

Labor's tough line on defense, dissidents and nukes

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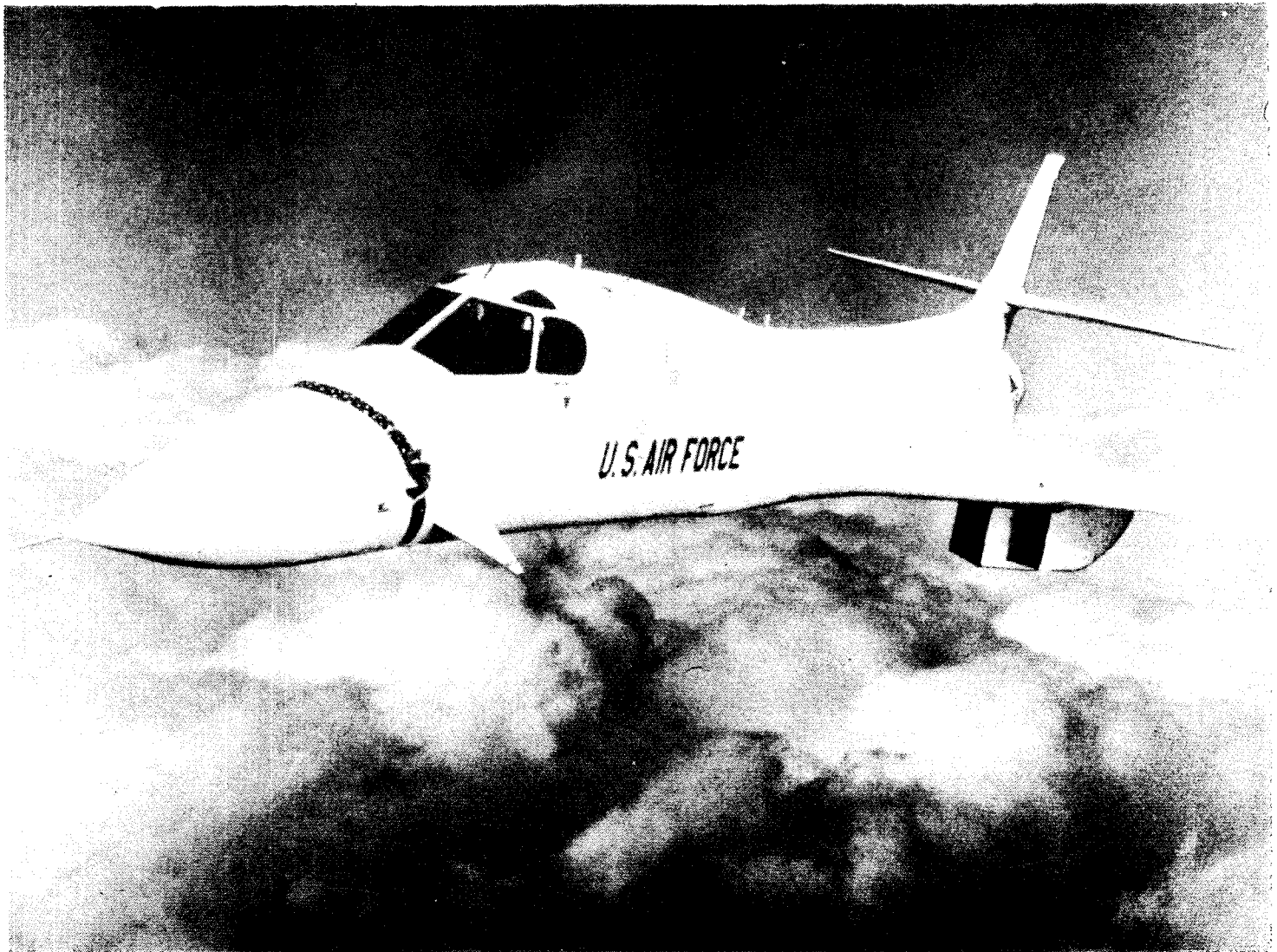
In addition to outlining future legislative goals, the Bal Harbour AFL-CIO Executive Council meeting reaffirmed support for increased defense spending, further development of nuclear power and the rights of dissidents in the Soviet Union. On these issues, Cold War ideology and concern for the immediate jobs of union members took precedence over other considerations.

