

LABOR RADIO COMMITTEE

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Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We've had quite a time lining up tonight's broadcast. It seemed like every time we started the phone rang, or someone walked into the office. It was Friday night's broadcast that did it. When we talked about the Labor Union Conference on Jobs and Relief.... we hit the jackpot. We talked about something that really was of vital interest to a lot of people, and they've been letting us know about it.

Just in case some of you missed that broadcast, and just to set the scene for what we'll talk about tonight, let's go back to Friday night. Here's a brief re-cap of what we said.

An organization, strictly non-partisan, consisting of AFL, CIO and Independent unions, has been formed on a state-wide basis, with plans for sub-organizations in each county, to fight for jobs for the unemployed and relief for those unemployed until they get jobs. The three most important actions of this organizations convention a week ago Sunday were these:

First: A demand that where private enterprise can't supply jobs for unemployed working people, our government on a state and national scale shall insitute useful, constructive work projects a union's wages and conditions. This does not mean projects like WPA or other make-work deals....it means projects that will in the long run pay for themselves, projects which private industry ~~has~~ can't do. Such projects as reforestration, improved roads, power dams, land recihnation, housing etc.

Second: A demand that until such time as there are jobs to take care of the unemployed, they shall be given adequate relief under the State Social Security program commonly known as Initiative 172. And the convention went

on record calling for a special session of the state legislature to raise the necessary money to completely live up to Initiative 172 by working out a tax program based on ability to pay.

The Third step was the demand that a recall petition be instituted against Governor Langlie. It was pointed out by delegate after delegate, that every attempt to get relief or to get the state to take advantage of federal money on tap for work projects met the road block in the Governors office. These people charged that until Governor Langlie began working for the people in the matter of jobs and relief....we'd get nowhere. So, concluded the delegates, Governor Langlie must go.

Before the convention had closed, organizational plans had been set up to organize county groups which would work on a grass roots basis. Their work would consist of visiting all local public officials in an effort to get them to jar loose with public works to supply jobs in the area; and, very important, to fight grievances of unemployed workers against the relief agencies.

Now one thing stood out in our memory about this convention. Later on we had visitors and phone calls on the same thing. And that was this: Delegates at the convention knew that a call had gone out to every single trade union local in the State of Washington, AFL, Independent or CIO. Not a single trade union was missed. Yet only a small percentage of the locals were represented at the conference. This led one delegate to say: Those unions not represented here today have not learned that it is the duty of a union to fight for the welfare of its membership.....off the job as well as on the job.

Let's beat that point around a bit. Let's see how sound it is. Let's figure out just where a unions responsibility to its membership begins and ends.

We went to the fights Friday night. After the fights were over, and it was a rattling good card by the way, we accepted the invitation of the guy sitting next to us at the ringside to take a run out to a little cafe

where a lot of the fight crowd hung out. Well, we no sooner walked into the joint than we spotted some of the guys off the waterfront, longshoremen and seamen, and a couple of steel workers that we know and a few others. Someone started asking questions about that night's broadcast and this subject of an organization to fight for jobs and relief.

One of the party, we won't mention his name or his union, began telling us about his situation. He was married, had three kids and was buying a home. Like all working people, his paycheck was spent for food, clothing, shelter and doctor bills before he ever got it. He'd had to sell the equity in his car, and he'd long ago cashed in what war bonds he'd been able to buy during the war years. This man was a skilled man, and he hadn't worked for six long months.

We asked him about unemployment compensation. He said he'd drawn it right along, but his checks were going to stop this month. He gave us a detailed story on how he and his wife had cut every corner in the book to try to make that \$25 a week stretch out to feed five mouths, keep up the payments on the home and keep them all in clothes. It was incredible.

Last month one of his kids fell off his tricycle and there went a doctor and hospital bill. He's still trying to rake up the money to pay it.

Now here's a man, ladies and gentlemen, who wants a job. A man qualified in his trade. A man with a good work record. A man who can't get a job....a man who is getting desperate because he can't feed his wife and kids. So, what's to be done about it?

He went down to the County Welfare office. He'd voted for Initiative 172, he knew what was in it and he was for it. He never thought he'd have to use it.....but now he was caught in the bight of the line. So he went down to see what help he could get. He wasn't sponging, he wasn't begging, he didn't want a free ride....he was a working man without a job. A working man

with a wife and three kids, unable to keep them in food, clothing and shelter.

Well, he was told that there was nothing there for him. He was considered quote employable unquote.

You're employable.

How many times, we wonder, have desperate, honest working people heard those words. How many times has a guy had to go out on the street, at his wits end, aching all over.....and had to go home empty handed because some character had classed him as employable.

Now by the time this man had finished his story, we heard three or four more just like it. And this morning we heard five more. People who are actually destitute.....one woman told us this morning that she and her husband, both out of work, had been living on oatmeal for the past week and were about to be kicked out of their apartment because they couldn't raise the rent.

