



Lane Kirkland, 1922-1999

A venerable labor leader who fought for freedom.

Lane Kirkland, the American labor leader who died in August at the age of 77, was a great American, whose contributions to freedom transcended partisan politics. He will be remembered for his central role in supporting movements that toppled Communist regimes and other tyrannies in the 1980's, and above all, for his support of the Polish trade union Solidarity, whose triumph precipitated the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

As president of the AFL-CIO, the 13-million-member labor movement, Kirkland was an important voice in the domestic policy debate and a spirited opponent of Republicans and conservatives. Yet in his death, Kirkland has been lionized by conservatives and centrists but has been criticized or ignored by much of the left. Because Kirkland was an avowed liberal, this paradox requires explanation. It rests in Kirkland's unique role in the American political firmament.

Kirkland believed in the virtue of a permanent competition between unions and the business community, and asserted that it was the emergence of organized labor that was responsible for the rise of an American middle class. He urged a level playing field for rich and poor. But he also knew the difference between equality of opportunity and equality of results and so rejected the politics of federally imposed racial or ethnic quotas. A child of the New Deal, Kirkland was a liberal anti-

Communist who rejected the excesses of the George McGovern wing of the Democratic Party and the New Left movement that emerged in the 1960's. Together with his mentor George Meany, Kirkland denied McGovern support in his bid for the presidency in 1972, and over the years opposed the various forms of identity politics and political correctness.

These positions earned him the scorn of many on the left, who encouraged and celebrated an insurgency that in 1995 forced him and his successor Thomas Donahue from the leadership of the American labor movement. But even these factors cannot explain the contempt in which Kirkland was held by left-liberals, in particular by the left-wing intellectuals who teach in our universities and opine about labor in the journals of opinion and on our nation's most important op-ed pages.

What reinforced the intellectual left's animosity toward Kirkland was the fact that under his leadership, the AFL-CIO was unrelenting in its opposition to the scourge of Communism and made it a matter of principle to shun and challenge Communism's fellow travelers at home and abroad. Kirkland never wavered from his anti-Communist principles throughout the difficult 1970's, a period in which the nihilism unleashed by extreme voices in the anti-Vietnam war movement made mandatory among many liberals the bashing of U.S. foreign policy and led to the left's romantic embrace of various Marxist and quasi-Marxist Third World movements.

Fashion never moved Kirkland. He understood that the U.S. was in a twilight

struggle against totalitarian Communism and that to win this struggle we must preserve a bipartisan majority in favor of a vigorous and assertive internationalism. This meant exerting his considerable influence within the precincts of the Democratic Party and urging that party to reject accommodation to Communism or isolationism.

Kirkland was a learned and deeply thoughtful man who rejected cant. On issue after issue, his faith in ordinary people and his commitment to the dignity and courage of the "little guy" influenced his view of foreign affairs. Even in the 1970's, when pessimism set in through much of the democratic West as Communist regimes and Soviet client states spread their influence, for Kirkland it was axiomatic that Communism and other forms of tyranny would fall in time. Indeed, over three decades in leadership positions at the AFL-CIO, Kirkland devoted himself to ensuring that there were adequate resources to the task of assisting democratic forces and voices in closed societies.

Whoever examines the seminal causes and institutions of the Cold War era will find Lane Kirkland's imprint.

Kirkland resisted the Nixon Administration's politics of détente, which he (like the neoconservatives) thought provided the USSR with economic support and political legitimacy.

He was among those who played a key role in raising the alarm over deteriorating U.S. defense capabilities in the post-Vietnam years, and worked alongside Paul Nitze, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and Max Kampelman on the Committee on the Present Danger, the bipartisan lobbying group for a strong defense and an assertive U.S. foreign policy.

He keenly understood that a struggle against Communism was being waged

ADRIAN KARATNYCKY is president of Freedom House. In the 1980's he worked in the AFL-CIO's international affairs department and from 1991 until 1993 served as an assistant to Lane Kirkland.

in the developing world, and was a strong advocate of the democratic center in such countries as El Salvador, where he backed the government of Jose Napoleon Duarte, and Nicaragua, where he supported the democratic forces of Violetta Chamorro and the anti-Sandinista democratic labor movement.

