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NO.: CA- 2343, September 11, 1959

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SUBJECT: American Labor's Attitude Toward Khrushchev Visit

TO: ALL AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS

The AFL-CIO Executive Council adopted three resolutions on international affairs at its August 17-20 meeting at Unity House, Pennsylvania. These resolutions dealt with Algeria, South West Africa and the visit of Soviet Premier Khrushchev to the United States.

The resolution on the Khrushchev visit was adopted in the Council by a vote of 22 to 3, with James B. Carey (Electrical Workers), O. A. Knight (Oil Workers) and Walter P. Reuther (Auto Workers) dissenting. It conveys the official AFL-CIO attitude toward the Khrushchev visit in these words: "...it is out of the question for the AFL-CIO to give recognition to the head of a government which does not permit its own workers to have any free trade unions. American labor could never participate in honoring the head of a government which seeks to destroy human freedom in any form."

In reply to questions raised at a press conference AFL-CIO President Meany elaborated this statement by saying: "The Executive Council is completely unanimous on the subject of World Communism" and that no one misunderstands the objectives of the Communists or the danger they pose to the American way of life and the free trade union movement. However, there is a "difference of opinion on just how to fight World Communism." Part of this difference showed up in the discussions of the statement on the Khrushchev visit. Some members of the Council feel that they can make a contribution by meeting with Khrushchev and explaining the labor movement's unreserved opposition to Communism, he said. The Executive Council statement, "will not preclude those who feel they can make a contribution in the fight against Communism from meeting with Khrushchev."

It is understood that Meany received strong support in the Executive Council debate on the Khrushchev resolution from David Dubinsky (Garment Workers), Jacob Potofsky (Clothing Workers) and Emil Rieve (Textile Workers).

Walter Reuther's explanation of his vote on the resolution was contained in a statement released on August 20. The statement reads in part: "There is room for honest disagreement between people of good will over the forthcoming visit of Mr. Khrushchev. There is no disagreement whatsoever about the basic immoral character of Communism and the brutal suppression

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Std Labor (US) Attitude toward Khrushchev visit

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suppression and denial by the Soviet dictatorship of human freedom and the democratic rights and values that we as free people cherish. ... Since Soviet dogma and propaganda are essentially built around the myth that Communism is the liberator of the working class, it is essential that American trade union leaders, who represent millions of the working people of America, ought to have the opportunity of telling Mr. Khrushchev straight from the shoulder that the workers of America, through their trade union movement, are irrevocably committed to the cause of human freedom and no amount of Communist propaganda will succeed in deluding or diverting us from our firm opposition to Communism. No one in America has better credentials to do this essential job than do American trade union leaders, and if they fail because of an attitude of isolation, they do America and the cause of human freedom a great disservice."

It was learned on September 8 that eight AFL-CIO Vice-Presidents have been invited to confer on September 20 with Soviet Premier Khrushchev at a dinner meeting in San Francisco arranged by James B. Carey, AFL-CIO Vice President and President of the International Union of Electrical Workers. The seven other AFL-CIO Vice Presidents involved are: Joseph A. Beirne, Communications Workers; William C. Doherty, Letter Carriers; Karl F. Feller, Brewery Workers; O. A. Knight, Oil Workers; Paul L. Phillips, Papermakers; Walter P. Reuther, Auto Workers; and Emil Rieve, Textile Workers. George L. P. Weaver, Carey aide, also has been invited to attend the meeting.

Reuther reportedly stated earlier that he was taking no initiative in setting up a conference.

The full text of the Executive Council statement on the Khrushchev visit is appended. Reuther's statement on the visit as well as the texts of the other two Executive Council resolutions dealing with international affairs (Algeria and South West Africa) are being forwarded in the air mail edition of the Weekly Labor Packet.

Posts are requested to report significant reactions of labor to American labor's action on the Khrushchev visit.

DILLON, ACTING

Enclosure:

Text of statement.

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Enclosure to Department of Labor's Instruction to all Diplomatic and Consular Posts

Statement by the AFL-CIO Executive Council

on

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Khrushchev's Visit

August 20, 1959
Unity House, Pa.

President Eisenhower has invited Nikita Khrushchev, the head of the Soviet Union, to visit the United States in the near future.

From various quarters there have come to us queries as to what is our attitude to the forthcoming visit of Mr. Khrushchev.

It is not for the AFL-CIO Executive Council to approve or disapprove an invitation extended by our President to the head of another government. We do not, therefore, have any comment to make on the wisdom of the President's invitation. At the same time, we must all face the situation realistically.

The Soviet regime continues to be a totalitarian dictatorship. It is dedicated to aggression and world domination. It has destroyed all democratic rights and liberties in its own country. It is now seeking to subvert and destroy the rights and liberties which we Americans cherish dearly in our country. There is not a shred of evidence to show that the Kremlin rulers have changed the nature or aims of their regime or even slackened their drive to conquer the world and remold it on the pattern of Soviet tyranny.

It has been reported that Vice President Nixon, during his visit to the USSR, indicated he would urge American labor to join actively in an exchange program with the so-called unions of Soviet Russia. It is, therefore, necessary to set the record straight.

In this situation, the Executive Council reaffirms its declaration of February 1959, against exchanging delegations with dictatorship countries. We further reiterate our wholehearted support of the ICFTU policy against exchanges of delegations with the so-called trade unions in Communist or any other totalitarian countries.

The AFL-CIO is an organization of free trade unions. There are no Soviet counterparts with which we of the AFL-CIO can have such exchanges. The Kremlin dictatorship strictly prohibits the Soviet workers from organizing free trade unions. The so-called trade unions in the USSR are nothing but agencies of the Communist dictatorship. Consequently, it is out of the question for the AFL-CIO to give

recognition to the head of a government which does not permit its own workers to have any free trade unions. American labor could never participate in honoring the head of a government which seeks to destroy human freedom in any form.

Furthermore, as a free trade union movement, the AFL-CIO is not bound to agree with every domestic or foreign policy of our government. For example, the American labor movement has always firmly opposed U. S. recognition of the Franco dictatorship. But our government has recognized and has even given economic aid to this dictatorship. Such governmental actions do not mean that the AFL-CIO should welcome Franco to our shores in the event our government should ever invite him to visit the United States.

By the same token, the President's invitation to Mr. Khrushchev does not mean that the AFL-CIO should participate in honoring this head of a foreign government which runs a vast network of forced labor camps and which ordered the murder of thousands of Hungarians fighting for their national independence and freedom.

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