

# Labor protest against WTO would leave free-trade system intact

by Marianna Wertz

A major battle is going on inside the AFL-CIO, in anticipation of the Nov. 30-Dec. 4 World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial summit in Seattle. That battle first became public at the Oct. 11-15 AFL-CIO Biennial Convention in Los Angeles, when President John Sweeney and a handful of Executive Council members rammed through the early endorsement of Al Gore for President, despite the vociferous opposition of the United Autoworkers (UAW), the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and the American Federation of Government Employees. By early November, the opposition was joined by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Paper, Chemical, and Energy workers, and the United Mine Workers.

Opposition from these unions to the Gore endorsement stems largely from Gore's advocacy of free-trade policies, which have led to the loss of millions of industrial jobs in the United States in the past three decades, and to the reduction of more millions of Asian, African, and Ibero-American workers to virtual slavery. Gore is the number-one free-trade advocate in the Clinton administration. At the Jan. 29, 1999 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Gore demanded that the November WTO meeting in Seattle approve even more sweeping globalist prerogatives to "free" flows of money, trade, "intellectual property" rights, food, and agriculture control.

At the October AFL-CIO convention, Teamsters President James P. Hoffa explicitly linked his opposition to a Gore endorsement to Gore's support for the WTO: My members, he said, "want to know how the candidates we endorse will affect their lives, and at this time we still don't know. We hope when the Vice President leaves here today that he will take with him our concerns about the future. The AFL-CIO will endorse today and next month we will go to Seattle to protest against the possible expansion of the World Trade Organization. Is the Vice President going to listen?" (see *Documentation* for Hoffa's statement on the WTO meeting).

## Is the blackmail working?

The battle in the AFL-CIO leadership emerged publicly a second time in late October, when Sweeney announced that

he had signed a letter to President Clinton endorsing the administration's free-trade agenda for the WTO summit. Sweeney is a member of a Presidential advisory panel, on which he sits with a Who's Who of corporate CEOs. He endorsed it, Sweeney said, because Clinton agreed to support a "working group on trade and labor" at the WTO ministerial conference. Sweeney called Clinton's agreement to this "a small, yet significant concession," in a defensively worded press release issued in response to a torrent of criticism led by Hoffa and Stephen Yokich, president of the UAW. Yokich resigned in protest from an AFL-CIO panel, calling Sweeney's endorsement of U.S. objectives "yet another sign of a serious failure to understand the significance of trade issues for our entire economy and especially for the industrial sector."

As *EIR* reported in our Oct. 27 issue, the AFL-CIO's endorsement of Gore was pushed through, in part, as a result of blackmail issuing from Bush networks in the Department of Justice. Knowing that George "Dubya" Bush's only chance of winning the Presidency is if Al Gore is the Democratic nominee, the AFL-CIO was pressured to endorse Gore under threat of blanket indictments, in a case now working its way through the courts in connection with the 1997 reelection campaign of then-Teamsters president Ron Carey (see *Documentation*). Sweeney's capitulation on free-trade policy clearly has the same explanation: He can't confront Gore at the WTO meeting if he's just endorsed him for President!

In his Oct. 4 Internet dialogue with labor, Lyndon LaRouche was asked explicitly about Sweeney's capitulation. He responded, "I'm very cautious about attacking Sweeney as such. I'm very critical of what he did. It's a mistake, it's wrong. But I know the pressures, at least to some degree, which the AFL-CIO leadership was operating under, based on Justice Department and related kinds of muscle. And you have to know what Al Gore is, to appreciate this. . . ."

"So, therefore, what he did in joining in the WTO—that's Gore policy, again! Clinton goes along with it, but that's Gore's policy. That's also, in a sense, Bush's policy. So, I'm against it. And I'm for all those in the labor move-

ment who are against it. That doesn't mean I hate Sweeney. I think he made a mistake, and I'm opposed to that policy. But I'm not condemning him personally. I'm just saying, the guys who go the other way, I support them."

