

STATINTL

## Rejection of a Soviet World

The split in the leadership of the AFL-CIO is deeper than last week's apparent rift over foreign policy. News reports said merely that Walter Reuther failed to show up for a discussion of the union's stands on foreign policy issues; whereupon the Executive Council voted unanimously for the hard-line, anti-Communist posture that Reuther abhors. The cleavage was all the more significant because Reuther himself had called for the showdown.

Even though there have been a number of events leading up to the foreign policy imbroglio, the real issue is much more fundamental. Reuther and George Meany simply embody two conflicting concepts of the role of the labor union. Not so long ago Meany attacked the secretariat of one of Reuther's pet operations, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in Brussels, as filled with homosexuals and incompetents. Some months later, Victor Reuther, Walter's assistant, accused Meany and Meany's agent, Jay Lovestone, of being tools of the CIA. Yet Lovestone, an unfrocked Communist, has been working through the ICFTU.

For an answer to the conflict, one must look below the surface. Meany comes from the old-school of unionists, who see the labor-management conflict in terms of immediate material benefits for union men. He chooses action, rather than subtlety; he believes a head-on clash of interests puts more in the pocketbook than do nebulous ideologies. He is not only a firm advocate of blunt resistance to Communism, but deeply concerned that proposed Federal legislation would put an end to collective bargaining. Both attitudes are all of one piece.

Walter Reuther, however, thinks the union's role should be concerned with

control of the whole social milieu of the nation, instead of merely with employee contract negotiations. Back in the Thirties, he was accused in a famous phrase of desiring a soviet America, after his glowing reports of collectivization in the U.S.S.R. Although he now refers to himself as anti-Communist and anti-Russian, his social views still reflect a preoccupation with sovietized society. For "soviet" simply means a social structure based upon the organization of worker's councils. Although most union leaders and union men are simply interested in collective strength to win pocketbook issues from their employers, Reuther sees the labor movement as a great apparatus to plan health, education, and welfare programs for the nation. His drive to increase labor's political strength, and his preoccupation with welfare schemes "run by the poor" are an up-to-date interpretation of a soviet America.

Such views, of course, do not mean that he is advocating the rule of the U.S.S.R. over the United States. All he wants to do is to change the social structure to make it more like the Russian experiment. On the international level, he seeks to build corresponding structures through the world labor movement; he has often said that he would like to be able to strike an industry throughout the whole world at the same time, doubtless for social as well as economic aims. Such a goal requires international solidarity—and international political supra-structure. No wonder, then, that he wants to reduce hard-line postures towards the Communists. Mr. Meany's inflexibility is getting in the way of a grand dream.

It is a tribute to the good sense of American labor that Reuther stands virtually alone. He probably thinks George Meany is a reactionary fossil.

RICHMOND NEWS LEADER

21 November 1966