

Washington Digest

Labor Disputants Must Heed Public's Interests

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WASHINGTON. — Regardless of the bitterness engendered by the coal strike many real friends of labor in Washington watched the preliminaries to the opening of congress with far less apprehension than might have been supposed.

But that wasn't true of some of the labor leaders.

There were several reasons for the fears of the latter. In the first place, it was no secret that a great many union members were getting decidedly fed up with the autocratic methods of some of the top dogs. Part of this may have been the general feeling that it was time for a change, which the voters registered so emphatically. Many of these voters were, of course, union men. Without labor's support the Republicans would not have made such great gains in many of the cities.

I talked to one union man who expressed this skeptical attitude toward the top leadership. He said there was discontent because of "too many strikes." He didn't mean strikes in his own group, necessarily. He was referring to the fact that when other unions walked out it affected him too. He didn't like the idleness that he had experienced. He resented the raising of his dues. He felt the pressure from the higher cost of living, which he did not blame entirely on big profits. He was not immune to the argument that lack of production due to strikes for which he was not responsible was also partly to blame.

His inability to control the strikes in other unions was not the only cause of his resentment. He felt that his vote in itself had very little effect; that "policy was hammered out by the big fellows."

Then, too, the stories of the fine homes and the big cars of some of the high officers didn't help. I found his attitude reflected in similar reports from other sources.

Most of these conditions to which my informant objected, of course, stood out at the very beginning of the coal strike with its powerful one-man-domination and its crippling effect on other industries.

Another feeling registered by many workers was fear of a depression. They knew that that would weaken the unions because many men would do as my friend said he would have to do—forget the union and take any job he could get if work grew scarce.

Predict Curbs on Autocratic Leaders

Since many of the men who followed this line of reasoning helped make the Republican victory possible, astute political leaders, with their eyes on 1948, are preparing to stop the "smash-the-union" talk and substitute for it the slogan "smash the autocratic leaders and keep them from smashing the union."

The "friends of labor" that I mentioned realize this. They are freely predicting that this congress will not produce "destructive labor legislation."

They feel that such radical moves as compulsory arbitration or rigid government control will not succeed. They do admit they expect many of the advantages labor has enjoyed under the Wagner act will be pared down.

When the President said at a White House press and radio conference that he intended to write as strong a message as possible to the congress, it was not interpreted as meaning that any anti-labor shackles would rise. Harry Truman's whole record in congress is distinctly conservative but not reactionary. On the other hand, he doesn't intend to approach the subject from the New Deal point of view. As I pointed out previously in this column, he considers himself a "free man," bound by no previous obligations, acting under no restraint. He could not escape the tenor of the vote in November nor could he ignore the gauntlet which John Lewis threw down.

Looking around in the senate, the friends of labor feel they see evidence of enough wisdom and discretion to prevent any labor-baiting orgy even if some of the members of the house may lean to extremes. After all, most legislation is written in conference.

Although there was considerable concern expressed by their respective opponents, both Senators Taft and Ball, who naturally would be

expected to initiate labor legislation, are considered too wise politically to overstep the bounds of what really amounts to common sense on this question. Neither of them would be likely to do anything they could avoid to prevent the workers or anyone else from voting Republican.

Another thing which the optimistic middle-of-the-roaders feel sure will happen is that there will be a careful study by congress of any measure which is proposed—unless, of course, some crisis develops which demands speed. In emergencies emotions run high and it is necessary to shift the ballast so rapidly merely to avoid capsizing, that legislators may swamp the boat trying to reach an even keel.

Labor suffers from an unstable economy. Therefore, it must have a "multiple objective," as Thurman Arnold and Walter Hamilton, contributing their "Thoughts on Labor Day" to the New Republic, last September, pointed out in these words:

"It must work for a stable economy with permanent high prosperity; it must hold and advance wage rates for the sake of that permanent prosperity; it must stand firm and even take the offensive against limitation of production and the degradation of the dollar."

Therefore, to succeed, "the labor movement must be a consumer's movement as well." The consumer's vested interest in labor legislation will not be overlooked by thoughtful members of congress. It was very plain that the will of the voter in the last election was expressed in the voice of the consumer.

Must Consider Consumer In Any Negotiations

One of the most searching surveys of the whole question of collective bargaining which undoubtedly has impressed our more studious legislators is a report, made two years ago by a special committee of the 20th Century fund. This report stressed the need of recognition by both labor and management of this "third party, the consumer." In that connection the committee recommended strongly "the use of economists, engineers, impartial fact-finding techniques." They also suggested that "managements and unions together explore the possibilities of market-wide collective bargaining."