Prominent union leaders have been actively involved in the Committee on the Present Danger, a 141-member organization that views the Soviet Union as "the principal threat to our nation, to world peace, and to the cause of human freedom..." The committee proposes higher levels of defense spending so that the U.S. will regain a "stable balance of forces" with the Soviets, the only "strong foundation" for American diplomacy. Committee members sitting on the AFL-CIO Executive Council include Lane Kirkland, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer, Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and Sol Chaikin of the International Ladies Garment Workers (ILGWU).

►The B-1 essential.

In accord with this Cold War outlook, the Executive Council backed full funding for the B-1 bomber program, widely criticized as expensive, unnecessary and of marginal security value. "We believe the B-1 program is essential if the United States is to have the best possible bargaining position" in arms limitation talks, the AFL-CIO said. They stressed that their support was not based on job creation, since "similar expenditures in other areas could provide as many and perhaps even more jobs."

Within the Executive Council, however, the vote did not go as smoothly as Meany had expected. One member tried to table the resolution and six others voted against it. This is quite unusual because Meany seldom makes proposals unless he is certain they will pass unanimously. Observers speculate that the no votes included A.F. Grospiron of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW),



The Executive Council backed full funding for the B-1 bomber program, stressing that it was not because of the jobs involved but because of the national security question.

Jerry Wurf of Municipal Workers (AFSCME), and Glenn Watts of the Communications Workers (CWA).

"The vote on the Executive Council about the B-1 may be the beginning of something significant. The turnover in the leadership of some unions may turn things around," comments one former union staff member. He believes—despite statements to the contrary—that labor's defense policy flows from the union leaders' concern for jobs and that those who differ with Meany's anti-communist politics would still approve more defense spending.

►Support for Soviet dissidents and nuclear power.

The Executive Council also denounced human rights violations in the Soviet Union and welcomed Vladimir Bukovsky, a recently-exiled Soviet dissident, to the Bal Harbour meeting. Bukovsky applauded U.S. labor unions for defending human rights as far back as 1947, when they "collected the testimonies of a great many

former Soviet political prisoners and published the first map of Gulag Archipelago." Meany hopes to sponsor visits by Bukovsky to other trade union centers.

AFL-CIO leaders also discussed environmental issues in Bal Harbour and backed the construction of more nuclear power plants. They expect the future construction of these plants to generate 700,000 jobs by the year 2000. Assailing the safe nuclear power movement for its "no-growth" philosophy, union leaders worked against nuclear safe-guard initiatives across the country last November.

Ironically, critics of nuclear power have pointed out that it is a relatively capital-intensive industry that employs mostly skilled technicians. One study found that 40 percent more jobs would be created in the construction of coal-fired plants.

Ignoring economic difficulties facing nuclear power, (like the spiraling cost of uranium) and widespread revelations about the dangers of nuclear waste, the Executive Council called for speedy de-

velopment of nuclear power to meet future energy needs and lessen U.S. dependence on oil from the Middle East.

Ralph Helstein, President Emeritus of the Packinghouse Workers, also believes that labor policies on defense and energy flow from leaders' concern for their members' jobs. "There are no simplistic answers on why these people do it," he says.

"Part of the difficulty with these kinds of questions is that people who object to the enlargement of armaments or certain attitudes on ecology, have little regard for where the jobs that are presently provided are going to come from."

"There's no question that Meany's orientation has generally been that of a cold warrior on most questions, and continues to be. A few negative votes on the B-1 is not proof that the Executive Council is beginning to open up on foreign policy. There has to be the support in the country for the kinds of programs that make sure people have jobs."

—Dan Marshall

Labor sets its agenda at Bal Harbour meeting

For Northern Republicans, support for right-to-work laws means support for runaway shops.

Continued from page 3.

of New Jersey, this year's bill deletes the wage stabilization part.

But construction union leaders like Robert Georgine, head of the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Dept., reportedly support the stabilization provision although they cannot publicly back such restrictions on the power of feisty, independent-minded locals. *Business Week* speculates that union leaders are depending on Ray Marshall, the new Secretary of Labor, to propose the stabilization provision as the price of administration sup-

port. In any event, the bill is expected to emerge from congressional committee in exactly the same form as last year.

