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## Keenan Sounds Political Keynote

By JOSEPH D. KEENAN  
 Director, Labor's League for Political Education  
 On this Labor Day two questions come to mind: (1) How much progress have we made in the last year? (2) How do things look for the year ahead?

We of Labor's League for Political Education have tried to answer those questions as we look back on the first session of the 81st Congress and plan for the 1950 elections.

First, how good—or bad—is the 81st Congress? Do we have sufficient legislative results to show for our hard campaigning in 1948?

Let's look at the record of the Congress:

We finally have adequate housing legislation. Since before World War II liberals have been working for a housing program that would provide good living quarters for persons with low incomes. We also have slum clearance legislation and federal aid to builders. The housing bill is probably the outstanding achievement of the 81st Congress.

The 81st Congress has prevented enactment of even more unfair labor legislation than the Taft-Hartley Act. The conservatives' plan for 1949—should they have won control of Congress and the White House last November—is familiar. They were all set to shift their antiunion drive into high gear.

Although the Taft-Hartley Act has not been repealed, the working men and women of America now have far more friends in Washington than they had two years ago. In 1947 we had only 83 friends in the House. Today we have 212. Two years ago we had 25 friends in the Senate. Today we have 44.

Congress this year has also extended rent controls, continued the

Marshall Plan for another year, provided crop storage facilities for farmers and started government reorganization. Some public power victories have been won. A start has been made toward revision and extension of the Social Security program. Progress has been made on federal aid to education legislation.

So, just a glance at the record of the 81st Congress shows that liberals have come a long way since the 80th Congress. But the record of the present Congress also reveals that we have a lot more work ahead of us.

To get a really progressive working majority in Congress we need to reelect all of our friends and, in addition, elect 15 to 20 more liberals to the House and at least 5 more liberal Senators.

And all of us should be at work on the 1950 campaign. Our enemies have started pouring their millions of dollars in to the 1950 elections. So we must get busy, too, although November 7, 1950, is more than a year away.

Now, what do we do about political education and political action in a year in which there is no election?

Register! If your city has permanent registration, organize a drive to get all members of your union, their families and their friends registered so they can vote in 1950.

If there is no permanent registration in your area, make plans now to register the members of your union, their friends and families when the law permits you to do so.

Trade unionists everywhere should compare their membership rolls with registration lists to see who must be registered. Last year we discovered that frequently half of the members of a local union were not registered. Let's not let that happen again in 1950.

Run contests to spur interest in registration. Have your members write essays or jingles or slogans on the importance of registering and voting. Award prizes for the best entries.

Between elections we also must remind people what is happening in their Congress, in their legislatures, in their city councils and in their county boards. We must tell our neighbors when a Congressman votes against the people. And we also must point out the "right" votes and actions of our representatives.

During the periods between elections we also have to let our Congressmen and Senators and other representatives in state and local bodies know how we feel about their work. A personal letter from a constituent gets attention on Capitol Hill or in a state legislature.

When your Congressman or Senator comes home during the congressional recess, drop in and see him at his local office. He'll be glad to talk with you and get your ideas on what should be done in Washington to help working men and women.

Labor must not only cooperate

with its legislative friends, but it must also work together with other liberal forces in American politics. We must cooperate with farm, teacher, small business, women's and professional groups who realize that this nation can remain strong only as long as its working people are strong.

Finally, we must strengthen our own organizations. We now have an active Labor's League for Political Education in every state. But we need leagues in every city, in every county and in every precinct if we are to get a true liberal majority in Congress next year. We have to organize for political action and education in the same way we have organized for collective bargaining.

So let us remember this on Labor Day, 1949:

Last November 2 was a day of triumph for workers throughout this nation.

But 1948 was only the beginning for Labor's League for Political Education. We must be getting ready for the 1950 elections.

For only through the work and cooperation of every trade unionist in the United States can we turn back once and for all the forces that are threatening the freedom of the working people.

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