

LaRouche's surprise labor strategy for the 1984 elections

by David Wolinsky

In the fantasy that grips Washington, TV-land, and other centers of "authoritative opinion," the U.S. economy is looking up, the labor movement is politically strong, and its vote belongs to Walter Mondale. With an eye to the fraud involved on all three of these counts, maverick Democratic presidential contender Lyndon LaRouche has launched a strategy through which, if it works, labor will help blow apart those fantasies and reshape American politics, between now and November.

The key to the LaRouche perspective is to mold the trade union movement, now as moribund as the old American Federation of Labor of 1929-31, into a political strike force. Labor, which deserted the Democratic Party en masse in 1980 to vote for Ronald Reagan, has no love for Walter Mondale. Although currently being gooned into line behind the "frontrunner," most unionists will desert their International's choice as soon as they see a credible alternative.

These unionists are also aware that they are being sold down the river by AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland et al. in a political deal by which they are encouraged to accept givebacks and brutal austerity so as not to provide Ronald Reagan with a strike wave to campaign against.

At present, industrial unionism, or what that idea would have meant to a working man of the 1930s, 1940s, or 1950s, is being ruthlessly hunted down and destroyed along with the rest of the productive sinew of America. The February Supreme Court decision in *NLRB vs. Bildisco and Bildisco*, which allows corporations to use bankruptcy proceedings to break union contracts, was a blockbuster precedent for every anti-labor force in the country. But what has been kept out of the headlines is that thousands of union locals, in small and medium-sized shops around the country, face destruction through forced strikes and lockouts, runaways, bankruptcy reorganization, or change of ownership, and demands for contract givebacks. A conservative estimate is that 10,000 locals are immediate targets for union-busting.

For Kirkland, one of Walter Mondale's controllers in the Chuck Manatt-Averell Harriman wing of the Democratic Party, this process is a foregone and much-desired conclusion. Private AFL-CIO studies predict as much as 50-75%

decline in union membership in basic industry. Trilateral Commission member Kirkland never needed convincing that his career and the country's future would be "post-industrial"; as the Paul Volcker-assisted carnage proceeded in the auto, steel, machine-tool, and transportation industries, many union bureaucrats were brought around to the idea. Others were invited for the now-infamous "drinks and sandwiches" before being told that their office and local no longer existed. Now the Internationals are on a big drive to "diversify" into organizing service workers: paper pushers and, often, paper locals. The April issue of the magazine of the Teamsters union (the supposed alternative to the politics of the AFL-CIO) is almost entirely devoted to this strategy.

Strike wave

But the union membership—including some local leaders—is not buying it. Neither are the thousands who have been driven out of the United States' industrial labor force (see article, page 53). Despite the best efforts of the 'crats and the Trilaterals to forestall any labor embarrassments for the Mondale campaign, a strike wave has begun.

One good example is the Beaumont-Port Arthur area of Texas, a boom region in the late 1970s. As industrial orders, especially exports for Ibero-American development projects, have collapsed, the pressure on the unions has been immense. National Building Trades chief Robert Georgine recently ordered striking Pipefitters Local 195 to remove pickets from other crafts at oil refineries operated by Gulf, Petrofina, Mobil, Union, and Texaco. All of the local craft unions, which had accepted weak contracts expecting the pipefitters to make a stand, are now furious. "They don't want any bad press about unions to hurt Mondale," one local union leader commented.

'Let there be no rioting'

"Although I am against chaos and disruption of orderly life of our republic," wrote LaRouche after the gigantic vote-fraud conducted against him in the Pennsylvania Democratic primary last month, "... the voters of the United States will never secure honest democracy at the ballot-box until they

win the battle for democracy in the streets. However, let there be no rioting. Let there be support for every legitimate strike which is about to occur during the months just ahead. The economy of this nation is being destroyed. . . . If the voters are being denied the right to vote for a presidential candidate who will give them economic justice, those voters have no alternative but to win those rights on the picket lines." The quotation comes from LaRouche's April 12 declaration: "I Count Your Vote Even If Crooked State Officials Don't."

