

LABOR PERISCOPE

Turning a retreat into a rout

The AFL-CIO Executive Council convened for its summer meeting in Chicago last week and quietly decided to abandon its priority commitment to nuclear power development in the United States.

While the media focused on other components of the federation's lengthy energy policy statement, the key portions were contained in a subtle but devastating change of direction on nuclear power. Al Zack, Sr., the longtime AFL-CIO public relations director, told a reporter: "Since the Three Mile Island incident, we have had to redefine our support of nuclear energy. People are afraid. ... We can no longer support nuclear energy until it has regained the full confidence and support of the public."

Zack, in a marked departure from previous AFL-CIO policy, tied future labor support for nuclear power to "meeting stringent environmental and safety standards" and claimed that such standards were not being met. Describing the impact of this thinking on overall federation energy policy, Zack stated that the AFL-CIO "no longer could view nuclear energy as a priority solution to either the nation's energy requirement or as a source of jobs for AFL-CIO members."

The 35-odd members of the executive council unanimously approved this new position.

While some observers may be shocked by this turn of events they have been cooking for some time. The principal chef of the new, proenvironmentalist energy plan is AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Lane Kirkland, the Council on Foreign Relations member who is

the heir apparent to enfeebled 84-year-old president George Meany. Kirkland presided over last week's council meeting in Meany's absence, but the energy policy was drafted far from Chicago, in the back rooms of the White House and the policy chambers of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York.

Kirkland is known to have been conferring with such circles over the last several weeks, including during his trip up the mountain to Camp David during the President's recent near two-week recluse. He is said to have promised Carter full support for his Nazi-modeled energy program.

And according to sources inside the AFL-CIO, it is Lane Kirkland who has been single-handedly moving within the labor federation to stymie and otherwise nix proposals from AFL-CIO leaders—especially those in the building trades—for a full scale offensive for nuclear power. Kirkland has had a great deal of outside help in these efforts from CFR-dominated circles in the nuclear industry. Sources have identified Roger Sherman, the chairman of the Atomic Industrial Forum as playing a leading role in this

pillars of the nuclear industry have conducted what amounts to brainwashing sessions with Building Trades and other AFL-CIO leaders convincing them to "lay low" in the wake of an alleged "post Three Mile Island" public backlash against nuclear power. Every request by union leaders for joint industry-labor pronuclear action has been either stonewalled

or "put off into the far distant future."

Kirkland has also made use of the environmentalist "Kennedy" wing of the AFL-CIO, headed by the Machinists' William Winpinger, to sell his "compromise." He fields his new energy plan as a compromise between "factions" in the AFL-CIO, pushing the Kennedy-backed scheme to nationalize the oil companies and environmental concerns, but stopping short of outright denunciation of nuclear power.

It is this "inside-outside" operation which is key to rendering the AFL-CIO impotent on the energy issue.

Just how far this suicidal malaise has gone within the AFL-CIO leadership, is shown by the strange actions of Building Trades Department head, Robert Georgine. The Building Trades leader, under counsel from Kirkland, has fired off a letter to utility executives which makes labor support for nuclear power contingent on an end to the attacks on the Davis Bacon Act. Georgine ignores the fact that the anti-Davis Bacon people within the utilities industry are manipulated and controlled by networks associated with the Heritage Foundation and similar organizations. Choosing to make an undifferentiated attack, he is walking into a self-defeating trap.

There are already reports of sentiment against the action of the council coming from Building Trades and other leaders on the East Coast. Next week, when the policy begins to circulate, there is certain to be more trouble.

Kirkland, acting under orders from the same CFR crowd trying to rig the 1980 presidential contest for General Alexander Haig, may be overplaying his hand.

—L. Wolfe