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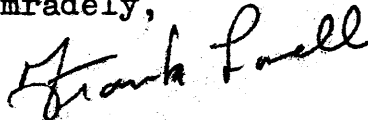
May 29, 1970

TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND NC MEMBERS

Dear Comrades:

The enclosed report on the AFSCME convention is for your information and should be shared with other comrades who are members of this union or working on jobs that come under the jurisdiction of this union. This is an example of what can be done in a favorable situation. As you will see from the confidential and personal nature of this report, it should be kept in your personal possession.

Comradely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frank Lovell".

Frank Lovell

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Report of Eighteenth International Convention of American Federation of State, County, Municipal Employees (AFSCME) in Denver, Colorado, May 4-8, by Debbie Leonard, a delegate from Seattle, Washington.

As you know, our small local sent in a number of resolutions. The most important one for us being a strong antiwar resolution. The local could only afford to pay for two of the three delegates we were entitled to send, so we held a highly successful fund-raising affair at our house and raised \$350.00 - more than enough for the third delegate. The other two were young enthusiastic antiwar types, but inexperienced politically and in union matters. So we three set off cold turkey - without prior contact even with delegates from our own state and with few anticipations of any sort.

When we arrived, we examined our kits and found, much to our surprise, a total of five antiwar resolutions - more than on any other subject - all calling for immediate withdrawal. We noted two from locals in Michigan (one was Wayne State), one from N.Y.C. and one from Berkeley, in addition to ours. Sunday night was a welcoming cocktail party and we immediately began to try to identify delegates from the locals who had submitted anti-war resolutions. It was quickly apparent that there were a large number of black workers - possibly as many as one-quarter - and that the vast majority of delegates were over 40. However, before the end of the cocktail party we had located the Berkeley delegates - three young people who turned out to be a pain-in-the-neck to work with and had located the H.Q. for the Michigan delegation.

Immediately after the affair, we crashed the Michigan hospitality room in a neighboring hotel. I quickly contacted one John Zupan - a prominent delegate in the Wayne State local - who I shortly ascertained to be a Workers League chap. After brief arguments, I was able to get him to agree to subsume our differences and found no problem cooperating with him for the remainder of the Convention. He was pushing one Bob Grovesnor for Internat'l V-P - Grovesnor is the Pres. of Council Seven which is on record against the war. However, none of the Grovesnor campaign literature mentioned anything about the war. I nailed Grovesnor on this and told him I would promote critical support among the rank-and-file for his candidacy only if he came out actively against the war. This turned out to be important as he was on the Resolutions Committee - an appointed committee. Before long he was wearing a peace button - although he didn't get elected as the main contenders were black candidates with more behind them. (They also, however, were against the war.)

On Monday, May 4, it occurred to us that it would be a good move to get large quantities of the traditional peace button for sale and/or distribution. We located 200 at the AFSC in Denver and, as it turned out, this became a key intervention. We began selling and giving out buttons for visual effect and to identify ourselves among the 2,000 or so present.

By Monday night, after diligent effort, we had added two black delegates from University of Chicago and a number of black transit workers from Philadelphia to our informal caucus. We spent considerable time on Monday attempting to find out if we could maneuver ourselves onto the Resolutions Committee - but that was totally controlled from the top. We then nailed one of the Washington delegates who was also running for Internat'l V-P, a young fellow whose antiwar sympathies were buried far below the surface for political reasons, who was also appointed to the Resolutions Committee, and made it clear to him that we wished to appear before the Committee on the Vietnam resolutions and wanted to know when they would be discussed and when we could speak to them. After considerable pressure on this fellow - one Larry McKibben - and on our council rep., Norm Scut another ancient liberal - we were assured of being informed when the committee would hear us and, accordingly, began organizing a rank-and-file appearance before it, for Tuesday evening.

I found New York hard to crack at first. They were very clan-ish and all involved in meetings eliciting support for Basil Patterson, who had arrived on the scene and whose campaign had been endorsed by Wurf, and who had been given speaking time at the last minute. But, early Tues. morning, because of my extensive circulation and peace button, two New York delegates approached me and asked what we were going to do on Kent State and, like tumbling bricks, the whole New York delegation opened wide and I worked very closely with them ever after. By this time, I was in touch with the N.O. over the Kent State affair and went to look for the Berkeley delegates whom I knew would be the first to move. Without consultation (they continuously disappeared throughout the Convention and refused to help work on delegates and, in essence, were always accusing me of finking out - although I never nailed down their specific politics) they had prepared a resolution to introduce as an Emergency Resolution on the Kent State developments. They brought it to the floor Tuesday morning; it was referred to the Resolutions Committee, and they were assured it would come back to the floor Wednesday morning. The resolution was substantially good, except for an unqualified attack on the National Guard which, as you can see, I intervened to modify before the Resolutions Committee.