### Slay the dragon

This is the context in which the AFL-CIO is mobilizing to bring 15,000 trade unionists to Seattle on Nov. 30, to participate in a rally at the opening of the WTO conference. But will they be in Seattle to demand a shutdown of the global system of free trade, which spawned the WTO? Will they condemn Al Gore's agenda at the WTO? Are they going to Seattle to slay the dragon?

Unfortunately, no. Under present plans, the AFL-CIO is going to Seattle to demand that the WTO be "reformed," to make it a "more democratic and accountable institution," so that the rights of labor and the environment gain greater "respect" in the context of a world dominated by the axioms of free trade. That's a little like asking a fire-breathing dragon to use breath mints.

Indeed, the "Citizen's Guide to the World Trade Organization," whose co-sponsors include the Teamsters and the United Steelworkers of America Dist. 11, goes so far as to say that the problem with the WTO is that it "has little to do with the 18th-century free-trade philosophy developed by David Ricardo or Adam Smith, who assumed neither labor nor capital crossed national borders."

As though free trade were a good system, which has been perverted by the modern corporate world!

This is not to say that the majority of trade union members support free-trade policies. They don't. The problem is that they, like most Americans, have been brainwashed into believing that America's agro-industrial economy is based on British free-trade policies, which just need to be made more humane, when, in fact, it is based on a *revolution against* those free-trade policies. Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* was written explicitly to stop the American Revolution, and to keep this nation enslaved to the world's greatest free-trade promoter: the British Empire.

Some among organized labor's leaders have indeed grasped the fundamental flaws of free trade and globalization, as the resolution, "The American Economy in a New Century," pushed at the AFL-CIO convention by the UAW, reflects (see *Documentation*). The UAW's opposition to Gore, and to Sweeney's capitulation, reflects the sound tenets of this resolution.

So, the question for those among the AFL-CIO leadership who will be guiding the federation's intervention in Seattle is: Will you slay the dragon? The best way to do that is to back Lyndon LaRouche's Presidential campaign. Only LaRouche, among the major Presidential candidates, opposes free trade altogether, vowing to do away with all its institutions—from the WTO to the International Monetary Fund—if elected President.

---

## Documentation

---

### Hoffa: Replace 'failed NAFTA-WTO model'

*James P. Hoffa delivered the following remarks on Sept. 15, on the steps of the nation's Capitol, demanding an end to expansion of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Emphasis is in the original.*

In capitals around the globe today, labor, consumer, environmental, religious, and other citizens' groups are rallying for fair trade—and *against expansion of the World Trade Organization.*

Five years ago, many of us opposed the GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade] Uruguay Round and the WTO because we knew it would push down wages, ship good jobs overseas, gut important environmental laws, and flood our markets with unsafe food and products. We saw a lopsided deal—a sort of NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] on steroids—that would undercut our sovereignty and undermine our ability to push policy that serves the needs of working families.

Now almost five years have passed. The time for predictions and speculation is over. On the basis of its actual performance, the WTO cannot pass the most conservative of tests and the most fundamental standard for trade laws—that they do no harm. U.S. environmental laws have been sacked by secretive WTO tribunals in Geneva. Basic worker safety rights have come under attack. . . . Food safety is also being weakened. . . . And the promised economic gains have failed to materialize.

We have seen the U.S. trade deficit *explode* to its all-time high. Remember, the Clinton administration promised the WTO would cut the deficit by \$60 billion in ten years!

We have seen the first extended period of economic expansion that has not been accompanied by steady income gains—U.S. workers' median wages *still* have not caught up with 1974 wages! . . .

The record is clear: The WTO is not serving the majority of people in the U.S. or abroad. Its outcomes are unacceptable.

The idea of *expanding* this damaging deal to new issues and areas is outrageous. That is why the Teamsters stand here today—as one of 1,200 signatories on a global letter representing 45 countries—and say: No New WTO Round—**We Need a Turnaround!**

We need to replace this failed NAFTA-WTO model. The first step is not to dig ourselves deeper into this hole. . . . Just like the other groups around the world saying no

to WTO expansion, we will be in Seattle in force to ensure the entire world knows how the American public feels about the World Trade Organization. It is time for the administration to get with the program: No New Round, We Need To Turnaround!

