

President Kennedy's Last Speech to AFL-CIO

(Editor's Note: The American Labor Movement was addressed by our late President John Fitzgerald Kennedy one week before he was assassinated by a fanatic's bullets in Dallas, Texas. Excerpts from this major address to the AFL-CIO Convention are reprinted here as a reminder of the unfinished business before us as union members and American citizens.)

Mr. Meany, Members of the Executive Council, Fellow Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen: The other day I read in the newspaper where Senator Goldwater asked for labor's support before 2000 cheering Illinois businessmen. I have come here to ask labor's support for a program for the United States.

I am glad to come to this convention, and I think that the AFL-CIO, at this convention and looking back over the years, over this century—can take pride in the actions it has taken, pride in the stand it has made, pride in the things it has done not only for the American labor movement, but for the United States as a whole. It is no accident. I think that those who oppose what we are trying to do today could recall the comparative history of the years between World War I and World War II. The 20-year period from 1919 to 1939 was marred by an 11-year depression, 8 years of stagnation in the 20's, the farms of America, and all of the efforts which were made in the 30's against almost comparable opposition, and on occasions even greater to what we do today—all of the efforts which were made in the 30's and later carried out in the Administration of President Truman, I think, have made it possible for us to have a far different history from 1945 through to 1965.

A BASE FOR PROGRESS

Those 20 years, 1919 to 1939, those years from 1945 through 1965, tell the story of the progress which Franklin Roosevelt made in the 30's and on which we now live and benefit in the 1960's. It is no accident. It is no accident that this country staggered through 20 years, and it is no accident. It didn't just merely happen that this country has steadily increased in wealth and strength in the years from 1945 on. It is because of the steps that were taken in the 30's to lay the foundation for progress in the 40's and 50's and 60's that make it possible for us to meet in these circumstances. And our obligation in the 1960's is to do those things in the Congress of the United States and in the various States which will make it possible for others in the 1970's and 1980's to continue to live in prosperity.

DRY SENSE OF HUMOR

Three years ago, and one week, by a landslide, the people of the United States elected me to the Presidency of this country, and it is possible that you had something to do with that majority of 112,000 votes, and I think it, therefore, appropriate to say something about what we have done, and even more appropriate to say something about what we must do.

PROGRESS IN CIVIL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Here in the United States we have encouraged the peaceful desegregation of schools in 238 districts, theaters in 144 cities, restaurants in 129 cities, and lunch counters in 100 cities, while at the same time taking executive action to open doors to our citizens in transportation terminals and polling places, and public and private employment. And finally, we have been working to strengthen the economy of the United States, through the Area Redevelopment Act of '61, through the Public Works Acceleration Act of 1962, through the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962.

We have increased industry's ability and desire to hire men through the most extensive and promising trade expansion act in our history, through the most comprehensive housing and urban renewal act of all time, through liberalized depreciation guidelines, and through over \$1 billion in loans to small businessmen. We have boosted the purchasing power and relieved the distress of some of those least able to take care of themselves, by increasing the minimum wage to \$1.25, which is still

YOUR Business Manager's COLUMN

By RONALD T. WEAKLEY

After writing monthly columns for this publication for over ten years, I missed our November deadline. The main reason was my attendance, along with President Thomas, at the International Labor Press Association and the AFL-CIO Conventions.

I had planned to write more about my recent visit to Argentina because I believe that our members would be interested in how a union similar to ours operates in the same industry in another country. This can wait.

Since the New York Conventions, the world has been shaken by the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The United States of America lost a man who will go down in history as one who tried mightily to shake the American people out of a deadly apathy. Only by becoming a martyr, did he succeed. During my extensive travels

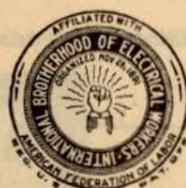
lately, I met many people in many places and I was amazed at the confidence they had in President Kennedy. In Argentina, for instance, the important names of U.S. patriots included Jefferson, Lincoln, Roosevelt and Kennedy. The people applauded loudly and sincerely whenever the name of John F. Kennedy was mentioned. Our readers can understand this as a result of what happened last month in our own country.

President Kennedy lies in Arlington Cemetery but as he sleeps, we who loved and understood him shall be awakened to the tasks he laid down for us as good Americans.

One of these tasks is to stand up and fight the extremists, the bigots, and the un-American forces of the far right as well as the far left.