Tuesday night, at the same time as the free showing of the Molly Maguires, the Resolution Committee took up the question. (Let me make an aside to say that one of the most difficult things to contend with was the partying atmosphere, the tourist trips planned, the extensive drinking and partying, etc., and much operating was needed - more and more as the days went by - which

was something the bureaucrats were counting on - just to get delegates in force onto the Convention floor. By the way, this was not a problem at all with the younger delegates who were, like our delegation, totally tirelessly devoted to getting this thing through.) We organized representatives from Michigan, the Berkeley kids, New Yorkers and a few strays to appear before it and established, from the beginning, that we, as the makers of the original resolutions, had to be consulted before any substitute resolutions were adopted by the committee. Only about one-half of the 25 member committee ever showed up - and the same group. The committee, under the chairmanship of John Zinos, a lawyer from Wisconsin, turned out, under pressured reinforcement from our continual intervention, to be very liberal and those who were sitting on the fence came over nicely. They had worked out a very fair substitute resolution, combining very adequately the main features of all five resolutions and, after 2½ hours of discussion, the committee unanimously recommended adoption.

By this time, combined with outside events, we were beginning to get a tiny bit more optimistic. We spent the rest of Tuesday night visiting delegations, getting rid of more buttons and, generally, trying to tap and influence the rank-and-file sentiment. I began aligning myself with Aldo Del Vecchio and Al Diop, two young delegates from N.Y.C. in Council 37. Aldo was on the Resolution Committee - he had sent his name to Washington, D.C. weeks in advance - and Al Diop, a black local president, had drafted the anti-war resolution from New York. They introduced me around the New York delegation and we proceeded to orient them (Michigan and New York could control the Convention) to mobilizing for the showdown.

At first it seemed that there was no reason for the resolution not to come up on Wednesday. But I knew things were going too smoothly - something was the matter. Throughout the Convention floor debate was pretty free - the problem was the agenda, which was totally controlled by Jerry Wurf and Joe Ames. The substitute resolution had to be printed and distributed to all delegates before it could be brought to the floor, and when we didn't see it Wednesday morning or afternoon, we knew we were in trouble. Delegates had been prepared for it on Wednesday, and were planning trips, etc. on Thursday and Friday. The N.Y. delegation, in large numbers, was planning to go to Las Vegas.

So we went into high gear. Finally, after bombarding everyone, on Wednesday afternoon, Vic Gottbaum, from District 37, came up to me. Up to this point he had played no role and, I am convinced, only took part now because the overwhelming sentiment had already been mobilized in New York, Michigan, California, Pennsylvania, Maryland, D.C. - and he knew the Resolutions Committee was recommending adoption. However, once he got on the bandwagon, we were - as it proved - in the winning ballpark. So, on Wednesday

afternoon, Vic came to me and said that his understanding was that Jerry Wurf would support the resolution if we took out the one clause that all candidates for public office had to be against the war before they were endorsed by AFSCME. This came to be called the "loyalty oath." I had had my doubts about this getting through all along, but the Resolutions Committee had not picked up on it. This was a fringe benefit of the resolution and not germane to its substance, so I agreed to discuss this with the other makers. Again, on Wednesday night we appeared before the Resolutions Committee and this provision was deleted. We thought we were closer to home base, but we clearly realized that, without Wurf's endorsement, the chances of the resolution getting printed and distributed in time to hit the floor were very poor. However, on this basis, Vic Gottbaum, representing 80,000 members already on record against the war, agreed to lead the floor fight. On Wednesday night we also amended and got the Resolutions Committee to recommend adoption of, the Kent State resolution.

Now we were dealing with the bureaucrats. Gottbaum assured us the resolution would hit the floor, as amended, Thursday morning and, accordingly we spent the whole night organizing the rank-and-file to get their bodies to the Convention by 9:30. Signs went up in the Albany - where the New Yorkers were staying - that all District 37 delegates were required to report to the Convention at 9:30 AM the next morning - and I got the word out to Michigan, Illinois and Pa. The only pro-war speaking before the Resolutions Committee had come from Boston and Aldo, an ex-Bostonian, contacted the people he knew there to guarantee a split vote in that delegation.

And, somewhat miraculously, at 9:30 on Thursday morning, delegates began pouring into the hall. (You have to understand what a problem this had become by Wednesday.)

But, we got there at 9:00 AM and, sure enough, the worst had happened. The resolutions had not been distributed. Immediately I went after Vic Gottbaum, who referred me to Julie Toplos, a minor piecard from New York. Julie handed me two sheets of a substitute resolution (copy he handed me is enclosed) and told me Jerry Wurf would oppose the resolution recommended by the Resolutions Committee, but had agreed to support the one he had just handed me. Needless to say, I ranted and railed about union democracy to Julie and Vic for about one-half hour - and was joined by several other rank-and-filers. However, we were left with the reality that it was Thursday morning and - big surprise - the bureaucrats controlled the agenda. So I looked at the resolution. The main thing that had been left out was a direction to the International Executive Committee to take action in forming an antiwar coalition and an insistence that the resolution be presented before all AFL-CIO bodies. However, there was also a principled problem - one we had built our intervention on. Instead of "immediate withdrawal" - "rapid withdrawal" was used. I consulted with Aldo - my main contact on the Resolutions Committee - changed "rapid" to "immediate" on my copy, handed it to Vic and told him, considering where things were, I would argue for acceptance of the resolution if they brought that change. Within minutes, the