## UAW says, 'Return to manufacturing-based economy'

At the Oct. 11-15 AFL-CIO Convention, the United Auto Workers union, which opposed the endorsement of Al Gore, pushed through a resolution entitled "The American Economy in a New Century," which is a hard-hitting commitment for a return to a manufacturing-based economy in America, and for an end to a free-trade- and speculation-driven policy. Motivating it at the convention, UAW Vice President Elizabeth Bunn said that manufacturing jobs are the "ladder to the American Dream for millions of Americans, and we are consciously kicking that ladder away."

The resolution flies in the face of those in the AFL-CIO leadership who are backing free-trader Al Gore for President.

It begins by calling for full employment and increasing the capital gains tax, as part of a strategy for real economic growth.

In the section, "Manufacturing Matters: America Needs a Manufacturing Jobs Policy," the resolution states: "America's manufacturing sector is facing a crisis. Over the past 20 years, more than 2.5 million manufacturing jobs have been lost, and the manufacturing share of total private employment has fallen from 28.5% to 17.5%. . . . Job losses have been caused by events in international financial markets triggered by the activities of currency speculators and by speculative excesses in foreign stock markets. These events are, in part, the result of policies that have inappropriately liberalized international movements of financial capital."

The resolution denounces the "wrong-headed conventional wisdom that asserts we have entered a post-industrial era in which manufacturing jobs no longer are essential to the nation's economic future. Nothing could be further from the truth." It then spends two pages discussing why manufacturing jobs are key to the economy.

The 15-page resolution concludes with a section titled, "An Industrial Policy that Confronts Economic Change and Fosters Economic Development and Technological Innovation." The full resolution is available at [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org) in the section on the recent AFL-CIO conference.

## Teamster trial is blackmail vs. labor

The trial of former Teamster political director William Hamilton on charges of corruption with respect to alleged money-laundering, in the 1997 reelection campaign of then-Teamster President Ron Carey, is now ongoing in the New York court of U.S. District Judge Thomas Griesa. The Hamilton trial is a major component of what Lyndon LaRouche called the "blackmail" hanging over the head of the AFL-CIO, which was used to force through the endorsement of Al Gore for President at the Los Angeles AFL-CIO convention last month. The trial began on Oct. 18 and is expect to last four weeks.

The indictment is for conspiracy, embezzlement of union funds, mail fraud, wire fraud, false statements, and perjury.

An editorial in the Nov. 8 *Wall Street Journal*, the mouthpiece of the Bush crowd, titled "A Campaign-Finance Trial," demands that the prosecutor, U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White (a Clinton appointee), "see it through to

the end," including finding a "conspiracy by higher-ups." Those higher-ups, if the Wall Street crowd have their way, could include: AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka, who pled the Fifth Amendment when questioned about the affair last year by Congressional investigators; AFL-CIO Executive Board members Andrew Stern (SEIU) and Gerald McEntee (AFSCME), who helped push through the Gore endorsement; AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, who has refused to fire Trumka for alleged violation of union regulations that mandate firing anyone who pleads the Fifth; the Democratic National Committee (DNC), which is alleged to have been involved in the money-laundering; and the Clinton-Gore election campaign team, also for alleged involvement.

On Oct. 12, Republican National Committee Chairman Jim Nicholson wrote to Attorney General Janet Reno, urging her not to "give a typical slap-on-the-wrist plea bargain" to Hamilton. Nicholson said in the letter that such a plea bargain would have the purpose of keeping secret "the involvement of the DNC, the Clinton-Gore '96 campaign, the AFL-CIO and the White House itself." If Hamilton is convicted, that lays the groundwork for further indictments, trials, and convictions, unless this political witch-hunt is stopped. — *Marianna Wertz*