President Johnson is a strong and capable man. He deserves

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Warren Scores Fanatics

Chief Justice Earl Warren, in an unprecedented eulogy in the great rotunda of the Capitol, spoke out against the forces of hatred in the U.S.A., as he stood with the leaders of the Nation at the bier of the late John F. Kennedy, 35th President of the United States.

Warren, former District Attorney of Alameda County, Attorney General and Governor of California, and now Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, is a life-long Republican.

He has long been the target of the John Birch Society and other extremist elements who have called for his impeachment. Both Presidents he has served, Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy, considered him to be a great American.



The 72-year-old top American jurist said, in part: "What a price we pay for this fanaticism! If we really love this country, if we truly love justice and mercy, if we fervently want to make this Nation better for those who follow us, we can at least abjure the hatred that consumes people, the false accusations that divide us and the bitterness that begets violence.

HATRED STIMULATES SUCH ACTS

"We are saddened; we are stunned; we are perplexed," he said. "What moved some misguided wretch to do this horrible deed may never be known to us. But we do know that such acts are commonly stimulated by forces of hatred and malevolence, such as today, are eating their way into the bloodstream of American life."

"It has been said that the only thing we learn from history is that we do not learn. But surely we can learn if we have the will to do so. Surely there is a lesson to be learned from this tragic event.

VENOM SPREAD INTO WEAK MINDS

"Is it too much to hope that the martyrdom of our beloved President might even soften the hearts of those who would themselves recoil from assassination but who do not shrink from spreading the venom which kindles thoughts of it in others?"

Warren was flanked by Mrs. Kennedy and her daughter Caroline, as he spoke out in obvious anger at the fanatics who urge violence and nurture hatred among citizens, most of whom are sharing a feeling of deep guilt at what happened in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963.

EXTREMISTS DENOUNCED

The Chief Justice, now white-haired but erect of bearing, electrified the mourners in the Capitol, as well as the millions who viewed him and heard him denounce the extremists who would tear asunder the United States of America.

much too low, and expanding coverage by 3½ million, which is still too little; by increasing social security benefits to men and women who can retire at the age of 62; by granting for the first time in the history of the United States public assistance to several hundred thousand children of unemployed fathers; and by extending the benefits of nearly 3 million jobless workers.

By doing these things, and others, we have attempted to work for the benefit of our people, and I can assure you that if we can obtain—and I see no good reason why we should not—if we can obtain the prompt passage of the pending \$11 billion tax reduction bill, we will be sailing by next April on the winds of the longest and strongest peacetime expansion in the history of the United States.

Our national output three years ago was \$500 billion. In January, three years later, it will be \$600 billion, a record rise of \$100 billion in 36 months. For the first time in history we have 70 million men and women at work. For the first time in history factory earnings have exceeded \$100 a week, and even the stock market has broken all records, although we only get credit when it goes down. The average factory worker takes home \$10 a week more than he did three years ago, and 2½ million people more are at work. In fact, if the economy during the last 2½ years had grown at the same lagging pace which it did in the last 2½ years of the 50's, unemployment today would be 8 percent. In short, we have made progress, but all of us know that more progress must be made. That is what we are here about. I am here today to talk about the right to work, the right to have a job in this country in a time of prosperity in the United States. That is the real right to work issue in 1963. In spite of this progress, this country must move so fast to even stand still.

SNOWBALLING ECONOMY

Productivity goes up so fast. The number of people coming into the labor market so increases. Ten million more jobs are needed in the next two and a half years. Even with this astonishing economic progress, which in the last 18 months has meant that the United States has grown faster economically than France and Germany, than any country in Europe but two, even with this extraordinary economic progress in the last 18 months we still have an unemployment rate of five and a half percent, four million people out of work. Productivity goes up so fast so many millions come into the labor market, that unless we have the most extraordinary economic progress in the history of our country we cannot possibly make a dent in the five and a half percent figure.

So while we take some satisfaction in what we have done and tried to do, this group more than any knows how much we still have left to do, and I hope the day will never come, nor do I predict it, when the AF of L-CIO will be satisfied with anything less than the best.