This is a subject of which you will hear more before long, I imagine.

The 20th Century fund study also sounded a warning which might well have shown a foreknowledge of some of the big strikes which followed, including the coal strike. It concluded with the admonition:

"Unless spokesmen for Big Ownership, Big Unionism and Big Government acquire a sharper awareness of their separate and joint obligations to society all three will become like the dinosaurs which grew too big and stupid to survive. The representatives of each, sitting around the collective bargaining table, must become—more consciously than ever before—trustees of other people's money, skills and aspirations. It is the committee's earnest belief that this change in moral and psychological climate of collective bargaining is vital, necessary and long overdue."

That admonition, which went unheeded, was responsible in part for the temper of the people last November. No labor legislation offered by the present congress will stand long if it "includes the consumer out."

And if the consumer is protected both management and labor are safe.

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS OF A COLUMNIST-COMMENTATOR

I will try to write and talk as much like a human being as possible.

I won't use any words on paper or on the air I don't use on the street car and I will be sure I know what the words I do use mean.

I will not talk or write down to my audience or up to my news sources.

I will swallow my snorts and coughs and wheezes until I can signal the engineer to cut off the mike.

I will read all my mail and answer it in person if a stamp is enclosed, or on the air or, if there is no other way, in spirit.

BARBS . . . by Baukhage

Political note: There are a lot of new prospective presidents in this country—more babies per thousand population than our first war-baby record month of March, 1918.

All the people exposed to schooling aren't educated. You can lead a man to college, but you can't make him drink of the Pierian spring.

Don't think you know all about the turkey. Spanish colonists shipped wild turkeys to Europe before 1550. They were domesticated and later their offspring were shipped back to the western world and mixed with our wild product. Gracias, senores.

Chiang Kai-shek can't be a dictator. He wants to resign. Real ones seldom get the chance.



LUCKY SEVEN . . . Left to right, front, Barbara Jones, Dawn Rae Dixon; second row, Joyce Erikson, Louise Campbell, Norma Christopher; top, Jean Rogers and Beverly Lobes. These seven students of Pasadena Junior college were chosen as members of the royal court, which included the queen, of the Tournament of Roses, at the annual New Year's Day celebration.



AWARDED SEVEN MEDALS . . . Ex-army T/Sgt. Llewellyn M. Chilson, Akron, O., and Malvern, Pa., who accounted for more than 300 enemy in fighting, is shown with wife and daughter after he had been decorated with seven medals by President Truman.



BLIND GOLFERS HOLD TOURNAMENT . . . Excellent scores were made when blind golfers held their championship meet at Ingleswood, Calif. Left to right, caddy Bruce Schwartz; ex-blind golf champion, C. F. Russell; caddy Billy Fincher, and Marvin Shannon, present champion of the blindmen golfers. They were aided by their caddies in obtaining the proper line and distance to the cup on the putting green, as a guide dog looks on in approval.



MEXICO'S NEW PRESIDENT . . . Newly-installed president of Mexico, Miguel Aleman and Mrs. Aleman are shown as they arrived for the diplomatic reception at the national palace during the inauguration ceremony. Aleman succeeded Gen. Manuel Avila Camacho. Inauguration ceremonies were the most colorful and elaborate in the history of the Republic. Representatives of 23 countries attended the diplomatic reception.



PILOTED ROCKET PLANE . . . Chalmers (Slick) Goodlin, 23, after he piloted Bell XS-1 rocket-powered plane, which in tests at Maroc, Calif., reached a speed of 550 miles per hour. He will later try for record of 1,700 miles per hour.



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DUCHESS SEES QUEEN KISSED . . . The Duchess of Windsor served as judge at "Little Sister Beauty Contest," held at Boys' club, New York. Victoria Dobrowski, chosen queen, is being given a regal kiss by her proud brother, Francis.



TO SWEDISH POST . . . Louis G. Dreyfus Jr., 57, Santa Barbara, Calif., was called recently from New York City to take up his new duties as United States ambassador to Sweden. He was appointed a consular assistant in 1916. He is a careerman.



HUNDRED YEARS OLD . . . Mrs. Maria Busalacchi, Milwaukee, Wis., as she celebrated her 100th birthday anniversary. Nearly 200 relatives attended the birthday party.



ARMY CANCER CURE
WASHINGTON. — Walter Reed General hospital has made some excellent progress in treating cancer, but it's kept such a hush-hush secret that the doctor in charge of cancer research, Lieut. Col. Milton Freedman, is about to be kicked upstairs because of a news leak.

