

The problem of racism in Labor Unions

by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

Washington — A revealing clue to why a labor leader so well regarded as I. W. Abel faced any challenge at all for reelection as president of the United Steelworkers Union (USW) Tuesday can be found in the tempestuous mail he received last year. Steel workers are not prolific letter writers. But they kept Abel's mailbox filled last year with abusive — often obscenely abusive — letters protesting his support of Negro political candidates and his condemnation of white racism as a member of the Kerner Commission on Urban Riots.

A favorite form of correspondence was to mail Abel clippings from "Steel Labor" (the official USW publication filled with praise for such extracurricular activities) after scrawling outraged comments in the margin.

THE SAME Negrophobia responsible for this poison-pen activity explains the alarm that seized the USW hierarchy when a little-known union functionary challenged Abel for the presidency with indications of a close race.

Since then, only prodigious efforts by the Steelworker establishment has insured a comfortable margin for Abel.

But quite apart from the size of Abel's victory Tuesday this much is clear: rank-and-file union members are showing deep resentment of what they consider pro-Negro policies of their leadership.

Racial feeling is not the only and probably not the most important factor behind the campaign against Abel, by Emil E. Narick, an assistant general counsel for the USW when he announced his candidacy last September (since demoted to the union's research department).

THE FACT that Narick, unknown to USW rank-and-filers, could frighten Abel, considered by many as heir-apparent to AFL-CIO president George Meany, cannot be explained only in racial terms.

Narick has benefited in part by the alienation between membership and leadership throughout the labor movement (which, ironically, benefited Abel when he unseated David McDonald as USW president in 1965). Specifically, Narick has capitalized on down-to-earth complaints against the Abel leadership over such issues as letting management schedule vacations in winter.

Beyond this, Abel has suffered from what one labor intellectual calls the "philistinism" of rank-and-filers who resent Abel's taking time off to serve President Johnson as an ambassador to the

United Nations or as a member of the Kerner Commission.

It is only a short hop from philistinism to racialism. Irritation with time spent by Abel on the Kerner Commission is aggravated by the commission's leniency toward black rioting. Furthermore, USW members in Gary and Cleveland still resent Abel's 1967 trips to those cities in behalf of successful Negro candidates for mayor.

WHILE NOT inciting racial feeling either directly or through codewords, Narick's campaign literature nevertheless craftily recalls the Kerner Commission and Abel's Gary-Cleveland trips by pledging: "Mr. Emil Narick will be a FULL TIME president and will not become involved or preoccupied with assignments or projects that are not related to the best interest of the total membership."

Moreover, Narick's vote is expected to run highest tomorrow where resentment over Abel's civil rights activity is most intense — particularly in Alabama's Bessemer mills.

With cool heads calculating last Christmas that Narick could roll up 45 percent of the vote, the USW machinery hurriedly organized a detailed

campaign that should have limited Narick to 30 percent at most and perhaps down to 10 percent.

For instance, although Abel won only 9 percent of the election committee's vote in Local 2227, Braddock, Pa., last Nov. 26, he was expected to carry that local.

BUT IN breaking down Narick support, USW leaders skirted the racial issue rather than meeting it head-on — just as they did in diverting Steelworker support from George Wallace to Hubert Humphrey. Instead of defending Abel's civil rights record, they stressed his fattening of paychecks without a strike.

Indeed, some USW functionaries — such as Orval Kincaid, anti-Negro sub-district director for Gary — have supported Abel against Narick despite vehement disapproval of Abel's racial liberalism. Even more liberal USW chieftains prudently advise that "Steel Labor" should play down Abel's civil rights activities.

The question thus remains whether a labor leader strongly for civil rights can withstand the future challenge from a formidable adversary supported not only by rank-and-filers but by the Orval Kincaids.

1969 Publishers-Hall Syd.

Editorials

Commentary

Great demise

of 1969

On a 10-point scale, the work of ASUN's Faculty Evaluation Committee ranks somewhere below 1.

