they represent to push for adoption of the call by the U.S. Congress, and are seeking an immediate 5000 signatures in support of the call.

The call signed by the two, which is being circulated nationwide by the Labor Party, states:

We, the undersigned, recognizing that:

- 1) Nuclear fusion energy is the only long-term solution to the energy needs of an advanced, industrial society;
- 2) An intense, on-going research and development program for energy is of the highest priority in maintaining the economic, social, and military health of the

United States;

3) The proposed budget for fusion development in the United States, representing a 20 percent cut in funds, is insufficient to achieve fusion energy in any time scale;

Call for the following steps to be taken:

1) A "crash" program for fusion research be undertaken immediately;

2) Cheap credit and financial assistance be made immediately available for capital investment required in industry and education needed for such a crash program.

The two union leaders also called for emergency licensing to clear the way for expanded fission power plant construction.

In addition, Bassett and Hagburg have targeted key area Democratic congressmen, including Reps. Floyd Fithian (D-Ind.) and Adam Benjamin (D-Ind.) as lawmakers to push to sponsor the program in Congress. Plans are currently being worked out with the U.S. Labor Party to hold an all-day town meeting to promote the program featuring leading representatives of the Fusion Energy Foundation and the Labor Party.

Bergland's Balloon Gets Shot Down

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Robert Bergland called for a U.S.-Canadian wheat cartel last week which elicited a rapid flurry of attacks in the U.S. and European press, strong disavowal on the part of Canadian government officials, and a hasty retreat on the part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the intervening five days since its announcement.

Announced following a meeting with Canadian Transportation Minister Otto Lang, Bergland's proposal called for the establishment of a U.S.-Canadian agreement on an artificially high 'floor' price for wheat, to then be used as a political weapon against the OPEC alliance.

Bergland told reporters, "If we can do something about the oil cartel, fine. I'd be willing to drop these talks with anyone when the oil cartel is dissolved. But until such time as that occurs I'm not going to back down." Bergland added, "It is impossible for the United States to develop a wheat policy without taking into account Canadian problems." Together, the U.S. and Canada produce 75 percent of the world's commercial wheat exports.

The international response to Bergland's proposal was immediate and unambiguously negative. Within days, queries to Canadian governmental sources on the extent to which Bergland's pronouncement reflected an actual

working agreement with the Canadian Transportation Minister elicited hasty official denials. An agricultural policy spokesman at Canada's embassy in Washington emphasized, although Canada is in fact seeking a means of stabilizing the international wheat price, it would not enter a bilateral cartel arrangement with the U.S. alone, but was seeking to make arrangements through the International Wheat Council. Bergland's proposals "were not the terms used in the discussions with Lang," said the official. The consequences of a U.S. embargo on the soybean market some time ago amounted in the long run to an effective 'reverse boycott' internationally of the U.S. soybean trade, he added. The upshot was a strengthened alliance between Japan and Brazil among others.

Queries to Bergland's office, the U.S. State Department, and other Washington offices indicate an at least temporary back-off on the proposal. As one USDA spokesman put it, "This proposal was purely exploratory; no specific agreements were reached in the meeting (between Bergland and Lang) on where to proceed, it is now in limbo and not being pressed forward." Another State Department official commented, "We mainly wanted to see what the response would be to this kind of proposal."

Although Bergland's trial balloon around "food

weapons" has sprung multiple leaks, it may continue to be floated for some time. One Washington think-tanker who insisted that the policy could not work, nevertheless reported that Bergland can be expected to make a major pitch for the proposal when he testifies before congressional agricultural committee hearings next week.

Food Control: The View Of The Overseas Development Council

The following is an exclusive interview conducted this week with an Overseas Development Council Agricultural specialist.

Q: We are interested in your assessment of agricultural secretary Bergland's proposal for a joint U.S.-Canadian grain pricing arrangement.

A: Personally, I find the proposal unpleasantly Butzian.

I don't think that much clout can be developed from the agricultural angle. Putting aside the ethical considerations of food control, it is simply not effective. For one thing, the Arab nations will not be effected since their populations are not very large to begin with. Then there is the question of Israel which comes in as well. Mainly, agripower is not a strong lever; it's not good against the Soviets — they will back down in the end, or if they don't they can eat less. The Ethiopians can buy elsewhere; it's simply not effective.

Q: Are the Canadians likely to adopt such a policy?

A: No. The Canadians will not go with any anti-OPEC cartel.

Q: Then what do you expect could serve to strengthen ties between the U.S. and Canada in a way which could be effective in relation to the OPEC alliance?

A: Possibly a buffer stock arrangement without the threat factor might be interesting. This could lead to a basis of stronger ties in the future.