

[1964-1965]

TEACHERS / AND AFT / AT THE CROSSROADS

A Look at the Year Past and the Years Ahead

Any way one looks at it, 1964-65, the first year of the Cogen Administration, was a year of change. And yet it was also a year of deepening development of traditional AFT values and principles.

The Cogen Administration is a new administration by definition. There is a new President, with new policies and new points of emphasis, and yet Carl Megel, AFT President from 1963-1964, is also a part of the new team as the AFT's first full-time Washington Representative. A majority of the new Executive Council were supporters of the new President, and yet only four of the sixteen Vice Presidents are newcomers to the Council, and all of the four have years of AFT experience behind them.

The new administration has demonstrated that while there is plenty of room for differences of opinion as to the proper means to be used, AFT members are united in their belief in the essentials of teacher unionism: an organization controlled by teachers, dedicated to the advancement of teacher interests, and firmly convinced of the necessity for participation in the nationwide confederation of other unions of the AFL-CIO.

More of Everything in 1964-65

1964-65 was the year of more.

More AFT members were involved in activities of nationwide significance than ever before.

Repetitious
Membership reached new peaks.

More Executive Council meetings and conferences were held - and more full-time staff members were involved in activities of nationwide significance than ever before.

Membership reached new peaks.

More Executive Council meetings and conferences were held - and more full-time staff members were employed than ever before.

AFT members were more deeply involved in the struggles of our time - the civil rights movement reapportionment, and various other legislative campaigns - than ever before.

Our effectiveness in our nation's capital was greater than ever before.

Our relations with the rest of the labor movement were far more extensive than they had ever been.

The AFT figured more in national news stories than ever before.

More conferences of professional significance included AFT speakers and resource persons than at any previous time.

The AFT concerned itself more with the quality education and professional matters than in any previous year in our history.

We challenged more directly the entrenched power of the supervisor-dominated associations than ever before -- and our union was more directly attached and challenged by the NEA and its satellite state and local non-union organizations.

Association Backlash

At the close of the 1965 school year the AFT finds itself on the threshold of success in the struggle to organize the majority of the nation's teachers into an organization which can establish teaching, ^{well as} as distinguished from supervising and administrating, as a true profession with power to control its own destiny and to contribute to the development of society.

~~The~~ At the same time our union is more seriously threatened by the non-union organizations, with their captive taxpayers and huge bureaucracy, than at any period since the founding of the AFT. We are threatened because of our success.

There once was a time when the AFT could be laughed off by the associations. We had pockets of strength in a few of the more industrialized areas, but as the national teaching force grew, the AFT was hardly holding its own in terms of per cent organized. But now this has changed. Now the growth of AFT membership and power has outstripped in percentage the automatic accretions of the non-union organizations, and those whose interests are vested in maintaining the organizational status quo - administrators, supervisors, and association staff personnel - have been aroused from their decades of lethargy.

Let us not underestimate our adversaries. Through their influence in state legislatures, they have begun to try to legislate the AFT out of existence by

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lists

providing for determination of negotiating agents by membership rather than ^{by} the more democratic election process. When elections are allowed they follow the association pattern established in Connecticut and Washington: supervisors and administrators vote on which organization will represent teachers - and all impasses between teachers and local boards of education are to be settled "in the family" - by the state superintendent or commissioner. As a sop to teacher demands for action the association executives endorse the "safe" sanctions, blacklisting, and "recess" procedures.

AFT Convention, 1965: A time of Decision

Make no mistake: the AFT is involved in a war for survival. Victory in this struggle depends on how much manpower and money we can throw into the battle. The decisions which will determine our commitment to this struggle will be made in Los Angeles in the democratic way - the AFT way - at our national Convention.

In spite of all the forces arrayed against us the AFT continues to grow. During the past school year we won bargaining elections in Philadelphia, Yonkers (New York), Plainview (New York), Menasha (Wisconsin), Ashland (Wisconsin), (Wisconsin), Mastic (New York), Taylor (Michigan) and Detroit. In Hamtramck we won a contract after a four day sit-in reminiscent of the nineteen-thirties. ^{Success} These victories brought more teachers under the AFT banner than at any time since the historic AFT breakthrough in New York City.

Yet these victories are only a portent of what can be our destiny in the next few years. In city after city - St. Louis, Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Washington, D. C., ^{South Bend,} ~~Sound,~~ and many a smaller school district - the associations are fighting desperately to stave off the march of teacher unionism. Through our reinvigorated state federations the possibility of union organization has been extended to hundreds of suburban and more isolated school districts which have long been considered "safely" non-union.