Kirkland recognized the central role that the free flow of information could play in undermining closed societies and played a crucial role in building Congressional and administration support for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. Working in tandem with Steve Forbes, he helped ensure bipartisan support for foreign broadcasting at a time during the Gorbachev years when many argued that the Radios were "Cold War relics." He understood that independent U.S.-supported broadcasting was needed to promote democratic values in the wake of the fall of Communism, and pressed to reenergize this crucial arm of U.S. foreign policy. Today U.S.-backed radio is broadcasting into Cuba, China, Serbia, Iraq, and other regions in which hatred and oppression temporarily hold the upper hand.

Early on, in the 1970's, Kirkland threw his weight behind the dissident movement in Russia, Ukraine, and the Baltic states, and reached out to such eminent human rights advocates as Andrei Sakharov, Vladimir Bukovsky, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, all of whom were honored at the AFL-CIO. Later, he offered the AFL-CIO's technical and material assistance to coal miners and other workers in the former USSR, whose protests in the late 1980's accelerated the disintegration of the USSR.

Kirkland was not a one-dimensional anti-Communist. He recognized that the promotion of democratic values and democratic movements around the world was in the best interests of the U.S. and of global peace and stability. Toward that end, he supported democratic movements in Chile, South Africa, South Korea, and the Philippines. He knew that the world was in the midst of a major transition to democracy and so became a vocal advocate for the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy as

an instrument to assist in this process. And he became an important voice in making the promotion of democracy a central tenet of U.S. foreign policy, a position that, in time, was reflected in both the Republican and Democratic platforms.

Under Kirkland, throughout the 1980's the AFL-CIO was involved in providing the lion's share of clandestine assistance to the Solidarity trade union while it operated underground. This assistance took the form of printing presses, mimeograph machines, computers, and funds to support strikes and activists in the network of underground publishing and organized resistance that ended in 1989 with the union's triumphant reemergence. And once Solidarity had resurfaced and was due to challenge the Communists in elections, Kirkland provided crucial financial assistance to help launch the union's election effort, which culminated in time with the election of Kirkland's friend Lech Walesa as Poland's president.

After Communist regimes fell in Central and Eastern Europe, Kirkland was disappointed in the feeble response of the Bush Administration and the then-Democratic Congress. He made his way to Capitol Hill, where he pressed Lee Hamilton, David Obey, and other congressional leaders to develop a major aid program to Poland, Hungary, and other Central European states. With equal vigor, he nudged his longtime friend from the State Department, Lawrence Eagleburger, to dramatically expand assistance to the emerging market economies and democratic systems in the region.

When in 1990 we visited the Warsaw grave of Father Jerzy Popieluszko, the

legendary anti-Communist priest murdered by Communist authorities in 1984, Kirkland was told by a clergyman that the martyred Polish priest had "prayed at morning mass for Pope John Paul II, for Lech Walesa, for Solidarity, and for Lane

Kirkland and the American labor movement." This, in the end, was the type of accolade that Lane Kirkland valued most.

The range of leaders who attended his funeral at Arlington National Cemetery (he served in the Merchant Marine delivering war materiel to zones of combat during the Second World War) is testimony to his impact. Coming to pay homage along with labor

leaders and representatives of the diplomatic corps were Alan Greenspan, George Will, Lally Weymouth, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Henry Kissinger, Alexander Haig, Madeleine Albright, Paul Wolfowitz, and Brent Scowcroft.

Kirkland's wide array of friends across the political spectrum was a tribute to his charismatic personality and sharp intellect. It also reflected a style of politics that regrettably is in steep decline. Today's conservatives and liberals debate one another, but they rarely speak to each other. Kirkland knew the importance of searching for consensus in our foreign and defense policies. His attitude embodied a patriotic centrism which recognized that deep differences on domestic policy issues must not stand in the way of bipartisan agreement when it comes to peace, security, and the promotion of democracy. The passing of this great man should serve as a wake-up call to succeeding generations about the need to preserve bipartisanship on issues that stand at the core of our well-being and security. ❧



PHOTO: AP/WIDE WORLD



by Grover G. Norquist

Serious About Taxes

Tax cuts are a GOP winner, and Democrats know it.

