

After the IBT contract—what next?

As negotiators wrap up the remaining details of the national master freight agreement between the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the trucking industry, a debate is raging inside the Carter Administration over how to proceed further with plans to carry out the Administration's commitment to a national austerity policy.

While inflation czar Alfred Kahn publicly boasts that the three-year Teamster contract, with its 30 percent plus wage and benefits settlement is a "victory" for his 6 percent voluntary wage price guidelines, his own planners are looking at more severe options. These include proposals for some form of mandatory wage and price controls, as supported by AFL-CIO President George Meany, or a possible freeze on wages and prices. Although an agreement has not yet been reached on a new policy, sources close to Kahn report that almost no one expects the voluntary program to hold together in the face of the upcoming bargaining calendar, which includes major negotiations in the rubber, electrical equipment and auto industry.

As of the present, a strike next week by more than 55,000 members of the United Rubber Workers against all major rubber producers except Firestone appears certain. In addition, auto industry sources report that they are bracing for a strike by the United Autoworkers that could affect upwards of 700,000 workers when the union's contract expires September 15. The major cause of these strikes will be the companies' use of the guidelines program—under prodding from Kahn—as an excuse to go after concessions from labor. This was made clear, for example, by a recent spate of ads taken by General Motors announcing their intention to "carry out the full intent of the President's program...."

Kahn and Federal Reserve Chairman William Miller would like nothing better than to see these strikes take place. First, the political climate is not yet ripe enough to secure congressional passage of economic emergency measures. A provoked strike wave might change that.

Second, a strike wave, shutting down whole sections of U.S. industry would accomplish precisely the kind of forced economic slowdown that Kahn and Miller have both called for publicly as desirable "to cool down inflation." Sources report that Miller in fact was upset that the Teamster strike—a strike that had been provoked by Kahn—did not last long enough to

significantly slow down the economy by forcing "ripple back" layoffs.

And finally, such a strike wave would also intersect an energy emergency being concocted by James Schlesinger's Department of Energy. Slated to hit by late summer and fall, the gasoline and fuel shortage will provide a handle for additional emergency measures.

These strikes are a sign of desperation within the ranks of organized labor who

Teamster steelhauler strike expected

A strike by 30,000 teamster steelhaulers is expected to go into full swing before the week is out, say sources close to the bargaining in contract talks between the Teamsters Union and the steel industry.

Already, over 5,000 steelhaulers in such cities as Chicago, Cleveland and Pittsburgh are reportedly refusing to return to work as directed by Teamsters Union officials who announced a tentative agreement with the Trucking industry last week resulting in a new Master Freight agreement and ending a 10-day selective strike and industry-wide lockout.

The steelhaulers' contract, while covered by the Master Freight agreement, is in fact negotiated separately. But while there is no actual settlement between the steelhaulers and the industry, it is generally accepted that the master freight accord will bridge the period until an accord is reached. It was for this reason that a back to work order was issued.

Steelhaulers are reportedly upset by what drivers consider to be a low wage and benefit package included in the master freight agreement. This concern, coupled to staunch industry opposition to exceeding the Carter Administration's 7 percent wage guidelines, has surfaced as the major cause of the unauthorized strike. Teamsters Union officials concede that this sentiment is so strong that steelhaulers are expected to vote down the tentative agreement this week, clearing the way for a fully sanctioned strike.

see their standard of living collapsing before their eyes.

Coupled with union busting tactics from management, several recent and bitter strikes have become scenes of police violence not witnessed since the 1930s. For example, the now three-month old strike by Teamsters against dairy operators in the New York metropolitan area last week became the scene of a police riot, when mounted police charged strike pickets to escort a scab truck through the picket lines. A crisis bureaucracy to handle the situation, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, is already in operation.

The Teamsters on 'dissidents'

The following is the conclusion of the exclusive NSIPS interview with Detroit Local 299 Teamster leader Lawrence McHenry. The interview and the fight by McHenry and others against the dissidents in the "Teamsters for a Democratic Union" have provoked outcries of disapproval from the antileadership faction in Local 299. This week, TDU members circulated leaflets attacking McHenry for working with alleged criminal elements in the union and with the U.S. Labor Party, which also published the interview in its newspaper New Solidarity. It is the TDU, however, which is on the defensive. As a result of the efforts of McHenry and others, TDU meetings have attracted fewer and fewer attendees, and their influence in the recent Teamster strike has been virtually nonexistent.

Q: *What do you think is the importance of Camaratta's suspension? Locally and also nationally?*

McHenry: It is about time that the Camarattas, and everybody else—other members of the IBT—realize that they do have a responsibility to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and it will be enforced. We will not stand for any further flagrant violations of it, any misinterpretations, and misapplications of it, for the so-called members' rights when it is really out to destroy the union, its leadership, and its ability to service the working man.

Q: *Have these charges had any effect on Camaratta and TDU?*

McHenry: Camaratta, in his publication, has tried to make the hearings and the charges a farce, saying they would have no bearing on what his activity would be. Yet Camaratta attended a meeting called for the specific purpose of giving authorization to the international union as far as strike in the contract negotiations and was very quiet; in fact, he didn't even make an attempt to speak, as he has in the past.

It is in this context that remarks made late last week by United Auto Workers' President Douglas Fraser take on their real significance. Fraser told members of the UAW bargaining council that the Teamster settlement had "blown apart" the Carter voluntary wage price policy. He boasted that the UAW would totally ignore the program in its bargaining. However, Fraser added that his union would welcome, with open arms, any proposal that would assure "equality of sacrifice" between business and labor. He further stated that unfortunately "no such program was forthcoming from the Carter Administration" at this time.

It is very evident to me that Camaratta knows that he has been properly charged, and the charges have been properly sustained, that he cannot do this. And I think evidence of this was yesterday's meeting where he did not get up and resume his normal derogatory remarks, demand for strike, inciting other members to violate the by-laws and constitution.

Q: *Sunday's Local 299 meeting was the big media event of the year for the TDU. They had been building up for two years, and he was not covered by any of the media?*

McHenry: No, as a matter of fact, in the past Camaratta—whatever was going on—was always on major network television news broadcasts. Sunday's event was a major meeting—especially what he has been working for and he was very obvious by his silence. That was the same as saying to me, "Damn it, you caught me red-handed. You nailed me solid. I know I have done wrong, and I am not going to do it anymore."

Q: *People like yourself who also have a background many times longer than Pete Camaratta's concerning members' rights in the union, why are you in a position now of defending the union?*

McHenry: I never have been in any other position. Criticism, if it is for the purpose of construction, if it is constructive criticism in this or any other organization, will make for a better organization. But if it is criticism designed for one express purpose, to destroy, then I am against it.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters means something to me. I have at times been critical in some areas, but it has been constructive criticism. Some of it has been taken properly and things that were wrong have been righted. But I will not stand for a Camaratta, or a Karagozian, or anybody else—on a pretense of caring about members—to go out and use them and their problems to further their own political ambitions!

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