Whether or not we will be able to extend the help necessary to reap this ripening harvest will depend upon three factors:

1. Continued support from the rest of the labor movement, particularly the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO.
2. Approval by the 1965 Convention of the proposed 15 ^{cents} and 10 ^{cents} increases in AFT per capita, and
3. Support of additional fund-raising activities proposed by the Executive Council.

During the 1964-65, financial assistance from the IUD exceeded by many thousands of dollars the assistance given in any previous year. We have been given assurance by IUD leaders that everything possible will be done to continue this assistance at an even higher level during 1965-66, but these funds are dependent upon the cooperation of other unions affiliated in the IUD. We cannot expect that unions whose members earn less than teachers and whose per capita

payments are much higher will be eager to help if we are not prepared to make a comparable sacrifice and effort.

Thus, to a large extent, we hold our destiny in our own hands. If we show we are in earnest, our brothers and sisters in other AFL-CIO unions will freely come to our assistance. If we falter or show a lack of confidence in our own cause, they, too, will be hesitant to invest in our future.

Teachers and Society

During the past year AFT commitment to the social struggle of our time, the civil rights movement, was deepened and broadened. Many AFT leaders, including President Cogen, participated in the Selma to Montgomery march sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

AFT leaders, and members of Washington Local #6, picketed the White House to urge President Johnson to take forthright action to extend voting rights to thousands of southern Negroes who are excluded from our fundamental democratic franchise by racial discrimination.

Thousands of AFT members have contributed to the Mississippi Freedom School Campaign for summer, 1965.

In city after city, AFT teachers have worked closely with local civil rights groups to help decrease and mitigate the effects of de facto school segregation.

And in Louisiana and several other southern states our long insistence on integrated teacher organization has begun to bear fruit in new AFT locals in which teachers can participate regardless of race.

Teachers and Children

In a related but potentially even more far-reaching action, the AFT has declared its commitment to total education for American children, regardless of the environmental handicaps which they may bring to school with them. This is our "Effective Schools Program", originally developed by Local #2, New York City, and extended to many other cities through the newly-formed AFT Council for Effective Schools.

The business-as-usual school administrations and associations could not have evolved the Effective School Program because they are essentially isolated from the rest of society. The AFT is based on the principle of involvement in society one of the underlying reasons for AFT affiliation with the AFL-CIO.

AFT members believe that all schools should have classes small enough to permit professional teaching, teaching loads and programs realistic enough to allow for planning and conference time during the school day, and supportive services ample enough to care for student emotional and remedial problems which cannot be handled during class time. But providing effective schools for all students would require a revolution in school finance - a revolution which the AFT does not yet have enough power to effectuate. Thus we have committed ourselves

to provide effective schools first for those who need it most: the socially disenfranchised children of our slums and ghettos.

The Council for Effective Schools has published a tentative blueprint which has been adapted by Denver, Newark, San Francisco, and other cities to their own local needs. As we move ahead into the 1965-66 school year the development of more and more effective schools will be a vital part of the AFT program.

Federal Aid: the Referendum

Hope for providing effective schools for all children was nourished by passage of the 1965 federal aid to education law. For the first time the United States government has accepted its responsibility to provide for the general welfare by directly supporting local school districts. Appropriately, the \$1.3 billions allotted for elementary and secondary school support has been ear-marked for school improvements which would benefit children from poverty-impacted families, but we can look forward confidently to an expansion of federal responsibility for education.

The AFT played a key role in securing passage of the new federal aid program. From the very inception of the Cogen Administration, the Legislative Committee of the Executive Council was in direct contact with AFL-CIO officials who would be helpful in securing the needed legislation. When President Johnson, a week after the beginning of his first elected term, declared his support for federal aid for elementary and secondary schools, the AFT enthusiastically endorsed the President's program.

There were many AFT members who felt that President Johnson and the AFT leadership had gone too far, however, because the new aid program opened the door to "shared time" schooling involving cooperative programs of public and private and religious-sponsored schools. The new bill also called for assistance to private schools in the form of library books and textbooks and other school equipment and supplies.

Traditionally, the AFT had opposed including private schools in any federal aid program, and some twenty-three locals requested the AFT to conduct a membership referendum to settle the question. Although the new federal aid bill was passed and signed into law before the referendum was completed, the result of the balloting was a clearcut membership endorsement of President Johnson's program.

The AFT use of the democratic procedure of the referendum to test the action of the AFT leadership stands in sharp contrast to the lack of any such referral to their membership by those who run the NEA. The NEA spokesmen gave instant endorsement of the President's program, even though NEA Convention policy was plainly opposed to aiding private and religious-sponsored schools and these worthies even scoffed at our insistence on membership involvement.

