

Teamsters Nat'l Meeting Rips News Media Unionbusting Drive

The following are unofficial transcripts of two releases issued by the Brotherhood of Teamsters on April 6:

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Meeting here today, April 6, are representatives from Teamster local unions and joint councils from throughout the United States and Canada. The meeting was called by the General Executive Board because it is apparent that a certain degree of confusion exists in the minds of the local union officers and members concerning matters of substantial importance to the international union. Members of many local unions have asked for an opportunity to speak out on the persistent media attack on this union and on certain inconsistencies and questions about the action of government concerning the Teamsters Union.

False and ambiguous press reports are primarily responsible for much of the confusion; for example, persistent reports appearing in the press that Teamster General President Frank E. Fitzsimmons is going to resign. These reports persist despite the fact that Mr. Fitzsimmons has repeatedly denied them and has issued definitive statements asserting that he will not resign but will be a candidate for reelection when his current term expires in 1981. The single element causing confusion which exists today is the never ending parade of a false and ambiguous press reports about the Central States Pension Fund. As recently as March 14 the press carried banner headlines that the Central States Pension Fund is in financial trouble. The administration of the fund testified before the Legislation Oversight Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee that under present funding, the fund would need additional funding from employer contributions to meet its obligations some 10 to 15 years in the future. Despite this very clear and precise statement, the following typical headlines appeared in the press: "Teamster Pension Chief Asserts Commitments Exceed the Fund," *New York Times*; "Deficit Seen for Teamster Pension Fund," *Washington Post*; "Teamster Pension Fund Not Sound," *Las Vegas Sun*; "Teamster Concedes Pension Fund Weak," *Lodi California News Sentinel*; "Teamster Fund Called Un-sound," *Atlanta Constitution*.

All this despite the fact that the Central State Pension Fund maximums pay a retiree 450 dollars a month for life for 20 years service at age 57, or 550 dollars a month at age 60 with 20 years service, and all this despite the fact that no retiree has ever missed a payment and despite the fact that 20 years of government investigations have never revealed a funding shortage.

In another area, the Teamsters is not the only segment of organized labor to experience an assault from outside sources seeking to capture labor for a political power

base. The steel workers, UAW, Machinists, and the United Mine Workers all have experienced this.

The recent steelworkers election is a classic example. A local district officer sought the election of the President of that organization. He was surrounded by a Harvard professor and a Washington lawyer who has been involved in almost all outside efforts to penetrate high commands of labor. Corporation and liberal millions financed the campaign of the district officer. Fortunately the rank and file of the steelworkers still hold power in their union as they voted a mass majority against outside influence in their internal affairs. Radical liberals, splinter parties, academic liberals, fringe lawyers, rich with extra money, to purchase excitement and others are assaulting organized labor.

That is a very important reason for the meeting today of the representatives of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. The recent hearings of the Legislative Oversight Committee is a classic example of a news imbalance. Media gave top billing to testimony of individuals, some of whom are and some of whom are not participants in the Central Committee Pension Fund. They were called to testify. Yet in the hearing room were nearly 100 retired teamsters who came from out of state to support their union and their pension plan. In fact, without their presence in the hearing, it would have taken a free lunch to draw a crowd. None were asked to testify by the committee and were ignored by the press.

Under the Supplement of the Master State Freight Agreement, the hourly rate is \$8.50 per hour. Employers' contributions to the pension will reach 31 dollars per employee per week in the third year of the agreement. Workers on April 1 received a 24 cent per hour cost-of-living increase. They have paid sick leave and medical and doctor insurance providing for major medical, vacations and holidays — all paid for by their employers. All this was negotiated by Teamster President Frank E. Fitzsimmons' negotiating committee which includes members of the executive board. That blue-ribbon credibility never makes the headlines — or if it does, it is under the headline "Teamsters Negotiate Inflationary Wage Hike."

While the performance of the Central States has been the ingredient for sensational, false, ambiguous and careless reporting, money mismanagement and illegality and in other areas of the economy have received scant notice by the press.

Corporate money is used to support campaigns for candidates for federal office, in violation of the law. Foreign payments are made to members of the Congress. The Securities and Exchange Commission is between a rock and a hard place, trying to police illegal

stock and bond deals. Major banks are failing because of mismanagement (Chase Manhattan — ed.). A scandal exists in government. Government military pensions are more than 90 percent underfunded. Social Security's liabilities exceed assets by a ratio of 40 to one. Social Security now has liabilities in excess of \$2.4 trillion. The Senate Finance Committee, according to an A.P. dispatch of March 2, 1977, considers the tax increase necessary to keep Social Security solvent. Under directive from the Federal Reserve, bank loans to real estate investment trusts increased from \$6.5 billion to \$11.4, despite the fact that bank losses have increased ten-fold since 1965. In 1972, aggregate loan losses were \$800 million. In 1974, losses rose to two billion dollars. Bad real estate loans are, for example, attributed to the failing of the National Bank of Long Island.