The inaction of the committee during the past year means students will not have a faculty evaluation book for next semester's pre-registration.

Chairman Bob Zucker said lack of student interest and funds killed the book. These problems are real enough; but, it was the job of the committee at least to seek solutions.

Instead of finding answers, the committee members chose to bemoan the demise of the book. The book didn't fail — they did.

So now let us evaluate the Committee's work. It was:

- (1) hotched
- (2) screwed
- (3) what work?
- (4) what committee?

Campus Opinion . . .

An 'old' definition of patriotism is alive

I wholeheartedly agree with Warren Storms (Letter to the Editor, 2-17-69) when he observes that patriotism is not dead.

In spite of the efforts of large numbers of people to thwart the American dream by supporting the anti-humanitarian oligarchy that presently manipulates power in the name of the American people to thwart the American dream by supporting generation of idealistic American youth who are worthy sons (and daughters) of Thomas Paine, Patrick Henry and John Brown.

This movement represents patriotism in its finest form. Like the revolutionaries of old, this generation refuses to lead "lives of quiet desperation" or work feverishly to hide the oppressive aspects of the controlling corporate cliques.

RATHER, THE movement demands a return

to the people of the freedom to determine the quality and direction of their own lives, and, further, that this freedom be extended to include all of the American people, and, indeed, all the peoples of the world.

(Parenthetically, my positive orientation toward the movement does not imply the perfection of all movement people. Movement people should be subject to (and at times deserve) criticism and reprobation. Instead, they usually receive stereotyping and red-baiting.)

It is extremely unfortunate that Mr. Storms wishes to narrow the meaning of the word patriotism so that it includes only people who lack the vision or courage to force ossified institutions to realize the ideals of the American revolution and the American people.

HOPEFULLY Mr. Storms will take the opportunity (albeit limited) which this University provides to examine the ideals of early American revolutionaries. Meanwhile, Mr. Storms try not to get in the way of today's true American patriots. David L. Sallach

Dear Editor: The forthcoming ASUN constitutional convention merits the attention of all students concerned about the role of the university in their own lives, and in the life of the nation.

Student government can, through the impact of the university on the society, play a significant role in this impact. Student government can only play this larger role if it also plays a significant role in the university of which it is a part.

ASUN does not play a significant role. This is recognized by everyone on our campus. Such recognition is often oblique, ranging from the apathy of the students to the administration's ignoring of its programs and policies.

THE DEBATE over reappointment is at its heart a debate about creating a more significant student government. Unfortunately, mere Senate reappointment alone will not solve the problem.

Reappointment is a part of the solution. There is, however, more which must be done. I propose the following as tentative parts of a complete solution.

1) The Court must be made subordinate to the legislative and executive branches. It should retain jurisdiction over lesser student organizations.

This will increase the power of the active branches of the government by denying the Court the power to halt their actions. The analogy is to the "legal supremacy" of the British Parliament in the British constitution.

2) EXECUTIVE departments should be created to effect political action. At present, ASUN has no real machinery for effecting action. I suggest

a department for the redress of student grievances to the administration. This department will regularize the handling of individual wrongs.

Second, a Department of Planning should be established. This will look forward to possible problems, and attempt to meet them before they reach the critical stage. Third, a Department of Finance should be created. This will handle the funding of programs and operational expenses. Fourth, provision for the creation by legislative act of other agencies and departments for specific programs, such as Faculty Evaluation, should be made.

At present, these functions are either not provided for at all, or are loosely under the President and his staff, the Director of Records, Treasurer, and Secretary. The committees appointed to handle these functions suffer from lack of a defined role in ASUN and the university community.

3) The heads of these departments should come from the leading members of the legislative branch as chosen by the President and approved by the legislative branch.

THIS WILL force the President to establish and maintain a working majority in the legislative branch. This majority will allow for innovative leadership, a sorely needed commodity. The present structure disallows such leadership through its disorder.

4) Reapportionment, or rather, total restructuring of the legislative branch on a model similar to that espoused by Mary Parker Follett in her book, *The New State* (1918) should be effected.

