

LABOR

Engineers moving to unionize

The fact that engineers are considering a union is indicative of the changes in the engineering industry.

By John Markoff

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ROCKWELL INTERNATIONAL, the nation's sixth largest defense contractor, used millions of dollars in government money, including funds programmed for the B-1 bomber and the Space Shuttle, in an attempt to defeat a union organizing drive by aerospace engineers.

The misuse of government contract funds came to light after the company last year turned around an almost certain representational election victory by the National Engineers and Professionals Association (NEPA), an affiliate of the United Auto Workers.

Rockwell kept almost 1,000 B-1 division engineers on its payroll after the B-1 was cancelled by President Carter on June 30 last year until the August 15 election. The engineers were laid off the following week.

NEPA officials say that by keeping the engineers on the payroll Rockwell scared its employees out of voting for the union.

Rockwell spokesman Earl Blount says the union charges are "absurd." "We had a certain amount of business that had to be performed. That's what determined who was kept and who was laid off. At the time we were still engineering the No. 4 aircraft.

Waiting for the axe.

Neal Manning, a NEPA organizer, says, however, that Rockwell held the engineers, despite laying off 3,000 blue-collar workers a week after the B-1 cancellation, in order to cut union support.

"This is fact," Manning says, "they held them for six weeks in the plant and, of course, they had all these poor guys in the situation of waiting to see who's going to get their neck cut off next. The union election was pending. Our meetings

at the B-1 Division dropped off tremendously during this period. The only people we had left were the rank-and-file leadership because everybody knew that there had to be another massive layoff."

Manning says he is certain the Air Force must have been supporting the Rockwell campaign to defeat NEPA. "The Air Force held 1,000 people on the payroll, they [Rockwell] had to have an agreement with the Air Force to do it because the money from the B-1 contract wasn't there anymore."

NEPA officials also charge that Rockwell used federal contract funds to finance several hundred anti-union meetings.

After meetings, which lasted up to several hours and were mandatory for thousands of Rockwell employees, according to the union, management instructed the engineers to bill the time spent in the meeting to government contract numbers for the projects they were employed on.

The union has collected affidavits from hundreds of Rockwell engineers, stating that they used the government contract account numbers to bill for the time they spent in the meetings at which management attempted to convince engineers not to support the union.

One engineer who is employed at the Rockwell Space Division in Downey, Calif., stated, "I charged the time I spent at this meeting to the project account number that I was working on at the time—the Space Shuttle Orbiter. I was not given a special charge number for the time I spent at this meeting."

The Pentagon taking a side.

