

COUNCIL OF AFL-CIO UNIONS

PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND CULTURAL EMPLOYEES

Meeting at International Inn, Washington, D.C.

December 7, 1966

Opening Remarks of Charles Cogen, Temporary Chairman
(President of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO)

Some two years ago, a group of us who are leaders in unions in the "professional" fields decided that there was a real need to combine forces for our mutual benefit. We felt that we had many common goals and problems that required a common attack. We were particularly concerned about the widespread feeling among workers in some professions that it is "unprofessional" to belong to a union.

We were bent on overcoming this false image by a combined evidence of the wide spectrum of professionals who are organized into unions, and with fine achievements to their credit. We were impressed by the large and growing number of employed professionals; which is one of the main areas in the labor movement for great growth potential.

The formation of the Council of AFL-CIO Unions for Professional, Scientific, and Cultural Employees is the result of many informal meetings over the past two years of representatives of a number of unions whose members are primarily "professionals". (Note that we added the terms "scientific and cultural" because we felt that the term "professional" is too ambiguous.) The unions which have acted as a steering committee in the formation of the Council are:

Actors Equity; American Guild of Musical Artists; American Federation of Musicians; NABET, National Association of Broadcast Engineers and Technicians;

American Federation of Technical Engineers; Insurance Workers International Union; Air Line Pilots Association; American Federation of Government Employees; and the American Federation of Teachers.

We are looking forward to the affiliation of these and other groups.

Many other unions have expressed interest and some of them are here today: the IUE; IBEW; CWA; and the AFSCME. Among them are unions where professional employees are in a minority, and only these professionals are represented here. I wish to welcome them on behalf of those of us who have formed the nucleus of this movement.

I want to make it clear that the Council has the formal approval of the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO.

Our purpose is to offer services to union members in the professional, scientific, and cultural categories, and to encourage other such employees to become members of the unions in their fields. We think we can fill a need which is not now being specifically met by the existing structure of the labor movement.

Many of us have found that workers in the "professional" category know very little about the activities of the labor movement in their behalf. Through this new Council we hope to make the interest and concern of the AFL-CIO for such employees much more visible. We also hope to increase the range of service which the AFL-CIO and its affiliates can offer such employees. The Council can also be of service to the public in helping to promote activities in which such employees participate.

What kinds of activities will the Council undertake? This question will be answered more concretely as the organization develops. However, some of the possibilities include:

- 1 - Preparation of literature explaining the place of professional, scientific, and cultural employees in the labor movement.
- 2 - Research on problems common to employees in the professional category: licensing, work standards, voice in policy determination, portable pensions and fringe benefits, the growing role of governments and the effect on unions, support, etc.
- 3 - Conferences designed to further the interests of professional, scientific, and cultural employees.
- 4 - Information about legislation and joint action thereon; and other activities affecting employees in the professional category.

A copy of the proposed constitution is available for your consideration. A proposed agenda for this meeting has also been distributed. Our purpose today is to move positively to get the Council in operation.

We wish to establish the Council of a permanent basis. As a means of formalizing our relationship, a "Founding Convention" has been suggested, to be held early in 1967 in Washington, D. C. This convention-conference can be an excellent rallying point.

In the meantime, however, considerable preparatory work must be done. Today we are having our organizational council meeting. I am suggesting that several committees be appointed, but more important, I believe that the Council will have work enough to warrant employment of an executive secretary, and for the present, perhaps a temporary one. This position would include legislative representation in its duties.

I would expect that the permanent Council would carry on its activities in the usual way; meetings of the Executive Board, the convention, conferences, newsletters, research studies, press conferences, and other means. I think we could seek the cooperation of the federal government, private foundations, and perhaps colleges and universities.

Certainly there is much to be done. I am pleased that we have been able to move along as rapidly as we have thus far. I know that we will accomplish great things as we continue to develop.

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