WHAT WE HAVE LEFT TO DO

Four million people are out of work. All of the people who opposed the efforts we are making to try to improve the economic climate of the United States, who talked to us so long about

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From Journal 1245

For detail of Bay Area see insert to upper right



DAN McPEAK



MERT WALTERS



ED JAMES



GENE HASTINGS



MARK COOK



BOBBY ROBINSON



RAYMOND ENSLEY



SCOTT WADSWORTH

NOT PICTURED
DELORES OLANDER
CHARLINE CHARLES
SAM CASALINA



HOWARD SEVEY



FLORENCE HALL



MARTHA KERR



VIRGINIA WIMPLE



ALICE SKINNER



DEAHL SAMMIS



LORRAINE HOLWAY



CHARLENE HERD



JEAN KING



PAT OLIVER

President Kennedy's Last Speech

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socialism and deficits and all the rest, should look at that figure. Four million people out of work. And judging from last summer's statistics, three times that many have experienced some unemployment. And that hanging over the labor market makes it more difficult for those of you who speak for labor at the bargaining table to speak with force. When there are so many people out of work it affects the whole economic climate. That is why I think that this issue of economic security, of jobs, is the basic issue facing the United States in 1963, and I wish we could get everybody talking about it. A quarter of the people we are talking about are out of work 15 weeks or longer and their families feel it.

This is a year of prosperity, of record prosperity. 1954 was a year of recession. Yet our unemployment rate is as high today as it was in 1954. Last year's loss of man hours in terms of those willing but unable to find full time work was a staggering one billion work days lost, equivalent to shutting down the entire country for three weeks with no pay. That is an intolerable waste for this rich country of ours. That is why I say that economic security is the number one issue today. It is not so recognized by everyone. There are those who oppose the tax cut, the youth employment bill, who oppose more money for depressed areas and job retraining, and other public needs. And they are powerful and articulate. They are campaigning on a platform of so-called individual initiative. They talk loudly of deficits and socialism, but they do not have a single constructive job-creating program of their own, and they oppose the efforts that we are making. And I do not believe that selling the TVA is a program to put people to work.

JOBS COME FIRST

There are those who support our effort for jobs but say it isn't the number one issue. Some may say that civil rights is the number one issue. This nation needs the passage of our bill, if we are to fulfill our constitutional obligations, but no one gains from a fair employment program bill if . . . there is no employment to be had; no one gains by being admitted to a lunch counter if he has no money to spend; no one gains from attending a better school if he doesn't have a job after graduation. No one thinks much of the right to own a good home and to sleep in a good hotel or go to the theater if he has no work and no money. The civil rights legislation is important. But to make that legislation effective we need jobs in the United States.

Some may say that the number one domestic issue is education, and this nation must improve its education. What concerns me almost more than anything is the statistic that there will be eight million young boys and girls coming into the labor market in the 60's who have not graduated from high school. Where are they going to find jobs? Which of your unions is going to be able to put them to work, eight million of them? But the best schools, the best teachers, the best books—all these are of no avail if there are no jobs.

The out-of-work college graduate is just as much out of work as a school drop-out. The family beset by unemployment cannot send a child to college. It may even encourage him to drop out of high school to find a job which he will not keep. Education is a key to the growth of this country. We must educate our children as our most valuable resource. We must make it possible for those who have talent to go to college. But only if those who are educated can find a job. If jobs are the most important domestic issue that this country faces, then clearly no single step can now be more important in sustaining the economy of the United States than the passage of our tax bill. This will help consumer markets and build investment demand and build business incentives and, therefore, provide jobs for a total addition to the economy of the United States in the next months of nearly \$30 billion.

TAX CUT NOW

We dare not wait for this tax cut until it is too late, as perhaps some would have. On the average, this Nation's period of peacetime expansion before the downturn comes leading to a recession, on the average, has lasted 28 months, since 1920, and 32 months since the end of the Second World War. Today we are already in our 33rd month of economic expansion, and we urgently need that tax cut as insurance against a recession next year, and we need that cut where it will do the most good, and the benefits mostly will go to those 2 or 3 million people who will, out of that bill, find new jobs. But tax cuts are not enough and jobs are not enough, and higher earnings and greater growth



and record prosperity are not enough unless that prosperity is used to sustain a better society.

We can take real pride in a \$600 billion economy and 70 million jobs only when they are underwriting to the fullest extent possible to improve our schools, to rebuild our cities, to counsel our youth, to assure our health, and to care for our aged and infirm. Next Monday the House Ways and Means Committee will open its hearings on a bill too long delayed, to provide hospital insurance for our older citizens. These hearings are desirable, but the facts are known. Our older and retired workers are sick more often and for longer periods than the rest of the population. Their income is only half of that of our younger citizens. They cannot afford either the rising cost of hospital care or the rising cost of hospital insurance. Their children cannot afford to pay hospital bills for three generations, for their children, for themselves, and for their parents. I have no doubt that most children are willing to try to do it, but they cannot.