Other parts of this "unfinished business" include removal of Hatch Act restrictions on the political activity of public employees, a requirement that 30 percent of all imported oil be carried on U.S. ships and federal regulation of strip mining.

►Repeal of 14(b).

The AFL-CIO will also push for reform of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). At the Bal Harbour meeting, they decided to support an "omnibus bill" that combines changes in Board procedures with repeal of section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act. This bill will supersede Frank Thompson's Labor Reform Act of 1977 (ITT, Feb. 9).

Section 14(b) allows states to pass right-to-work laws and undercuts union security. Its repeal has not been strongly pushed by the AFL-CIO since the mid-1960s, when their effort was filibustered to death in the Senate. Organizations like the Na-

tional Right to Work Committee are gearing up to defeat repeal and some observers say that the demand may be dropped in exchange for passage of the rest of the omnibus bill.

There are some indications, however, that prospects for repeal of 14(b) are better than ever and that there may actually be a sharp fight over it. Ray Marshall supported such a change in Senate confirmation hearings and Carter has promised to sign it into law if it passes the Congress. Within the labor movement, pressure for repeal is especially strong from service employee unions that represent workers in many small workplaces. Right-to-work laws make it difficult for them to hold on to new members, since the ban on the union shop allows workers to refuse to pay union dues. If the AFL-CIO dumps the demand, they could catch a lot of flack from these influential quickly-growing unions.

►Republicans reassessing right-to-work.

In addition, some Republican politicians

are beginning to reassess their past anti-labor records. Rep. Robert Michel of Illinois recently told his GOP colleagues that they ought to take a "fresh look" at voting against repeal of 14(b) this time around. Conservative columnists Evans and Novak point out that northern Republicans who support the right-to-work just encourage business to move from their home states to the overwhelmingly Democratic South. With organized labor "splitting into clear right and left factions," they argue that "Republicans must take some pro-union positions, even at the cost of a scruple or two."

These are some of the highlights of the AFL-CIO legislative program as it emerged from Bal Harbour. The union leaders will also demand reforms in the Fair Labor Standards Act, including a 35-hour week and a higher minimum wage indexed to the cost of living. Other demands include expanding federal aid to mass transit, prohibiting discrimination against pregnant women and removing the barriers to voter participation. ■

WOMEN



The takeover of a building by the women's movement in 1971. The FBI was certainly there.

Photo by Jane Melnick

The FBI campaign against women

By Sidney Blumenthal

Protecting national security often requires extraordinary measures. A 1969 FBI memorandum to J. Edgar Hoover details in concise, business-like language the report of an informer: "[Name deleted] states that at 10:50 a.m. one old-model gray charter bus with no name on it but containing telephone number GO3-4352 on the side, departed Union Square, NYC, with about 35 to 38 girls for the WLM activity at Atlantic City. A new black foreign-type station wagon believed to be a Volkswagen departed at the same time as the bus with four girls." Everything about this case seems ominous; even the identity of the Volkswagen is mysterious. Yet the suspects surveilled by the FBI did not hide their mission; they advertised it, painting a phone number on their bus.

The girls in question were feminists traveling to the Miss America Pageant to walk the Atlantic City boardwalk with picket signs. Since the 1968 feminist demonstration at the Miss America Pageant, in which brassiers were flung into a trash barrel, the FBI was alerted to potential disruption of this national spectacle. For the next three years, through 1971, the Bureau's agents manned the Atlantic City boardwalk and convention hall, on the lookout for "WLM activity"—that is, the Women's Liberation Movement.

►Four years of spying.

For four years, from 1969 to 1973, the FBI infiltrated, spied on and analyzed many manifestations of what the Bureau called the "WLM," according to documents released under the freedom of information Act at the request of the *Los Angeles Times*. The 1,370 pages of FBI documents, replete with glaring omissions, disclose for the first time the extent of FBI espionage carried on against feminists.

The FBI comprehensively monitored feminist activity, collecting pamphlets such as "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" and newspapers of the most ephemeral, peripheral groups. Federal agents attended countless rallies, recording names of individuals, taking photographs and making notes from the speeches. Women's groups from the large National Organization of Women to the obscure New York WITCH (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy From Hell), were regarded as equal menaces and were subject to FBI spying.

