

NM SPOTLIGHT

Lewis Still Waits

PERHAPS the most significant thing one may say about the AFL Executive Council meeting last week is that John L. Lewis is not in. Not yet. And perhaps he may never be. This fact dominated the sessions; it jolted Big Bill Hutcheson and Matthew Woll, Herbert Hoover's men of labor. Not to mention David Dubinsky, godfather of the move to bring Lewis back into the AFL tent where he could do his damndest to swing labor away from President Roosevelt.

It worked—the energetic pressure of wide circles within the Federation, as well as public opinion generally. For the mass of people didn't cotton to the notion that the nation's good would be served by Lewis' return—and there were plenty of evidences of active popular disfavor. By unanimous vote the Council agreed to submit the Lewis issue "without recommendation" to the Boston convention in early October.

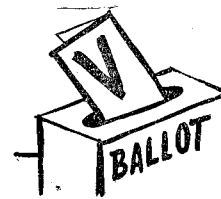
The decision to delay UMW reentry, according to William Green, resulted from "technicalities"—which means (1) the jurisdictional issues arising from Lewis' District 50, that polyglot setup busily engaged in poaching on other unions' preserves, and (2) the question of the Progressive Mine Workers, which received a charter from the AFL after the UMW left the Federation. The PMW, which claims 35,000 members, contends that it has jurisdiction over all coal miners in the country and insists that Lewis' union can return to the AFL only through its doorway. Naturally that created some big headaches, but, most observers think, not big enough to be the real reason for denying Lewis at this point. After all the Progressive Miners are but 35,000 compared to the UMW's 500,000. The practiced parliamentarians in AFL top circles would have found means to bypass the technicalities had they so desired. Obviously, they did not—not at this time anyway. It was the better part of judgment, observers say, for the AFL leaders to play a waiting game to see how the winds blow around October. And it is felt that Lewis' reentry will depend upon the war issues and John L.'s defeatist role the next few months. If public and labor pressure is not relaxed, but increased, Lewis most likely will fail to have his way. Which is a triumph for America. Another positive result of the meeting was the declaration that the AFL would not be bamboozled by the Smith-

Connally act into repudiating its no-strike pledge. In view of the fact that Lewis' District 50 is busily engaged in promoting strikes under the act's aegis, the Council's position is all the more significant. It constitutes a direct rebuff to the Lewis position on strikes. The Council, furthermore, endorsed wage and price stabilization, subsidies, and the roll-back. This, too, ran counter to John L.'s liking. When you consider all these factors you may conclude that the Council was, in these actions, reflecting the win-the-war spirit of its 5,000,000 members, a spirit most of the top AFL leaders share in varying degrees. But unfortunately old habits of thinking persist.

They persisted in the rejection of Sidney Hillman's proposal, on behalf of the CIO Political Action Committee, for cooperation. Green reaffirmed the Council's traditional policy "to oppose our enemies and support our friends, regardless of political affiliation." But he feared "entanglement" with other committees, "appointed by other organizations." It might "jeopardize the success of our nonpartisan policies." Obviously Hutcheson and Woll, stumping for defeatist politicians, don't want "entanglements" with the other great wing of labor which seeks to strengthen FDR's position. Green did indicate that the CIO and AFL committee would frequently follow the same course of action in the case of specific candidates. Undoubtedly political cooperation on a local and state scale already exists in many areas. And no doubt it will be strengthened as the 1944 political campaign swings into action, speeded by the war's exigencies.

SHOCKING, however, was the Council's stand on repeal or modification of the insulting Chinese Exclusion Act. Most Americans feel that this act runs counter to United Nations spirit and that it violates our growing friendship for our allies. But the Council felt otherwise. It reiterated its traditional position against repeal or modification. Green's comment, "A Chinaman is always a Chinaman," not only shocked Americans, but will certainly win no friends for us in that great country which is holding out against our common enemy in the Pacific. Old prejudices die hard, evidently, with AFL leaders; this one should certainly draw the fire from millions of AFL rank and file. They haven't reflected this chauvinistic attitude in their passionate desire to see the United Nations win. And in their admiration for the heroism of our Chinese allies.

Moral of the ALP Primaries



LIBERALS who threw their weight behind the Dubinsky-controlled slate of the American Labor Party should do some straight thinking now that the official returns of the New York primaries are in. The majority of ALP enrolled members repudiated the right wing slate. Dubinsky has lost in Brooklyn, the most hotly contested county of the balloting. He lost in Manhattan, of course, where the progressives strengthened their leadership by receiving more than seventy-five percent of the votes cast; this compares with sixty percent in the elections two years ago. Even in the Bronx, the Dubinsky stronghold, the "right wing" carried only by a small majority. The contest for county committees centered about these three areas; the Progressives have won a resounding victory. And they did so after the Dubinsky-Social Democratic group, which controlled the ALP state committee, had waged a furious campaign, had enlisted every commercial newspaper in the city. Even the *Nation* and *New Republic* carried heated pro-Dubinsky editorials. *PM* and the *New York Post* ran Red-baiting "news stories" that at times crowded the war cables off the page. Dubinsky's men poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into the campaign, took to the airwaves practically every day the week before the primaries. They even tried coercion against unionists. Yet Dubinsky lost. Why?

Herein lies the moral. The red herring has lost its savor. The Dubinsky crowd had only one plank in the campaign—the issue of "Communist control." The voters rejected that issue. They would not believe that the Communists plotted to control the ALP but they did believe that the Progressives wanted to extend the ALP base to include all trade unions. The voters drew some canny conclusions when they observed Progressive endorsement of the Sidney Hillman proposal to restore the ALP to organized labor; that didn't sound like "Communist control" to them. And the voters took sufficient cognizance of Dubinsky's clamorous silence at Mr. Hillman's proposals. The voters rejected the high pressure Red-baiting campaign, figured the truth out for themselves. This they believed to be the real issue: unity of the party behind the President's win-the-war program.