Such a restructuring would make participatory democracy a reality on the student level at this university. Space prohibits a detailed discussion of Follett's plan, I leave it to members of the convention to study and apply it.

The foregoing suggestions will go far toward making student government a reality on this campus. They will make it an effective part of the university community. As such, it should be welcomed by student and administrator alike.

Thomas P. Briggs

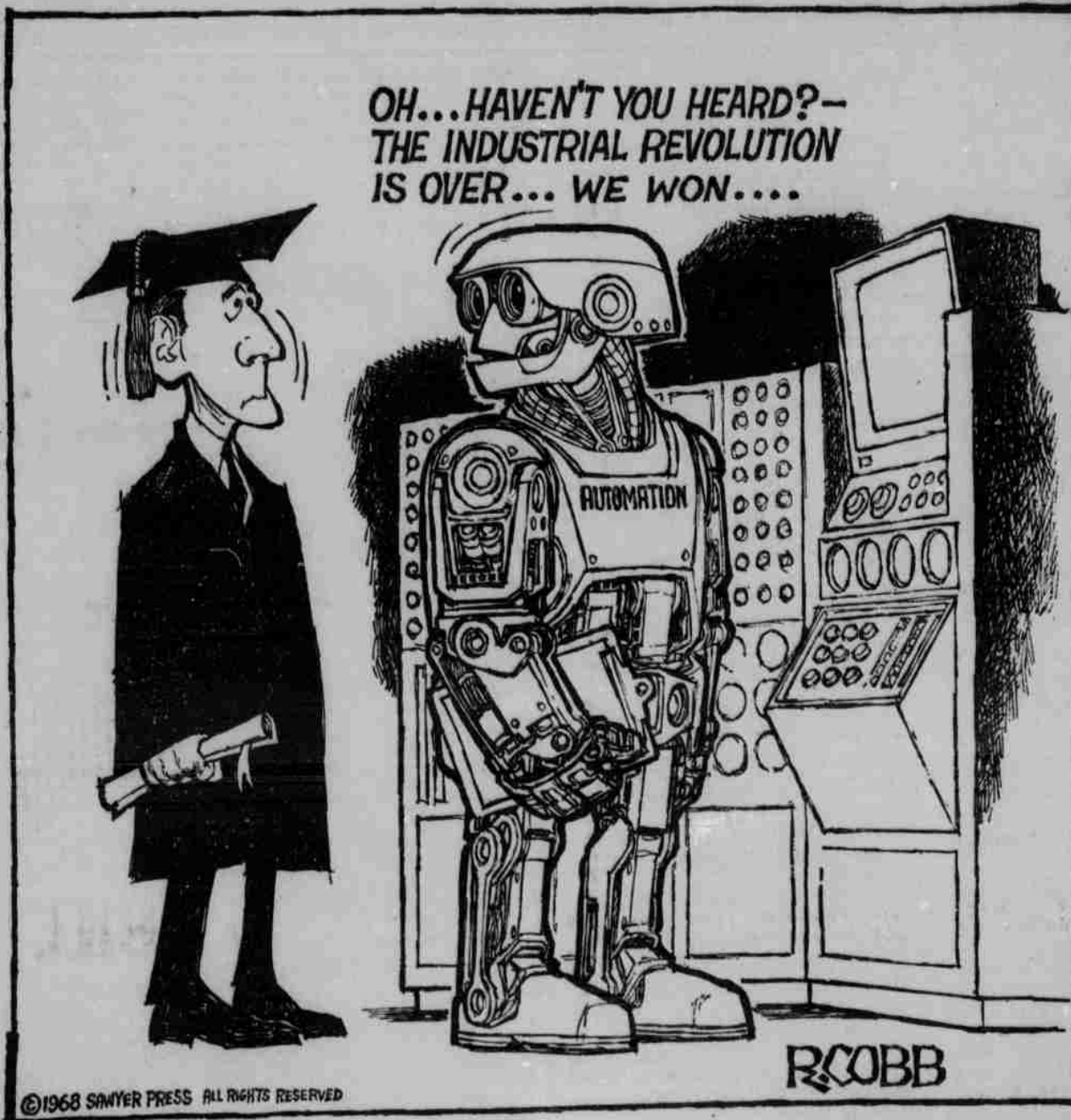
Dear Editor:

It seems that some of the tenets the "radicals" in America adhere to quite strongly are that most beliefs are fictions agreed upon for particular purposes, that ends justify means, that all morality is relative.