Most of the FBI's efforts occurred in major cities—Boston, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Kansas City—but feminist groups in towns like Limerick, Oregon, were not overlooked.

Justifying the FBI surveillance of the women's movement, Hoover wrote: "Interwoven in its goals for equal rights for women is the advocacy of violence to achieve these goals."

In justifying his order to FBI bureaus to maintain strict "WLM" watches, J. Edgar Hoover wrote in May, 1970: "The WLM emerged as a loosely structured but nationwide feminine activist movement comprised of women ranging from liberal to radical extremism. Interwoven in its goals for equal rights for women is the advocacy of violence to achieve these goals. The WLM has demonstrated readiness to support other extremist or revolutionary-type organizations and has established ties with Canadian counterparts."

This reference to foreign links aroused Hoover's keen sense of conspiracy. "In view of the above," he wrote, "it is absolutely essential that we conduct sufficient investigation to clearly establish subversive ramifications of the WLM and to determine the potential for violence presented by this movement as well as any possible threat to the internal security of the United States."

►Not all offices believed. Despite Hoover's demand that his agents uncover violent plots there is not a single one documented in the reams of FBI materials.

Not all of the FBI's bureaus believed, along with Hoover, that the feminist movement fit the subversive mold. The San Francisco and Chicago offices asked Hoover that they be dropped from the "WLM" intelligence program. An agent in the Chicago bureau explained, "The

however, did not agree with this assessment and directed that the program against the "WLM" proceed immediately.

The San Francisco FBI office took a different tack. Rather than presenting a security challenge to America, it argued, feminists threatened to disrupt the fragile structure of the New Left. "The Women's Liberation Movement," an agent from that bureau wrote to Hoover, "may be considered as subversive to the New Left and revolutionary movements, as it has proven to be a divisive and factionizing factor. The women question is consuming more and more time and discussion as the precepts and premises of this movement are psychological and introspective. It could be well-recommended as a counterintelligence movement."

►A one-dimensional conspiracy mindset.

This analysis did not jive with Hoover's notion of social movements, which he conceived as fitting a one-dimensional traitorous pattern. The FBI Director was unprepared to abandon ideas he had operated on since the Red Scare of 1919, the real break in his career. He observed the antique dogma about the Communist menace religiously.

In 1970 a group called D.C. Women's Liberation pasted a poster on the walls of the then unfinished FBI building now named after J. Edgar Hoover, which was addressed as "An Open Letter to Martha Mitchell." The outspoken wife of Attorney General John Mitchell had informed a Washington newspaper, "I think I'm going to join the women's lib-

eration movement. As a woman, I have a right to speak up and be heard." Feminists advised her that the movement was ready to welcome her, but warned that she might eventually alter her views about her husband, a position that Martha Mitchell unhappily arrived at later under difficult circumstances.

Diligent FBI agents scraped the poster off of their future headquarters and forwarded it to Hoover, who promptly sent it to John Mitchell with a letter expounding on the irrefutable ties between Women's Liberation and the Kremlin.

"Enclosed is a copy of a flyer obtained by a representative of this Bureau," he wrote, explaining that "WLM" originated around 1965, citing the *Washington Star* as his source. One of the movement's founders, he noted, was Marilyn Webb, then a member of Students for a Democratic Society and Washington correspondent for the *Guardian*, a radical weekly. The 1961 *Guide to Subversive Organizations and Publications* issued by the House Committee on Un-American Activities identified the *Guardian* as the official organ established by the American Labor Party (the New York wing of the Progressive Party) in 1947. "It has manifested itself," Hoover triumphantly wrote to Mitchell, "as a virtual official propaganda arm of Soviet Russia." Hoover's logic was undeniable; only his facts were wrong. By 1961 the Progressive Party had long been out of existence and the *Guardian* was an independent publication with no allegiance to any organization.

The quality of J. Edgar Hoover's understanding of the Women's Liberation Movement was replicated by many of the FBI agents who spied on feminist meetings. One agent transmitted a report to his bureau noting the distribution of a pamphlet at a gathering about a strange substance, which he called "sex rolls." It was because of the potential danger of these unpredictable new "rolls" that the FBI was on guard.

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