And through it all, aging working Americans contemplating retiring are unduly and cruelly worried about their Teamster Pension Fund because of the false, ambiguous and ignorant reports. This malicious and sloppy job of journalism has even confused rank and file members as to which pension plan they belong to. The Central States Pension Fund is only one of many pension trusts negotiated by affiliates of the international union but an ambiguous headline such as "Teamster Pension Chief Asserts Commitments Exceed the Fund" not only creates unfounded doubts in the minds of Central States participants. It also makes those covered under other pensions wonder which fund the headline is talking about. These are some of the reasons the General Executive Board of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters has called this meeting today. The falsehoods and ambiguities and out of context reporting by the media will be discussed. Frankly, we are tired of the distortions and tired of being the national whipping boy.

We fully understand that when criticism is deserved we can weather the storm and benefit from it, but that is not what the present media attack is all about. For example, the NBC six-part series last year during the National Master Freight Contract were designed to disrupt this important national collective bargaining. Our members recognize our achievements. Every day we get requests from members of other unions seeking to become Teamsters. Despite the fact that we have no national organizing campaign to organize municipal police forces, we are contacted by them every day seeking membership.

So, workers do not believe what they read about the Teamsters in the press — when the representatives return to their local unions and Joint Councils they will know the truth and report it to their membership. That is why the meeting is closed to the press. We are here today to clean up the misconceptions spread by the mass media. We certainly did not call this meeting to give the press another opportunity to misreport. We do not share this view of the media alone. Consider the report which appeared on page 2, of the March 11 edition of the *Washington Post*. The executive editor of the *Washington Post*, Ben Bradlee, recently in Cuba, just turned up in Ogden, Utah and told students at Weber State College "just because you don't read it in the paper, that doesn't mean it didn't happen. Conversely, just because you read it, doesn't mean it did happen." Bradlee said newspapers try to print the truth but sometimes face

Fitz: 'I Won't Quit'

*Statement by Frank E. Fitzsimmons
Concerning His Tenure In Office*

Over the past several weeks, the U.S. news media has persistently reported that I will resign my position as President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. These reports are absolutely false and, often, I believe, maliciously circulated. In more recent days, there have been reports that the meeting of representatives of the Joint Council today in Washington, D.C. was called for the purpose of announcing my retirement. These reports, too, are false. Therefore, through this statement, I want it known that I was elected at our international union convention June 1976 for a five-year term. It was an unanimous election by 2,254 duly elected delegates to that convention.

I did not accept that office intending to only serve part of a term. Nothing has happened since, to erode that intention. And not only will I complete my present term but I will be a candidate for reelection as the General President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters at the union's next convention in 1981.

Perhaps my pending resignation as trustee of the Central States' Pension Fund has whetted the imagination and dulled the accuracy of those preparing the news. My resignation as the trustee of that fund was not a spur-of-the-moment decision. After the passage of the Employer Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), it became obvious month by month that no one could fulfill the duties of both pension trustee and president of an international union. Even after my resignation is effective there will be union trustees as there will be management trustees. There will be a collective bargaining process to generate money to fund the Central States Pension Program. Union and management trustees will set benefit levels and pass on eligibility of retirement applications. These will be demanding and time consuming duties. Now that these arrangements satisfactory to both union trustees and government have been completed, I am now free to devote my full attention to the demanding duties of the President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and I will be striving daily to make membership in the Teamsters even better than it is today.

insurmountable obstacles including deadlines and lack of personnel.

Perhaps a retired Teamster in Kansas City best summed it up recently in a letter to the editor of the *Kansas City Star*. Retired from local 838, Kansas City, Robert L. Schleininger wrote "Benefits Tell the Tale." "It's time the public becomes informed of the fact from someone who is directly involved concerning the Teamster Central States Pension Fund and the government investigations into the fund. For too long, the public

has received information from ambitious news reporters or lockerroom lawyers who have only thought of taking cheap shots at the Teamster's union leadership.

"Let's take a look at the record. The Teamster Union Central States Pension Fund has been in existence since 1957. The last report stated there was \$1.4 billion in the fund. Social Security has been existant since 1937 and the last report read said that it is practically broke. Now let's take a look at the funding of these two funds.

"The last week I worked before I retired \$25.70 was deducted from my check as Social Security. My em-

ployer paid the same amount, this totalled \$51.40 paid to Social Security in my behalf. The same week my employer paid \$19.40 into the Teamsters Union Central States Pension Fund. I paid nothing. At the age of 60, I was eligible to receive \$550 a month from the Teamster Central States Pension Fund. However, after reaching 62 years of age, I am only receiving \$293.50 from Social Security. After looking at the benefits of the two funds, I don't have to be a mental wizard to figure out I just can't afford to have the government protecting me from the so-called bad guy."

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