

How Nixon Misjudged Meany Image

By Jack Anderson

The labor lords are expected to celebrate Labor Day with a new round of rhetoric against the inequities in the wage-price freeze. But behind the scenes, AFL-CIO boss George Meany has agreed to sit down with President Nixon and discuss their differences.

We reported in an earlier column how the President, soon after settling in the White House, tried to butter up Meany but managed instead to alienate him.

The irascible old labor tyrant, with his gruff manner and omnipresent cigar, has the finesse of Edward G. Robinson playing a 1920 labor boss. At the first howl over the wage-price freeze, therefore, the President calculated that Meany had a poor public image and made the mistake of trying to isolate him from his union members.

The White House has now put up a smoke screen to hide the President's mishandling of Meany. We have been able, however, to see through the official haze.

As we previously reported, Mr. Nixon personally made the decision to undercut the

AFL-CIO chief. He gave the assignment to one of his best backroom operators, Charles Colson, who has handled such political hatchwork as trading ex-Sen. Joseph Tydings (D-Md.) during the 1970 campaign.

Colson's Conspiracy

Colson wrote the statement that Labor Secretary James Hodgson delivered, charging that Meany was "out of step" with his members. Colson's assistant, George Bell, also telephoned the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and urged its executive vice president, Arch Booth, to call for the retirement of all labor leaders over 70.

This would have been aimed, of course, at the 77-year-old Meany. But Booth discreetly declined to be the White House mouthpiece on this issue.

Now the President, realizing his mistake in antagonizing the old labor warhorse, has called off Colson and is trying to repair his relations with Meany. Secretary Hodgson, hat in hand, made the first overture.

"The President stole \$5 billion from our members with

this freeze," Meany greeted Hodgson. But he agreed grumpily to talk over the next economic moves with the President.

Footnote: Meany will demand that profits and interest rates also be frozen and will suggest that wage-price-profit controls should be administered by a board of business, labor and public members. The President is reported to be willing to extend the freeze and to establish a review board. However, he has told at least one adviser emphatically that he intends to return to a free-market economy as early as possible. To stimulate the free enterprise system, he is considering legislation to impose antitrust-like penalties upon any unions or corporations that abuse their economic power.

Intelligence Items

The coded intelligence reports that flood into Washington from all over the world often contain raw, unverified information. The Central Intelligence Agency has devised a simple system for rating the reliability of its reports. The veracity of the source is given an alphabetical rating; an ap-

praisal of the content is rated by number. Thus, an A-1 report would be considered 100 per cent accurate. But if a wholly reliable source passed on a hot barroom rumor, it might be rated A-12. Or if a less trustworthy source submitted what he claimed was a really reliable item, the rating might be C-3. Hereafter, we will use this rating system to help our readers evaluate the accuracy of intelligence items.

Emperor's Surprise (A-2)—No one was more surprised than Emperor Hirohito to learn that his European trip would be interrupted by a stopover in Alaska. Prime Minister Sato neglected to consult the Emperor before setting up the trip. By staging a dramatic meeting between Emperor Hirohito and President Nixon, Sato hopes to take some of the steam out of the hot Japanese reaction to Mr. Nixon's Peking ploy and economic moves against Japan. The Emperor, left out of the backroom planning, was astonished to learn that he would interrupt his European trip to confer with Mr. Nixon in Alaska.

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