

# UMW Leader Calls For Probe Of Mineworkers Health And Pension Funds

Two weeks ago, former UMW Vice President Mike Trbovich issued a statement calling for an "immediate full investigation" of what he termed "the systematic destruction" of the United Mineworkers health and pension funds at the hands of former associate trustee and Institute for Policy Studies lawyer, Harry Huge. Trbovich has since called on the President or other national government officials to call for such an investigation to "help show mineworkers their good faith and aid in their good faith to get the contract ratified..."

*The following are excerpted from articles appearing in the Cincinnati Enquirer on March 10 and March 11.*

## *Ex-UMW Aide Sees Health Fund Fraud*

Mike Trbovich, former international vice president of the United Mine Workers (UMW), says he would "stake his life" that an investigation of the union's health and retirement fund would uncover fraud.

"I think the Congress and President Carter are not showing respect to the coal miners by ignoring their main problem — which is the health and retirement fund,"

"The President should appoint a fact-finding commission, or ask Congress to investigate the fund. Should this happen, I would stake my life that they would find fraud."

Trbovich, who was the No. 2 man in the union under President Arnold Miller for five years (1972-77), spoke in an interview by telephone from his Clarksville, Pa., home.

"In the minutes of executive board meetings, there is evidence of such fraud," he said. "Some clinics, some doctors, some hospitals have been ripping the union off. Drug firms have been having a ball. Money has been going to people who don't even belong to our union."

For nearly 30 years, before July, 1977, — when the 1950 health trust was declared nearly bankrupt — miners received free health care. The money for this came from royalties paid by coal operators, based on tonnage and man hours, Trbovich said.

While in office, Trbovich said, "I asked for two investigations. I started to raise hell. So the union president (Miller) decided to send me out West."

About \$2 billion went into the health and retirement fund under the 1974 contract, Trbovich said. "Now everybody is talking about the wildcat strike situation, but what the people don't understand is that the wildcats caused a loss of about 5% of that money. That is not enough to bankrupt the fund.

"Yet, it is bankrupt, and the union is broke.

"I will give you a personal example," Trbovich said. "I had a brother-in-law (a miner) with ulcers. He went to a

doctor, and was given a supply of medicine for a week.

"Then a drug firm started sending him medicine. He couldn't make them stop. Finally, he had almost a wheelbarrow full, and had to dump it. The UMW was paying for all this.

"You have construction workers in West Virginia, people who work for paving companies in Virginia, carrying UMW hospital cards. Maybe they worked in the mines years ago. When they left, they just kept their cards.

"That's why the fund is broke..."

## *Gradison After UMW Fund Probe*

Rep. Willis D. Gradison Jr. (R.-Ohio) plans to ask Labor Secretary Ray Marshall for an immediate investigation of the United Mine Workers (UMW) health and retirement fund, based on allegations of a former UMW vice president.

Mike Trbovich, who said in an *Enquirer* story that people have been stealing from the fund, added Friday, "I am ready and willing to back up my statements. I fought those thieves for four years."

Trbovich was the international vice president of the UMW — the No. 2 man in the union — for five years, 1972 to 1977. In an interview earlier this week, he said that he would "stake his life" that an investigation of the health and retirement fund would uncover fraud.

Gradison, in a letter that will be sent to Labor Secretary Marshall Monday, said:

"The enclosed article from *The Enquirer* brought to my attention the charge that there is evidence of fraud in the United Mine Workers health and retirement fund.

"The charge has been made by Mike Trbovich, former international vice president of the UMW.

"The seriousness of the charge and its possible effect upon the current strike negotiations are matters of grave concern to me. I would like to request an immediate investigation of the issues raised by Mr. Trbovich by your department, with the assistance of the Department of Justice, if necessary.

"If fraudulent activities involving the UMW health and retirement funds have taken place, there must be swift and thorough action . . ."

In the interview, Trbovich asked for an investigation by Congress or by some sort of fact-finding commission.

He said that while he was in office, he asked twice for investigations, and was ignored.

The major reason the coal strike is still on, Trbovich said, is the health and retirement issue.

"I will bring 80,000 miners, or retired miners, to Washington if they want them," Trbovich said Friday. "I am willing to go all the way."