

Labor in Focus by Marianna Wertz

AFL-CIO finances anti-SDI movement

The union rank and file supports the Strategic Defense Initiative, but Kirkland's funds go to anti-SDI candidates.

The Center on National Labor Policy, a strictly anti-union "public interest foundation," released a study on Nov. 11 titled "AFL-CIO Political Action and Its Impact Upon National Defense." The study reveals, in documented detail, that the overwhelming majority of union political action committee (PAC) money in 1984 congressional elections "went to those candidates whose National Security Index ratings and SDI votes were decidedly against an increase in national defense programs."

The study points out that the union PAC contributions fly in the face of the values of the majority of union members, as revealed, for instance, in the 1984 CBS-News/*New York Times* Poll, which showed 66% of union households opposed cutting the defense budget. A January 1985 Gallup Poll further showed that at least half of the nation's union households support development of President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative.

While trade-union membership has dropped substantially over the past 10 years, labor still has the greatest organized power in American elections. Sixty-four percent of labor-backed candidates were elected to the House of Representatives in 1984, which translates to 235 congressional seats, a clear majority in the Congress. More than 400 union PACs in the nation put over \$19 million into U.S. Senate and House elections in 1984, a 22% increase over funds contributed in 1982.

The Center's record of candidate positions on defense issues is based on

the National Security Index (NSI) developed by the American Security Council, generally regarded as the most comprehensive and authoritative index of this sort. The candidates' position on the SDI is based on an index compiled by the U.S. Defense Committee of four House votes and five Senate votes which dealt with funding the research for the SDI: Senate votes 99, 100, 101, 103, and all amendments to S. 1160, Department of Defense Authorization, Fiscal 1986; House votes 160, 161, 162, 163, 164 and all amendments to H.R. 1872, Department of Defense Authorization, Fiscal 1986.

To quote the study's principal findings:

"Fully 77% of the AFL-CIO's PAC money went to those candidates whose NSI rating was less than 39%. The average contribution for these candidates was \$67,648. In comparison, those candidates with a pro-defense NSI rating of 60% or greater received only 13% of the total union PAC money. Their average contribution amounted to \$12,134."

In 1984, congressional candidates with a 100% pro-defense NSI rating received \$830,034 from the AFL-CIO PACs, for an average contributions of \$7,217. In contrast, 1984 congressional candidates with an NSI rating of 0%, received \$3,974,075 from the union PACs for an average contribution of \$55,207, nearly eight times as much as the pro-defense candidates, according to the report.

On the SDI, the labor PAC contri-

butions are even more one-sided. Ninety-one percent of the AFL-CIO PAC contributions went to those candidates who opposed funding the SDI. \$12,705,823 went to fund a total of 268 candidates who voted in opposition to funding SDI research. \$1,322,393 went to funding 128 candidates whose vote favored SDI research.

The worst labor PAC, from the standpoint of national defense funding, is the International Association of Machinists, a union whose membership depends upon defense contracts for their livelihood perhaps more than any other. The president of the IAM, however, is William Wimpisinger, one of the top figures in the Socialist International and an outspoken advocate of American disarmament.

According to the Center's report, 84% of the IAM's PAC funds, \$800,782, went to those candidates who voted in support of pro-defense issues less than 39% of the time. Only 7%, or \$66,600, went to candidates who had a pro-defense rating of 60% or greater. On the SDI, 97% of IAM PAC contributions went to candidates who opposed its funding.

The AFL-CIO should rightfully be leading the nation in a defense mobilization, to end the threat of nuclear annihilation through full-scale development of the SDI. Organized labor was the crucial factor in President Roosevelt's ability to mobilize the nation to fight the Nazi menace in World War II, gearing up the factories to produce United Auto Workers President Walter Reuther's famous "500 Planes a Day." Instead, labor's rank and file has allowed a treasonous nest of Tri-lateral Commission members, such as AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland, to steer the significant political power of the coalition in the interest of the nation's enemies.