It so happens that the amount of cancer in the army is high—so much so that the number of cases is kept secret. But one whole wing at Walter Reed hospital is devoted to cancer, and Dr. Freedman made so much progress that various editors got wind of what was happening and tried to print the story.

At this point, Surgeon Gen. Norman Kirk stepped in. It was made clear that medical corps policy did not permit mentioning the name of any hospital specialist. Only the surgeon general's office could be mentioned in connection with cancer research.

The cancer specialists didn't particularly mind this policy. But as an aftermath of this, Kirk wants Freedman kicked upstairs to an administrative post, where he would shuffle papers instead of practicing medicine. This Freedman refuses to do.

Meanwhile, doctors criticize Kirk for continuing his wartime policy of wasting medicals. During the war he corralled 40 per cent of the nation's physicians, then let many of them spend about three months sitting idle for every month they devoted to medical practice. Some had so much free time, they even organized softball teams to keep themselves occupied. Many would have stayed on in the army, but were fed up with the regimentation of the surgeon general's office.

NORTH CAROLINA YANKEE
When administration friends approached Max Gardner, former governor of North Carolina, about being U. S. ambassador to the Court of St. James, Gardner replied:

"I've been bowlin' and scrapin' to North Carolinians all my life, and in my old age I'll be darned if I want to be bowlin' to anyone else now."

However, at this difficult period, with British labor kicking over the traces against the British alliance with right-winging, Republican-ent USA, Gardner will make about the best possible choice for American ambassador—whether he puts on knee breeches or not.

State department officials already have warned Gardner that he will have to hire a valet—which will go against the new ambassador's homespun humility. He also will live in Barbara Hutton's ornate former palace, surrounded by about 25 acres of park, featuring a swimming pool in the basement, gold bathroom fixtures and iron bars, worked by pushbuttons, that slide over the windows at night.

But, despite all the folderol, if the British are wise they will know that this astute but humble North Carolina Yankee at the Court of St. James represents the backbone of the USA from the grass roots up, and can speak simply but wholeheartedly for it.

FRIEND OF VETERANS
One interesting thing to watch in the new GOP congress is whether the Republicans carry out the La Follette-Monroney congressional reorganization bill.

Already the whisper is going around capitol cloakrooms that the Republicans will take the increased salary and pension benefits derived from the reorganization bill, but throw overboard provisions for increasing congressional efficiency. Already some Republicans are maneuvering to prevent consolidation of overlapping committees in order to preserve for themselves cushy chairmanships and extra money for clerical hire.

In this connection one important backstage battle is aimed at preventing motherly GOP Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts from becoming chairman of the veterans committee. Mrs. Rogers has been a tireless worker for the veteran and, as ranking Republican on the veterans committee, she automatically should become its chairman. However, because of her long running feud with routin' tootin' John Rankin of Mississippi, several Republicans and Democrats are conspiring to have her passed over.

Fair-minded Joe Martin, the prospective new speaker, has promised Mrs. Rogers that she will get the job, but despite this, the sub-rosa wire-pulling against her continues. If she is passed over, however, Capitol Hill is sure to witness a veterans' march of protest.

CAPITAL CHAFF
So much surplus American war materiel has been sent to the Chinese Nationalists—in clearing off our Pacific islands—that the Chinese are looking for American businessmen to serve as brokers to resell to South America. . . . President Truman has authorized Secretary Byrnes to ask the Republican congress to appropriate 400 million dollars for relief work in Austria, Greece and Italy during 1947. There will be no American money available for relief in Soviet-dominated countries.

Protective Coatings
Phenolic resins serve as interior protective coatings in metal five-gallon containers and drums to protect the metal from attack by the contents of the package. Many kinds of chemicals may be shipped in phenolic-lined containers. Frequently it is more important to keep the chemical free from contamination with iron than it is to keep the iron from being attacked by the chemical. These kit and drum linings are, when properly cured, resistant to organic solvents.

Keep Tree Fresh
An Xmas tree can be kept fresh if you set it up in a pan of water. Cut off the base of the tree at an angle at least one inch above the original cut and keep it standing in water during the entire period that the tree is in the house, adding water to the jar or tub in which the tree stands at intervals to keep the water level always above the cut. This method when used with fresh trees reduces the flammability as effectively as any fireproofing chemicals. Chemicals may cause the tree to turn brown or yellow or to lose its needles. The place you select for your tree should be well away from stoves, radiators and other sources of heat. When you smoke, keep away from the tree.

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