I think it important that they realize the means can make the ends, that their method of arguing can justify anything.

These people must be shown that they are professing a relativism which will ruin radicalism and even liberalism because if radical tenets are adopted by the power structure, as they have already in some instances, radicalism will be crushed.

Rod McCall



The lonely crowd

... by Dave Buntain

The Centennial Day Convocation was a flop.

Those who were there saw that it was the minute they walked into the near-barren Coliseum. Those who weren't — and they number in the tens of thousands — have undoubtedly heard by now that less than a thousand loyal Cornhuskers showed up to honor the University on its one-hundredth birthday.

By almost any standards the Convocation "bombed out."

THIS SHOULD come as no surprise. Indeed, most students had predicted it. University leaders, nonetheless, were flabbergasted that NU students would pass up this "fitting tribute to a great University" for a couple of extra hours of sleep.

Friday's fizzle affords a clear view of the gulf of understanding that separates these leaders from their student constituency.

The question, "Why did the Convocation fail?" can best be answered with another question: "Who is Robert Goheen?" For it was the selection of the widely-respected but little-known Princeton president which signaled the death of the convocation.

NOT THAT Goheen is necessarily a loser. His academic credentials are certainly impeccable. But "Goheen" is not a household word.

It is a hard fact-of-life that Nebraska students, being normal human beings, are attracted more by a speaker's charisma than by his credentials.

Nebraska Administrators and Faculty should have known this. But it was apparent from the beginning that the Convocation was not to be a student-oriented event.

Indeed, the entire program appears to have developed to gratify the wishes of certain Administrators in addition to performing its commemorative function.

CONSIDER, for example, the awarding of the honorary degrees. Dr. Goheen and the other three male recipients are all affiliated with the Rockefeller Foundation in a variety of capacities.

This is quite a coincidence until you realize that Dr. Hardin "happens" to be on the Foundation's Board of Directors. Which leads one to wonder by what criteria honorary degree candidates are actually chosen.

The Administration's heavy hand was also evident in the tapping of the major speaker — he certainly wasn't picked for his oratorical ability.

Although Goheen's appearance was attributed to a faculty committee, his association with Dr. Hardin was undoubtedly a key factor in his selection for the Convo address. Those who sat through his uninspired, stumbling presentation could not help but envy Gov. Tiemann who had the foresight to stride off the stage and "leave for home" just prior to the address.

ADMINISTRATION-FACULTY domination carried over to all facets of the Centennial Day activities. Not one student was on stage for the Convo program and only "token" students were invited to the luncheon.

In fact, one student member of the Convo Committee which sponsored Goheen was even omitted from the luncheon guest list.

Of course, none of these factors directly resulted in the student "boycott" (Sleep-In?) of Friday's event. They are instead symptomatic of a "student be damned" attitude which inevitably leads to failures like the Centennial program.

Events such as all-University Convocations could serve as worthwhile supplements to the life of NU's academic community. But they will be worthwhile only when they are dictated by student interest rather than administrative appeal.

The Daily Nebraskan is solely a student publication, independent of the University of Nebraska's administration, faculty and student government. Opinion expressed on the editorial page is that only of the Nebraskan's editorial staff.

DAILY NEBRASKAN

Second class postage paid at Lincoln, Neb. Telephone: Editor, 472-2228; News, 472-2229. Business 472-2230. Subscription rates are \$4 per semester or \$6 per academic year. Published Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday during the school year except during vacations.

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"Speaking of bull sessions, Mr. Garrison, how's the trial going?"