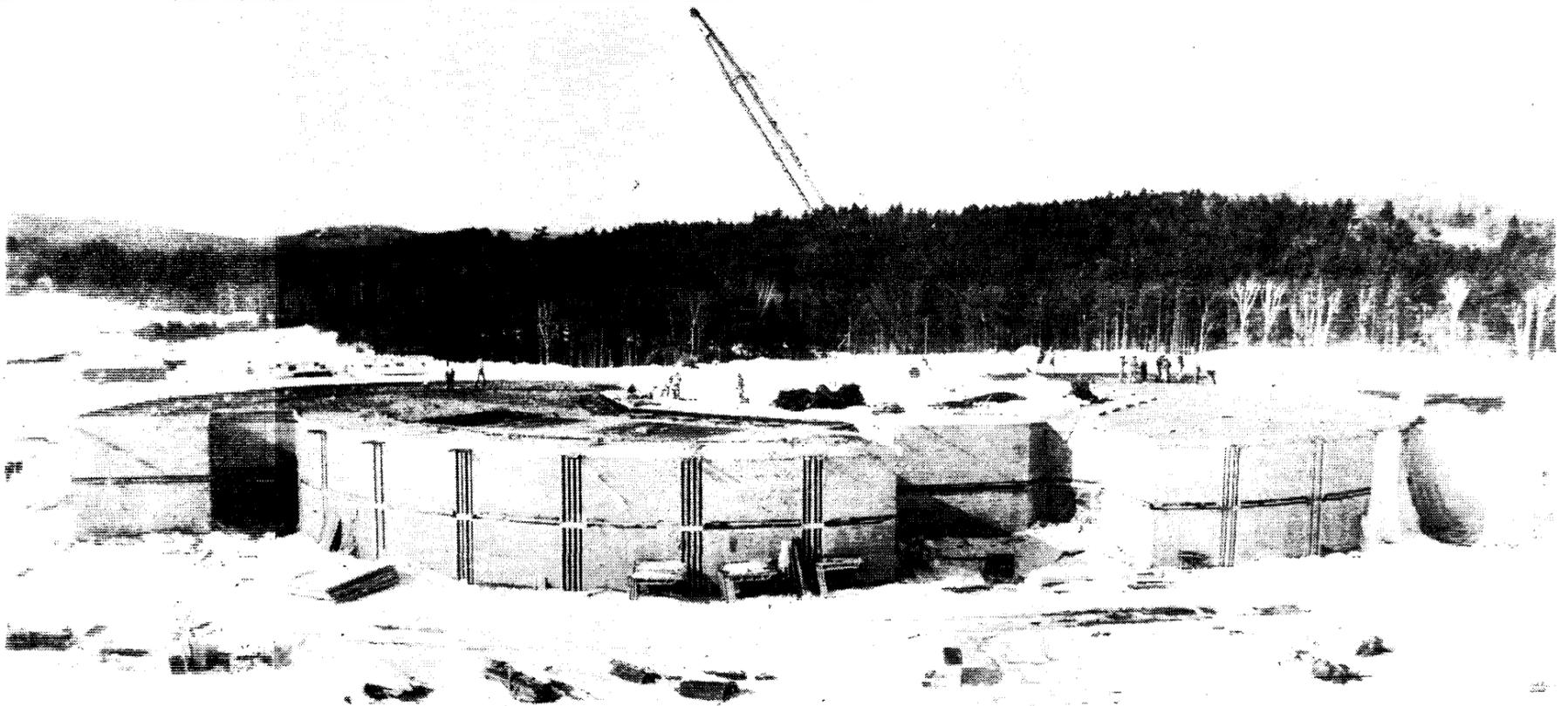
The union believes that in addition to engineering time, Rockwell also charged managerial time spent opposing the union to the government.

NEPA took their case last month to Elmer Strats, U.S. Comptroller General, after the Department of Defense refused to disallow the Rockwell charges on the grounds that the meetings appeared to be legitimate labor relations costs.

A Defense Department memorandum said, "Judged by a standard of reasonableness, an anti-union stance on the part of an employer should not be assumed to be unreasonable. Such an attitude may be taken for a sound business purpose."

"This kind of reasoning is ridiculous," Manning says. "It amounts to the Pentagon taking the side of the employer in a labor dispute."

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PRISONS

Prison will be Olympic legacy

By Hub McMahon

APLENIES FROM ALL OVER the world will come to this country for the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, N.Y., to live in a prison. In a remarkable coincidence of interests the Lake Placid Olympic Organizing Committee, scrambling for a federal agency willing to fund housing for the Olympic games, has found that fences and other security measures required to protect athletes nicely mesh Federal Bureau of Prisons specifications for a youth prison. So when the athletes leave, the winners will move in.

The match is not quite perfect, however. The current guidelines specify that new prisons be built in metropolitan areas, close to social services and the home communities of most offenders. Lake Placid is 350 miles from the nearest major city.

But the unique arrangements between the Bureau of Prisons and the Olympic Committee had other advantages. Because use as a prison was only a "secondary" purpose of the site, it was possible

to secure approval for funding the prison without going through the normal authorization committees in Congress. Approval to divert already apportioned funds for the Olympic prison was quietly secured through a subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee.

Rep. Robert Drinan (D-MA), a member of the Judiciary subcommittee that would normally review new prison construction, only learned of the plans when he ran across them in a newspaper.

Similar shortcuts seem to have been used by Olympic promoters to meet federal environmental impact statements and construction contract bidding requirements for the prison.

To Andy Hall of the National Moratorium on Prison Construction all this makes the Olympic prison a "fantastic symbol" of the way the prison bureaucracy operates. "They will grab any chance to expand," Hall comments.

Expanding all over.

The Olympic prison is only one facet of a massive expansion of the federal and

state prison systems now under way.

The June 1975 Bureau of Prisons master plan called for building 34 new prisons at an estimated cost of \$460 million. This was shaved down from an even more ambitious 66 prisons costing \$670 million.

A recent study by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration reported that state and federal governments plan to spend \$1.4 billion between now and 1982 to increase the national prison capacity by 24 percent, or 62,000 beds, to a high of 325,000.

