

## LABOR PERISCOPE

### Teamsters face continued austerity fight

As of this writing, a tentative pact has been reached between International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the trucking industry for a new national master freight contract, ending a 10 day selective strike and industry-lockout. Some minor snags may remain, but sources close to the negotiations feel that the final package will be in excess of 30 percent and will be ratified by the IBT membership.

Teamster President Frank Fitzsimmons charges government interference in the negotiations caused and prolonged the strike. He says the Teamsters refused to be cowed by threats from inflation czar Alfred Khan to keep the contract within the Administration's 7 percent wage price guidelines.

Kahn holds a White House press briefing and declares that the contract falls within the Administration's "relaxed" guideline program. He says that the contract proves the program works since it held down the final package well below the Teamsters initial 50 percent offer and below the 1976 master freight package. Kahn reportedly sabotaged a proposed pact two weeks ago.

Some Teamsters worry about the future. The contract, they feel, will have trouble standing up under continued assault by Carter's austerity managers.

The Interstate Commerce Commission and the office of Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) report that they will continue efforts to deregulate the trucking industry — a move that will destroy the basis for the master freight agreement and promote

nonunion trucking. "we don't give a damn what the new contract says," an ICC official states.

Energy Secretary James Schlesinger's plans to drastically hike domestic fuel costs will wreak havoc with the industry; some companies won't survive. Kennedy's people say that the higher energy costs will give them a chance to sell deregulation as more "energy efficient."

Carter Administration officials base their estimate for the cost of the proposed contract on a projected 8.5 percent rise in the Consumer Price Index. The CPI is currently rising at a rate of more than 15 percent annually.

Teamsters will vote on the pact by mail ballot over the next several weeks, while local issues are resolved.

#### Other strikes continue

Teamsters are expected back to work by this week, preventing the lockout and strike from having devastating impact on the economy. Two other Kahn-forced strikes in the transportation sector continue.

United Airlines and the International Association of Machinists (IAM) are so far apart on a new contract for the airlines machinists that they aren't even talking. The nation's largest freight carrier is shut down and plans to stay shut into the foreseeable future.

No progress is reported either between the operators of tug boats, tankers and barges in East Coast ports and the International Longshoreman's Association

(ILA). Freight traffic in the port of New York-Newark is slowed.

#### AFL-CIO to monitor industry price violations

AFL-CIO President George Meany, a critic of Administration efforts to curb inflation through a system of "voluntary" wage and price guidelines, announced plans this week to commit the Federation's over 12 million members to a grassroots effort to monitor price increases and report on potential industry violations of the President's anti-inflation program.

The grassroots effort, dubbed "Operation Price Watch," was kicked off at a rally of over 150 trade unionists yesterday which featured Administration chief inflation fighter Alfred E. Kahn.

The move to become the Administration's "eyes and ears," reminiscent of union participation in the wartime Board of Economic Warfare set up as an anti-inflation force in World War II, would assure, said Meany, a more equitable enforcement of the guidelines proposal. And it would represent a step closer to actual mandatory controls—a condition long favored by Meany.

Meany, in fact, renewed his call for a system of mandatory and comprehensive controls, saying anything less would be "ineffective." While feigning opposition to full controls, and affirming Administration commitment to the voluntary program, inflation fighter Kahn welcomed the AFL-CIO price watching initiative as a demonstration of support for the "voluntary" effort. This support, however, may be too little and too late to rein in "inflationary price and wage increases," Kahn hinted in his prepared remarks to the unionists, adding that it may be necessary for more caustic measures—like, perhaps, an induced recession or even a shift to mandatory controls.