word came back that Jerry Wurf would accept the change. We called a Resolutions Committee meeting for 12:30 PM; Aldo arranged to ask Wurf from the floor when the antiwar resolution would come up to hold delegates and we frantically contacted all the original makers, some additional spokesmen for ballast and got the word around that we would get it on the floor that afternoon. Needless to say, most of what happened at that morning's formal session escaped me.

We had problems from Berkeley. When confronted, Steve Willet stated if the original resolution didn't pass, it would "tell me what I need to know about this union." Marty Morgenstern, who had become increasingly active, cornered him, while I worked on Phyllis O'Donnell and, by 12:30 we finally had them lined up. But we packed the Resolutions Committee meeting just in case we had to override Berkeley's commendable, but ill-advised, "principles." While waiting for the Resolutions Committee, we all met with Vic Gottbaum and reached agreement that we would support this substitute resolution, which was now guaranteed passage, if we had agreement not to accept any amendments that would dilute it. I was pleased to see the younger members of the Resolutions Committee and Bob Grovesnor go through the same arguments about union democracy that I had earlier - they were pretty mad at the bureaucratic maneuvering and lack of respect for their decisions - but, faced with reality, and realizing the historical import of getting a resolution through, and the fact that this one was a principled stand - they finally voted to accept it. Alton Williams, a black delegate from Oakland, California was the single vote against it - on the question of democracy - and then he defended it on the floor - which gave me a beautiful opportunity to publicly applaud him at a victory party that night. We also found out that the previous resolution, unanimously adopted by the Resolutions Committee, had been very literally locked up and was unavailable.

So, finally that afternoon, just after a demonstration of student protestors from Denver University had routed their march past the Convention hall to remind delegates of the bigger issues, the resolution came to the floor. However, not after a last minute panic when it was reported that the printing machinery had broken down. This turned out to be an inexplicable false rumor, however, and, as we stalled off the Resolutions Committee report and maneuvered to hold delegates by the promise that it was coming, I took the job of pushing the Sgt.-of-Arms to organize distribution the minute it arrived. Support was clearly overwhelming - there was no point, from the viewpoint of timing, for all of us to speak - although, by then, I sure wanted to. Vic gave a very forceful antiwar talk; support came quickly from some as yet uncontacted quarters and there was only one speaker in opposition. The resolution won clearly by voice vote and when the one delegate asked for roll-call vote he could only get about 10-15 delegates when 25% was required. An earlier call for quorum that afternoon established that well over a quorum was clearly present.

After the resolution clearly passed, Wurf made a statement

indicating that, although he had not participated in discussion, he wanted the delegates to know that his position was not neutral and that he supported the resolution and would do his best to carry it out.

However, they were still worried about Kent State. Vic refused to get involved in that and kept asking me what Berkeley was planning to do. It was clearly not possible to bring it up Thursday afternoon as it had not been distributed and Phyllis, rather than waiting until after the entire Resolutions report, broke in to ask about it - against our worked out plan - and got herself promptly ruled out of order as well as turning off the Resolutions Committee chairman who had been cooperating with us fairly well. Throughout the Convention the Berkeley people refused to work in the informal caucus or discuss tactics and, since they weren't staying at any of the hotels and wouldn't tell us where they were staying it was rather provoking to deal with them. Anyway, the Kent State resolution finally did come up Friday morning and barely slid by. It was fortunate no one called a quorum because there wasn't one, but it was nice icing on the cake. (By the way I had much earlier on argued with Berkeley, although I supported their resolution, to accept the proposal of simply issuing a statement of support for the National Day of Mourning and a call for union action on that day, with possibly some action from the Convention itself such as going to Denver University, since I knew we could get that through without problems and I could easily see we'd need all our big guns for the antiwar resolution. Needless to say they rejected this out of hand - and since only tactics were involved I didn't push too hard.)

Very certainly the union has a great deal of potential and the bureaucrats are quite uneasy about it. It is now the eighth largest union in the AFL-CIO with 460,000 members and growing at the rate of 1,000 a week. Six of every ten jobs created now are in government and only one-third of the public employees sector is organized. The postal strike opened new horizons which the leadership has to endorse, but is nevertheless worried about its ability to control. More and more of the strikes in AFSCME are resulting in confrontations and arrests - 100 members were arrested in the last Atlanta strike. The biggest membership potential is among third-worlders and ex-students - both of which are hard to control. The delegates from Ohio told me, straight out, that the students at Ohio University were the key to their victory in the strike there and that the youngsters at Kent State were like their own kids. Last year AFSCME grew by 50,000.

Debbie Leonard