Federal funding is expected to underwrite a significant amount of this prison construction. Bills offered by Sen. Robert Griffin (R-MI) and Rep. Allen Ertel (D-PA) or by Sen. Joseph Biden (D-DE) propose that the federal government subsidize state prison construction. Biden's bill, with the highest subsidy, calls for \$1.55 billion over a three-year period to help build state prisons.

One reason the Olympic prison, as a symbol of this heading expansion, is a likely international issue is that the U.S. imprisonment rate is already far higher than that of other Western countries. In

1974 the American rate was 212 in prison per 100,000 population, compared with 18 per 100,000 in Holland, 28 in Denmark and 75 in England.

Ironically, one of the more important victories of the prison reform movement has helped speed new prison construction.

In the 1970s federal courts began active intervention in prison conditions, and found conditions existing in a number of state prison systems, including Alabama and Arkansas, to constitute "cruel and unusual punishment."

The response of legislatures in these states has been massive new programs of prison building to reduce overcrowding, blamed for many of the problems courts have found.

Even in states not yet in trouble in the courts, such as North Carolina, legislatures have adopted new construction programs to meet acknowledged problems. Prison administrators have found that "being under the gun" from the courts has given them unprecedented leverage in lobbying to expand prison systems.

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INTERNATIONAL LABOR

Auto unions face protectionist pressure

Charles Rooney

World Automotive Conference delegates were urged not to separate Ford U.S. and Ford Europe.

By Charles Rooney

DETROIT

THE INTERNATIONAL METAL-workers Federation (IMF) held its World Automotive Conference in Detroit May 30-June 1. Delegates from all five continents and 25 countries represented more than 13.5 million workers. The biggest and most powerful delegations were from the U.S., West Germany and Japan.

The three-day conference offered a fascinating glimpse into international union dilemmas. The IMF unions are facing the same issues as the multinational firms whose workers they represent, above all free trade vs. protectionism.

Free trade advocates.

At the first day's press conference attention focused on employment, and the leaders of the Big Three countries' unions showed themselves to be free trade advocates, though with considerable differences among them.

Ichiro Shioji, president of the Japanese Auto Workers Union, startled listeners with his matter-of-fact acknowledgment that Japan will probably lose 100,000 jobs as a result of the expected moves by Nissan (Datsun) and Toyota to establish plants in the U.S. Shioji said that the losses were inevitable, and that he would expect greater job loss if they were postponed.

German delegate Hans Mayr, vice president of the German Metalworkers Union (IG Metall), spoke in a similar vein. In the German system of "Mitbestimmung," or co-determination, the union has only one less representative on the boards of directors of large firms than have the companies' stockholders. When Volkswagen decided to build its Rabbit in the U.S., the union concurred. Like the Japanese, the leadership was convinced that if they delayed the competition from abroad would become more severe and the result would be the loss of more jobs. The corporation also assured the union that no jobs will be lost.

The contrast with the American situation was striking. UAW president Doug Fraser complained bitterly that General Motors had violated the promise of "neutrality" toward unionization drives that it had made in the 1976 contract. Fraser claimed that GM has not been neutral toward the unionization of southern plants. He charged that it did not demonstrate the same respect for the right of the union to exist as did Volkswagen in the unionization drive at its new Pennsylvania plant. Fraser cited GM's refusal to transfer employees to the South. According to Fraser, GM fears that these employees will want to unionize.

Fraser reiterated the UAW's view that they were not opposed to the corporations' establishing plants abroad provided that the movement was in both directions.

A realistic note was sounded by IMF secretary-general Herman Rebban, who pointed out that free trade is not a burning issue at the moment because of the relative prosperity of the auto industry internationally. The situation could change dramatically, however, if the position of the automobile industry deteriorates.

Development of a world car.

Consequently, the future health of the automobile industry was of great inter-



Argentine trade unionist Francisco Correa addresses the IMF conference.

est to the gathering. Economist Michael Hinks-Edwards identified factors that have radically transformed the automobile industry internationally in the last two decades: the spectacular rise of the Japanese auto industry; the growth of local assembly/manufacture in developing markets; an increase by 250 percent in the West European car production capacity; and the development of a potentially huge auto industry in the East European bloc nations.

Production of automobiles in Western Europe, North America and Japan has declined from 93 percent of the world's total in the mid-'60s to 70 percent today. Ownership has gone from 88 percent to 83 percent. In spite of this shift, control of the industry will continue to rest with the western industrialized countries, especially those leading the field for the new "world car" market.