And I think that the United States should meet its responsibilities as a proud and resourceful country. I cannot tell whether we are going to get this legislation before Christmas, but I can say that I believe that this Congress will not go home next summer to the people of the United States without passing this bill. I think we should stay there until we do.

THANKS LABOR

Abraham Lincoln said 100 years ago, "All that serves labor serves the Nation," and I want to express my appreciation for the actions which this organization has taken under the leadership of Mr. Meany, both at home and abroad, to strengthen the United States, to support assistance to those who are trying to be free, to make it possible in this Hemisphere for labor organizations to be organized so that wealth can be more fairly distributed. I saw coming in here a housing project of \$10 million, which the AFL-CIO is putting into a housing project in Mexico.

This hemisphere is our home and I cannot understand, as I read the debates of the Senate, and as I said yesterday, why it is possible for the Soviet Union with one-half of the wealth of the United States to put as much resources and money and assistance into the single island of Cuba of 6 million people as this rich country does in its own backyard for all of the countries of Latin America. Can somebody explain that to me? Strength abroad and strength at home, and strength abroad and strength at home in the final analysis depends upon the vitality of the economy of the United States. If we move from recession to recession, if we are unable to master our economic problems and permit them to master us, if we move into a recession in '64 and demonstrate that the cycle which has been traditional is still with us, if we end up that recession with eight or nine million people out of work, what then is going to be said about the Leader of the West? What we are attempting to do affects not only your members but all of the people of this country, and all those who around the world depend upon us.

WORLD LEADERSHIP

The United States is the keystone in the arch of freedom. However disappointing life may be around the world, the forces of freedom are still in the majority, and they are in the majority after 18 years because the United States has been willing to bear the burden. There are 1 million Americans serving the United States outside its borders. No country in the history of the world has a comparable record. No country has ever sent so many of its sons and daughters around the globe, not to oppress but to help people be free. But we can maintain them, we can maintain our commitments, we can strengthen the cause of freedom, we can provide equality of opportunity for our people only in the final analysis if we provide for a growing and buoyant and progressive economy here in the United States. That is what we are attempting to do.

I come here today and I express my appreciation to the AFL-CIO which, in the 1960's is attempting to do what its fathers did in the 1930's in supporting a program of progress for this country of ours. So we ask your help not next year but now.

Marshal Lyautey, the great French marshal, went out to his gardener and asked him to plant a tree. The gardener said, "Why plant it? It won't flower for 100 years." "In that case," the Marshal said, "plant it this afternoon."

That is what we have to do.

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the support of all Americans as he takes the helm of the ship of state in times of great peril. We in this Union are pledged to give that support as best we can and it shall be done within our capabilities and our limitations.

The shock of the murder of a fine human being and a great President must cause us to re-evaluate our role as Union members and citizens and reminds us that only through fighting together for what is right, can we discharge our responsibilities to our families and to our country.

Forces of evil grow in our Nation. Vicious elements work to divide us, to teach us to hate one another, and to offer our Nation as a sacrifice on the altar of the money-gods and the power-gods who would destroy us. Forces of good, like John F. Kennedy and the forefathers who founded and preserved our country, beckon us to take up the fight for right and human justice for all, at home and abroad. We must make this fight.

Our National economy is fraught with the growing danger of an imbalance which could topple our free system. This must be corrected and corrected soon by the Congress of the United States. The economy of the world is imbalanced to the point where a majority, whose poverty must be relieved, threatens to overwhelm the affluent minority.

Nuclear power in terms of potential annihilation of the world is an awesome reality and overshadows all other considerations.

One bad slip and it's all over—all over the world. The man who snatched us from the brink of international incineration is gone but the peril remains. The man who took his place knows the peril and how to play the odds against it but he must have the full support and understanding of our people if he is to continue to chart the course of survival with honor.

This Union and its members can help President Johnson in many ways. We can alert ourselves to the real issues of our times, think rationally and independently, take on the hate-mongers at every turn, and vote our honest convictions after honest evaluations of fact based on common sense.

It isn't a happy task to write such words as Christmas approaches. Nevertheless, the best Christmas present we could give to our families and our country, is to shake off the apathy which breeds selfishness and provides a nesting-ground for the hate-mongers who infect our National health.

Mrs. Kennedy and her children will have a sad Christmas. The millions of unemployed and their children will have a sad Christmas. We who enjoy the blessings of materialism cannot forget the fact that there, but for the Grace of the Lord, go we.

Perhaps this Christmas will be one which can truly rekindle the spirit of the Prince of Peace. We have lost one of His finest soldiers.



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