

LABOR PERISCOPE

Taking a bull by the horns

The national leadership of the Teamsters union has taken the first steps in a campaign that could end, once and for all, the violent, chaotic disruptions of the nation's transportation system by "independent truckers strikes."

In a strongly worded statement issued early last month, Teamster General President Frank Fitzsimmons demanded that Congress immediately place all unregulated sectors of the trucking industry under full government regulation. Fitzsimmons charged that the unregulated trucking industry is in "a state of total disarray" and that the independent truckers hauling exempt commodities are getting the worst of it.

"Responsible independents are pleading for regulation to a deaf Interstate Commerce Commission" (which regulates the trucking industry), Fitzsimmons stated. "Because of a lack of regulation and union representation the nonunion independent truckers are going broke." Instead, he said, independents are left with no organization or spokesman to represent their needs.

Once the exempt commodities are brought under ICC regulation, the independent truckers can be brought under the umbrella of the Teamsters union, where their legitimate grievances can be dealt with without violent strikes.

There are already more than

20,000 independents hauling regulated commodities who have chosen to be members of the Teamsters. The Teamsters are now saying that rather than less regulation, as the Carter administration and Senator Edward Kennedy jointly propose, the trucking industry, including the "independents," is in crying need of more regulation.

A soon-to-be-released study on trucking deregulation commissioned by 1980 presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche strongly supports Fitzsimmons' findings. The study locates the nonregulated sector of the trucking industry and the independents as a weak link in an otherwise highly efficient transportation system.

The study finds that the Teamsters are the single most important positive regulator of the trucking industry. Under the National Master Freight Agreement, the Teamsters effectively set standards for safety while guaranteeing the standard of living necessary for truck drivers who are the most productive in the world. This in turn forces the trucking industry to stay modern and competitive.

The union, together with ICC regulations, guarantees the profitability of the industry and protects it from cut-throat competition.

The independent truckers, es-

pecially those who haul exempt commodities, exist outside this system; they represent a battering ram against the regulated sector.

The independents are periodically deployed by agents of the Kennedy machine such as Mike Parkhurst of *Overdrive* magazine, for violent shutdowns which threaten the entire economy. Last month's "strike" is a vivid example of such a deployment. One industry source described the independents as "like a herd of cattle who are easily stampeded in one direction or another...."

If Kennedy has his way—as the LaRouche report shows—the highways will be turned over to hordes of independents. The Teamsters union will be busted, safety and wage standards will become a thing of the past. Using the computerized economic model developed by LaRouche, the cost of deregulation was calculated: \$500 billion in lost production in less than five years, more than 3,000 additional highway fatalities a year—a social cost greater than the Vietnam War.

Teamster President Fitzsimmons is aware of these consequences. "Direct action, violence and periodic shutdowns will become the rule if Congress votes for deregulation," warned Fitzsimmons. "The chaos we are now witnessing in some areas will become a national disaster."

—L. Wolfe