The "world car" has developed from the demands for fuel conservation. American producers have begun to design small cars along the lines of the Japanese and Europeans. This trend has creat-

ed conditions for great economies of scale, because now one to two million cars of the same model can be produced for a world market. He sees GM and Ford as clearly the front-runners, because they have balanced strategies.

The irony, according to Hinks-Edwards, is that the Japanese first developed this idea for a big world market but are now in trouble because they failed to recognize that the "world car" must be produced as well as sold world-wide.

Production of the Ford "world car" (code-named Erica) is distributed across continents; major component production is organized into high-volume standardized runs, and the investment and jobs pie has been divided into several pieces, yielding substantial pay-off and ensuring access to important markets.

In spite of the Japanese problems, though, the European companies face the biggest problems, including loss of market to the Japanese and American subsidiaries operating abroad.

According to Hinks-Edwards, unions expect protectionist measures in the auto

industry. In response, they need to look at multinational corporations internationally. Ford Spain, Hinks-Edwards insists, cannot be separated from Ford Europe or Ford U.S.A.

This last point was foremost in the consciousness of those attending. Participants heard of the embattled unionists up against government-supported multinationals in Spain, South Africa and South America.

In Brazil, the largest and most important strike since the 1964 coup was occurring during the conference. The delegates were encouraged by the success of the Brazilian workers in obtaining a 15 percent wage increase and by the apparent impact that the UAW and other international unions had on the settlement.

In its final action program, IMF declared its determination to respond with "rapid and effective assistance to unions engaged in struggle against auto corporations or hostile governments."

Charles Rooney is a professor of community medicine at Wayne State University in Detroit.

Brazilian autoworkers win strike

On Friday, May 12, the morning shift of auto workers showed up as usual at the Saab-Scania plant in the Sao Paulo suburb of Sao Bernardo. The 2,000 workers punched their time cards, proceeded to their work sections, and then refused to start their machines. The stoppage began in the foundry and quickly spread to the entire production line. This was the beginning of what was to be the biggest strike in Brazil since the military coup in 1964.

Between Monday and Wednesday, workers at Ford, Mercedes Benz, Volkswagen, Phillips, and Karman-Ghia joined the strike. On Thursday, the government's Regional Labor Tribunal declared the strike illegal, but it continued to spread to Pirelli, General Motors, Chrysler, Otis Elevators, and Alcan Aluminum.

Within a week, between 20,000 and 30,000 workers were on strike in this area known as ABC, initials for Sao Andre, Sao Bernardo and Sao Caetano. In spite of the flawed structure of Brazil's unions, over 50 percent of all workers in this area are unionized, a figure unequaled anywhere in the capitalist world except Italy. The biggest union is the Metallurgical Workers, which has the most militant elements in the area.

ments of the southern Brazilian working class.

The issue that sparked the widespread work stoppage was the government's new wage adjustment. Every year there is an adjustment to enable workers to keep up with the rate of inflation. For years the government has used this figure as an instrument for capital accumulation by using an artificially low figure, which effectively transferred cruzeiros from workers to their employers.

For years this strategy had been well known and bitterly criticized by the labor movement. But not until last year could they produce an authority which the government could not ignore.

Last September the International Monetary Fund published a report challenging the government's figures for past years. Under pressure, a 5 percent increase was granted in late 1977 and another 10 percent in early 1978.

When the government announced a 39 percent increase in April, many workers thought they would finally begin to get back some of the past years' losses. Instead their checks in May showed that the employers had deducted the previous 15 percent increases. With wages already at

starvation levels in Brazil, the employers' action prompted the strike.

The government's response was uncertain, in itself a sign of the changed political climate both within and outside of Brazil. While the official tribunal ruled the strike illegal and government Finance Minister Simonsen warned employers that any wage increases would have to come out of their profits and not from the consumer, the Justice Ministry pretended nothing was happening.

The government's hesitation may have stemmed from the disrupted state of the presidential succession process and the active role being taken by the international unions, particularly the United Auto Workers. The UAW evidently had an important effect on Ford, which had refused to negotiate for a week and then suddenly agreed to a settlement.

By the end of May, the strikes and slowdowns had achieved some success. In the auto industry, workers won back the 15 percent increase in wages. And probably more important, the workers had flexed their muscle and found they had considerable strength and support, both within their own ranks and from the international unions. —Charles Rooney