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No Spy Work, UAW Official Says

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By JAMES D. SETTS
(Of The State Journal Staff)

Victor G. Reuther, director of international affairs for the powerful United Auto Workers (UAW) Monday said his union has nothing to do with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) cloak and dagger operations.

The 55-year-old union chief said the UAW has consistently fought against such associations which he said encouraged police states.

The American labor movement and student organizations have been accused recently of compromising their integrity and principles by working with the United States spy organization.

"We did this on one occasion 15 years ago," Reuther said. "We were asked to transmit money to anti-Communist trade unions in foreign countries and we did."

The UAW has not done so since and does not intend to do so again, Reuther said.

Reuther, brother of UAW Pres. Walter Reuther, was in Madison to participate in the University of Wisconsin School for Workers summer session.

The bespectacled, soft-spoken, and articulate labor executive who still bears facial scars of labor-management wars of two decades ago, chatted with reporters briefly between lectures at the Wisconsin Center, 702 Langdon St.

Reuther said he was asked by government officials after World War II to become a secret agent during the cold war with Russia but he "flatly refused."

"We have been critical of this sort of involvement and have called for an end to it," he said. "The CIA should operate in a manner so as not to destroy the character of private organizations."

Reuther said there have been no moves by the CIA since to recruit UAW members.

The UAW operates a Free

World Labor Defense Fund aimed at supporting democratic unions abroad but it is strictly on an independent basis, he said.

Reuther said the UAW spends about \$500,000 to \$750,000 a year on such operations.

The money is not used for anti-Communist propaganda but rather for direct support of anti-Communist labor organizations, he said.

"The best way to fight Communism is to come forth with positive programs," he said. "People don't want slogans — they want positive results."

Reuther said the UAW will not give a "blank check" to either political party or to any individual politician but he made it clear his big union is not impressed with Republicans.

"The Democratic Party more than the Republican Party has identified itself more with the wage earners of this country," he said.

He put down speculation that the UAW and other liberal unions would, along with liberal farm groups, throw their massive support to the formation of a third major American political party.

"The net effect would be to guarantee the Republicans national control," he said. "We are not quite prepared to pay that price."

Reuther admitted that the American labor movement has fallen down in attempts to organize migrant farm workers and minorities.

"The record of labor unions in this field as a whole has not been one to be proud of," he said. "In the case of migrant farm workers there is nothing short of a feudal relationship."

The labor executive added, however, that the UAW has tried to carry its share of the load.

"The UAW expenditures in this area have been greater than the combined expenditures of all unions of the AFL-CIO put together," he said. "We don't say that out of boastfulness — we say that out of sadness."



"People don't want slogans"

—State Journal Photo