LaRouche's manifesto offered beleaguered unionists a chance to turn their defensive strikes into a political strike-wave offensive such as the United States has not seen since the 1930s. In LaRouche's words: "The working people, and masses of unemployed, of this nation are being ruined, and this ruin is being caused by the same evil monetary, economic, and tax policies which are also ruining our productive entrepreneurs and our farmers. We must destroy that common enemy. Insofar as labor acts to weaken that enemy's power, labor is acting in the interest of us all, and requires the support from all among us who care about this republic of ours."

The genius of this approach is that it cuts through decades of "class struggle" rhetoric on both sides of the worker-employer fence. Envision an economy which is perpetually expanding because productivity is constantly increasing, one in which scientific innovation and application is the goal of policy. In such an economy the battle of one section of the citizenry against the other becomes an irrelevant relic of the past, along with "limits to growth" and every other piece of irrational dogma the anti-capitalist financial oligarchy uses to perpetuate its power.

Although alien to conservatives for whom "pro-business" means "anti-union" (as well as to graduates of Harvard Business School), this concept is actually the 19th-century American System "harmony of interests" that saw the forces around Abraham Lincoln and his economics adviser Henry C. Carey launch the era of America's greatest industrial expansion. It was also the basis, however temporary, upon which Franklin Roosevelt mobilized the United States to save the world in World War II.

Boycotting Sun Oil

LaRouche's forces have moved their "American System" weaponry into action in support of 400 members of Local 7-912 of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union (OCAW) on strike at the Sun Oil refinery in Toledo, Ohio. The OCAW workers were forced off the job March 17 after the company dropped out of national refinery contract negotiations and demanded crushing wage, benefit, and seniority concessions. Sun has refused to negotiate, and now reportedly has 100-200 supervisory personnel and scabs, including workers imported from its Yabucoa, Puerto Rico refinery, living inside the plant and working 12-hour shifts.

On April 28, seven hundred unionists and their supporters marched to the plant gates. A local boycott committee began

picketing 23 Sunoco stations in the area a day earlier. LaRouche's presidential campaign organization has put out 800,000 leaflets in support of the strike and the boycott against Sun, starting with Pennsylvania and Ohio. It has also mobilized support telegrams from all strata of the population, and from Western Europe and Ibero-America, emphasizing what is at stake in the strike. "By mysterious but lawful processes this strike has become the rallying-point for the cause of humanity and justice throughout the nation," wrote LaRouche in his own telegram to the president of the striking OCAW local.

Toledo is a union city. Port workers, auto workers, grain millers, and grain-elevator workers are all unionized, but the nationwide anti-union drive has hit Toledo hard. In 1983, a Teamster strike was broken. Non-union labor built a new hotel subsidized by a county government loan; a referendum against the county loan was voted down. Sun would only save \$25,000 from the concessions it asked from workers in Toledo and in their Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania refinery, but those same concessions would eliminate union protection against department closings and layoffs.

In Toledo, where veteran unionists remember the political strike tradition of the 1930s, the boycott has the support of the AFL-CIO Central Labor Council, Teamsters Local 20, United Auto Workers (UAW) Region 2B, the Northwest Ohio Building Trades Council, and the Toledo Port Council (maritime workers). Other local unionists are pledging to pass resolutions joining the boycott—but no international union has taken similar actions.

One union which has contributed to the OCAW's strike fund is the UAW local at Toledo's AP Parts plant, supplier to General Motors and one of the largest auto-parts manufacturers. The AP Parts workers went on strike themselves on April 28, as the company, bolstered by GM's uncharacteristic advance-payment on a \$20 million parts contract, has been "negotiating" wage and benefit givebacks totaling \$5.20 an hour.

AP Parts has been threatening to move operations to its non-union plant in North Carolina. On March 5, the company abrogated the union's contract, stopped paying into the pension fund, and implemented oppressive new "work rules" enforced by 40 "security guards," with cattle prods and baseball bats, imported from the Cincinnati-based Nuckohls and Associates. In addition, the company erected a security turret on top of the plant and put up two barbed-wire fences.

Such concentration-camp methods, by no means unusual as the architects of the post-industrial society move into their next phase, are spurring strike support not only among different sections of labor but also from the "productive farmers and entrepreneurs" cited by LaRouche. Mississippi farm leader Billy Davis, the designated agriculture secretary in a LaRouche administration, telegraphed the Sun Oil workers: "Only together will we win our country back. Else individually we will stand accountable. Therefore, we farmers stand with you."