Ronald Reagan won the 1980 election when he convinced voters that the question they should ask themselves in the polling booth was: "Are you better off than you were four years ago?"

The 1984 and 1988 elections both centered on the question: "Should America continue Reagan's policies, or should we return to liberal policies on taxes and foreign policy?"

House Speaker Denny Hastert and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott want to frame the November 2000 elections on whether the surplus means Washington should spend more money or Americans should get tax relief.

To this end, on August 5 the House and Senate passed legislation to reduce federal taxes by \$792 billion over the next ten years. The bill phases out the death tax, cuts the capital gains tax, expands allowable Individual Retirement Account contributions from \$2,000 to \$5,000, cuts every marginal tax rate by 1 percent, and eliminates the marriage penalty tax.

House and Senate leaders then did a very interesting thing. They didn't send the tax cut legislation down to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue and give Bill Clinton a photo opportunity to veto the bill. Instead, they announced they would "enroll" the legislation when they returned from the August recess one month later. Only then would the legislation be presented to the president for his signature or veto.

And throughout August, Republican leaders organized a full court press to build public support for the tax cut.

GROVER G. NORQUIST is *president of Americans for Tax Reform.*

When Republicans last spring decided to design a serious tax cut and use it to drive policy through the November 2000 elections, there were three possible outcomes. First, Republicans could fail to pass a significant tax cut. This was their fate in 1998, when the House passed a small cut—\$98 billion over five years—and the Senate refused even to vote on it. Republicans thus went before voters last fall with no tax-cut message. New York Sen. Alfonse D'Amato for one feared that his opponent would attack any vote for lower taxes as endangering Social Security. (He wound up costing Republicans the tax issue and himself a Senate seat.)

To defuse Democratic charges that a tax cut would endanger Social Security or Medicare, Republicans this year came up with the "lock box" strategy to pass legislation that would "lock" away all Social Security tax payments and pay down the national debt. The tax-cut would come from income tax overpayments over the next ten years. In his State of the Union address last January, Clinton called for no tax cuts for 15 years, claiming he wanted to use all the surplus to pay down the debt. By this he meant he wanted to avoid a tax cut and leave the surplus to be spent in Washington. Four times Republicans have forced a vote in the Senate on the lock box protection for Social Security. Four times Democratic senators have filibustered—voting against protecting Social Security. At a White House meeting, Clinton was forced to promise Republicans that he would make Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle pass the lock box. Republicans had become the defenders of Social Security, and Congress was simply debating whether the income-

tax surplus was to be returned to taxpayers or spent by politicians.

Still it required a struggle to pass the cut. In the House, Republicans lost four of their own: Constance Morella, Greg Ganske, Jack Quinn, and Mike Castle. But they also gained five Democratic votes: Virgil Goode, Ralph Hall, Gary Condit, Pat Danner, and Ken Lucas. In the Senate, the final vote was only 50-49, with all Democrats joined by Ohio's George Voinovich, Maine's Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe, and Pennsylvania's Arlen Specter. (Idaho's Michael Crapo, who supported the tax cut, was absent.) At noon the day of the vote, Senate leaders worried John McCain might come out against the cut as his ticket to liberal approbation and a seat on that weekend's television talk shows.

The success in getting almost all the Republicans in the House and Senate to pass a specific tax cut that will shape the 2000 election dwarfs the accomplishments of 1994's Contract With America. GOP senators had refused to endorse the contract, which was only a promise to hold votes on ten issues if Republicans won the House. By contrast, the vote on the 1999 tax bill was a real vote with billions of dollars at stake. House Ways and Means chairman Bill Archer and Senate Finance chairman Bill Roth had each spent six months designing his perfect tax-cut package. Archer's legislation cut income taxes ten percent across the board. Roth devoted more of the tax cut to expanding IRAs and other personal savings vehicles. Then in just two days, Roth and Archer, working with Hastert and Lott, were able to write a joint House-Senate tax cut—the largest since 1981—that passed both houses.

Having avoided the failure of 1998, Republicans will now follow one of two strategies. In 1995 and 1996 the model was to send welfare-reform legislation