Now we asked each of them if they belonged to a union. All of them did. We asked them what their union had done to help them. And here's where union men and women had better pay close attention. Because here, in the answer these people gave us, lies a threat and a sharp danger to organized labor. All of them said their union was pretty fair about protecting wages and conditions on the job. All of them said their union hadn't done one single thing to help them, either in the way of getting a job or in getting some relief, since they'd lost their jobs. And two of them....two people who had been good union members for along time.....said they would never pay dues to a union again. They claimed that their union had only been interested in them when they were working and paying dues....now that they were out of work it was a different story. When they were working and paying dues, any grievance they had they could go to their shop steward or their union business agent and get it taken care of. But now that they were out of work....and still paying dues.....they had no place to take their grievance, their need for support in getting a job and getting relief to put food on the table.

Now here's two people out of the ten or so we talked to Friday night and today who are turning anti-labor union simply because their unions have failed to accept the job, the responsibility of fighting for their welfare. We know of several more. And when you stop to figure that out of the thousands of people now unemployed.....there are probably hundreds who are turning anti-union.

So, what's the answer? The answer is very simple. If we are not to have a large number of embittered anti-union people running around ready to cut the foundations out from under our unions.....we'd better get down to grass roots here and start fighting, as a union should, for the welfare of it's membership. One or off the job. Because a union members welfare doesn't end when he walked out the gate after work.

A union member pays dues. He makes sacrifices for his union because he knows that his union is his strength. And he deserves something in return for that dues money, that loyalty and those sacrifices. He deserves a return on his investment. He has every right to expect the support of his union both on the job....and when he gets laid off.

And unless unions get wise to that fact....they're in for trouble.

These two people we talked to said they were going to quit paying dues. They said they were going to drop out of their unions and never join/ another one. We told them that wasn't the way to do it. We told them, and now we tell any others who feel the same way. You, the membership, are your union. Your union only does what you, the membership, make it do. So take your story to your union brothers and sisters. Go to your union meeting, hit the deck and lay it on the line. Demand that your union set up a committee to work for the welfare of the unemployed members. Demand that your union join with other unions to fight for jobs for the unemployed....to fight for relief for those unemployed until they get jobs. Then get on that committee and go to work.

But whatever you do, don't ever get the idea that your union is something separate and apart from you. Don't ever get the idea that your union is some higher power, something you pay tribute to or something you throw rocks at when you are mad. Your union is you, you and your brothers and sisters. Its up to you and your brothers and sisters to run your union. And how do you do it? You do it by going to meetings, speaking your mind, taking part in the job of running and directing your union.

Now lets talk about people who are out of jobs. People who are down to that old bed-rock where it isn't a new car, or money for a party, that is the pressing thing....but bread and butter and a place to sleep. Right down to stark reality.

You read and hear a lot about such people being bums, idlers, grafters and so forth. People who don't deserve help. People who, assuredly, are broke and hungry and out of work due to their own fault.

Well, don't you believe it. These are people just like you and your neighbors and friends. People who want to work and live.....but people who are caught in the bight of the line, laid off, no jobs available. If you for one moment believe that these people are all bums and idlers and looking for a free handout.....just put an ad in the paper saying Men and Women Wanted. And then barricade your door, because hundreds of these idlers and bums and grafters will be beating frantically for a chance to do an honest days work for an honest days pay. If you doubt this, how about the recent scene ~~in~~ when the city works office advertised for men to work on streets? Literally hundreds of men jammed the corridor trying to get in on the few jobs offered.

Unemployment isn't just a state of affairs. It isn't just something you read about. It isn't just a set of figures in the economic picture. Unemployment is heart-break and misery, its kids crying and mothers grieving and fathers going half mad with frustration and worry. Its sickness and agony. And its crime. Because you trace the rise of unemployment, then trace the rise of

crime....and they parallel, Brother. Hungry desperate people do strange things.

So what are we going to do about it? Can't we take a few minutes time out from the so-called fight against communism and do something for our own people? As a matter of fact, and we borrow this quotation, the best way to defeat communism is to put something in the soup besides statistics.

We have men and women right here in Seattle, ladies and gentlemen, who actually do not know where they will sleep tonight....who actually are hungry.....we have hundreds of them. There are thousands of them in the State of Washington, millions in the United States. People who, thru no fault of their own, do not have jobs.

Now it comes naturally that someone is going to ask: how can we feed and cloth and furnish shelter to all these people? Where is the money going to come from?

That's a good question. And we'll answer it this way. You can rest assured that if big business were in the bight of the line.....our government officials would jolly well find the dough to finance them over the rough spots. They've done it before, they are doing it now. Billions of dollars to support big business.....

Well, this nation is made up of people. Little people. People like you and your neighbors. You are the people who do the work, you are the people who build and produce and you are the people out of whom comes every bit of wealth in this nation. You, in fact, are the people who make it possible for big business to even exist.

And if the money can be raised to aid big business when it gets in a jam.....then that money can be raised to help you, the people, when you are in a jam.

Its up to you. But you've got to get into the fight. And here is where you can start. Go to your union. Demand that your union set up a committee to fight for jobs and relief. Then join with the other unions who

.....then we'll do the job.