



Senator Orrin Hatch.

Senator Hatch discusses future labor policies

Last week EIR discussed the future activities of the U.S. Senate Labor Committee with its new chairman, Orrin Hatch, a Republican from Utah. This is Part One of Barbara Dreyfuss's exclusive interview. In Part Two, discussing the Carter administration's Abscam-Brilab procedures, Senator Hatch says that he intends to pursue charges of corrupt activity by both business and labor, but guard against any unconstitutional methods.

EIR: There has been a lot of concern about raising the skill levels of American workers if we are to have an expanding economy with new technologies. What will your committee do in that regard?

Sen. Hatch: Well, we are interested in enhancing vocational education and training programs, and particularly private-sector job corps and private-industry training programs like Opportunities Industrial Centers. We are looking into apprenticeship training and how we might utilize that and give people more skills. I think we have to have hearings to answer that particular question. . . .

EIR: What about those workers already working whose skills have to be upgraded?

Sen. Hatch: Apprenticeship programs could help there. But I don't know the answers to that, other than to say that businesses who want skilled workers will have to pay the price to train them. With certain incentives we can give businesses the initiatives to do that.

EIR: Labor Secretary Donovan testified that the problem of American productivity is not the laziness of Americans, but the fact that they have to deal with outmoded plants and equipment. How will your committee help American workers to be more competitive?

Sen. Hatch: That's a tough question. I don't have an answer to that. I think the way to increase productivity is through tax incentives and our committee doesn't have any particular jurisdiction over that area.

I do think we can help this country by getting rid of some of the overregulatory practices that are literally

eating our business people alive, and workers as well, and stopping them from being productive. One of the subcommittees that will really do a lot of work is the Investigations and Oversight subcommittee, and Senator Hawkins may well want to get into that.

EIR: President Reagan tried to appeal throughout the campaign to the blue-collar workers; he unequivocally stated that he wouldn't support revocation of OSHA [the Occupational Safety and Health Act] or Davis-Bacon [the legislation maintaining union wage-scales on federally funded projects]. Doug Fraser of the UAW and Jerry Wurf of AFSCME claim their problem will not be with the President, but with Congress.

Sen. Hatch: Since President Reagan has a desire to see if they can be changed administratively, I have a desire to see if that's possible. If it is, that would be superior to congressional change. I've chatted with Secretary Donovan about this, and he agrees that maybe the Labor Department can administratively make both those bills more workable.

But let's face it, Davis-Bacon is costing American taxpayers an unnecessary \$700 million to \$3 billion, depending on which economist you're talking to. . . .

As for OSHA, we would like to make it a more cooperative partner with labor and business. OSHA is spending a large part of its precious funding investigating small businesses that don't have safety problems. Why shouldn't we concentrate OSHA's efforts, and have OSHA work in a more cooperative, noncombative way in those areas that do have huge industrial safety problems?

EIR: Will you be looking into the question of drug use in the workplace?

Sen. Hatch: I believe we will. The Alcoholism and Drug Abuse subcommittee is chaired by Gordon Humphrey, and I happen to be on it. . . . I agree with you, something has to be done to educate the American people as to the dangers of drug abuse, and especially our workers.