

LABOR PERISCOPE

Truckers strike fizzles, but fuse remains lit

As we go to press, the three-week-old "shutdown" by independent truckers appears to be fizzling out. Shipments of fuel and agricultural products, which at points over the last few weeks slowed to a trickle, are now moving at near normal levels, according to government spokesmen. Blockades of truck stops along major interstate highways disappeared, as did most of the violence that had terrorized both non-striking independents and Teamsters into shutting down.

Late last week the Carter administration crisis managers made what they termed their final offer of concessions to the independents. Their six-point plan promised additional diesel fuel supplies and pledges to work on other "grievances." Acting according to a 1974 crisis management plan for a truckers shutdown, the federal emergency bureaucracy, under the control of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, created seven "safe corridors" along East-West and North-South interstates, to be patrolled by various state police and national guard units.

The two principal gauleiters of the independent truckers, Mike Parkhurst of the Independent Truckers Association and publisher of the semipornographic *Overdrive* magazine, and Bill Hill of the Truckers Unity Coalition, immediately termed the offer "worthless." They urged truckers to continue the shutdown.

With their final offer, the crisis managers were throwing the ball to Parkhurst and Co. They knew that the level of violence and chaos in the strike did not yet justify—in the eyes of the American people—the activation of the last and final level of the 1974 plan to declare a national emergency and deploy federal troops. By making a final offer, the planners were giving Parkhurst a chance to organize for a final terror-filled offensive.

Parkhurst and Hill continue their bluster and threats. They have scheduled "strategy meetings" to map out "new plans." The majority of independents are paying no heed.

The decision to be made by Parkhurst's controllers is whether to send his "hardcore" terrorist cadre back out on the road for a new escalated, violent spree without "cover." Some government officials—outside the FEMA crew—fear that this may be in the offing. They caution that a few well-placed snipers might scare many drivers off the road.

Meanwhile, Parkhurst is discussing another range of actions. He is reportedly testing the waters for a mass action against Washington itself—an action that would demand immediate deregulation of the trucking industry. Sources on the Hill report that Parkhurst and his people have been in contact with aides and staff of deregulation advocate Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass).

These aides have regarded the shutdown as "an organizing drive" for the Kennedy-Carter trucking deregulation legislation.

An ode to the dark ages

The leadership of the United Mineworkers is doing its part in the efforts to bring the nation behind a massive coal synthetic fuel program.

UMW Vice President Sam Church, the June issue of the *UMW Journal* reports, "is on the road to becoming America's most dynamic recording star." The UMW vice president (who was once described by a former top union official as "if not the dumbest man I know, the second dumbest") spent ten hours in Nashville last month recording two ditties about "coal power." One side, called "Black Gold," attacks nuclear power: "Even the smallest accident and we must evacuate. But it was God's intention, Black Gold should be our fate."

Church is "most proud" of the "A side," "There is no other way": "When you pull into the station and see the price of gas today, don't you wonder if there is a better way. America do you realize gas can be made from coal and it can be converted—we did it long ago. Our miners are not working because of Arab oil. Let's fight for independence—why the hell don't we use coal?"

"I think this should be our national anthem," said a UMW official referring to the song.

Two weeks ago, UMW spokesman, humming the songs, showed up at hearings in Washington to support congressional coal synthetics fuel legislation. "It can be done ... it was done long ago," he said echoing the Church song. "The Nazi war machine ran on gasoline made from coal."

—L. Wolfe and M. Moriarty