AFT Teachers and Their Profession

In the past the AFT, perhaps because we are a union, has been thought of as a purely bread-and-butter organization. Some observers have even suggested that the AFT confine itself to the improvement of salaries, working conditions,

and fringe benefits, leaving so-called "professional" matters to the associations. Most AFT members reject this narrow view of unionism, however.

During the past year the Education Committee of the Executive Council sponsored the formation of two nationwide special councils to explore and develop new ideas of professional interest. The Council on Effective Schools was already alluded to; the second group is the Council on Teacher Supervisor Relationships. Both Councils met several times during the year. The Effective Schools Council published a 32-page booklet of high professional quality- quality, entitled "A Tentative Plan for Effective Schools", and was the coordinating group for a highly successful conference in Washington, D. C. on the uses of new federal aid.

The Council on Teacher Supervisor Relationships sponsored in May a provocative and well-attended conference in cooperation with the University of Illinois Institute of Labor and Management Relations. Speakers included Professors Steven Hencley and Joe E. Burnett, from the UI College of Education, Associate Professor Mil Lieberthal, from the ILIR, and David Beggs, III, from Indiana University's School of Education.

Throughout the nation AFT locals and state federations hold many conferences of high professional content. To facilitate the selection of suitable speakers and panelists for such gatherings, the AFT has published an "AFT Roster of Resource Persons." This list runs to nearly a hundred names and includes many leaders of today's educational thought.

In the years ahead the AFT will expand its professional interests. We hope to begin publishing a Professional Journal in January, 1966, and during the year there will be more AFT national and regional conferences of professional interest.

New Research Programs

Closely related to the new development of AFT professional interests is the revitalization of our research program.

Next year, in addition to the survey of teacher salary schedules which has been an AFT project for many years, many new studies will be undertaken. We hope to expand the AFT Research Department, under a Director and Assistant Director. We are also preparing plans for research studies in cooperation with federal government agencies.

In addition to the above projects which will be carried out by AFT personnel, a new research grant program is ready for launching in the fall. AFT research grants will be offered through graduate schools of education to aid original work on approved subjects. This program will be far-reaching. It holds great promise for the future, both in terms of the work produced and the closer relationship between schools of education and the AFT.

Teachers and the AFL-CIO

Throughout the 1964-65 school year AFT national staff members were in almost daily touch with AFL-CIO and IUD officials. Our success in collective bargaining elections has won us new respect within our movement, which, in turn, is reflected in our closer working relationship.

The AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education was an extremely valuable aid as state legislatures began considering various proposals to extend negotiating rights to teachers. We also worked closely with the AFL-CIO Civil Rights and Education departments.

Through the efforts of the AFL-CIO Legislative Representative AFT officials were able to secure key meetings with Congressmen, Senators, and cabinet members.

AFT relations with the labor movement in the year ahead will be further strengthened by the establishment of a new council of AFL-CIO unions for professionals. President Cogen in April of this year took the lead in calling together representatives of the Newspaper Guild, Actors Equity, the American Federation of Musicians, National Association of Broadcasting Engineers and Technicians, Screen Actors Guild, and other unions whose membership is concentrated in the professional occupations.

The Industrial Union Department was cooperative, as always, not only in helping finance AFT organizing efforts, but also in making available research and publicity facilities.

The Co-Org Program: Organizational Underpinning

The supporting structure for a large part of the AFT's expanded activities during the past year has been the Co-Org Program. Co-Org stands for "Cooperative Organizing"; the cooperation is built in through a system of matching funds within the AFT, with the IUD undertaking to match the total AFT effort.

The Co-Org program is designed to do three things simultaneously: bring more members into our movement, assist state federations and help larger locals to achieve exclusive collective bargaining rights.

The Co-Org program is not a permanent part of AFT structure. As soon as a participating state federation achieves an effective operational status, AFT

involvement is phased out. A self-liquidating feature is built into each program.

During the past year, 22 new full-time staff members were added as a result of the Co-Org Program. Four more programs are ready to go as soon as the go-ahead is given.

The concentration of the Co-Org program on the development of AFT state federations is vital to the development of the AFT. The need for effective state action in the legislative field has long been apparent. But even more important is the key function of the state federation in providing service for smaller locals. Decades of AFT organizing experience has shown that newly chartered locals must have a strong AFT service structure into which they can fit if they are to succeed.

Ninety-five percent of our present locals are in districts outside the big cities - and the overwhelming majority of American teachers is employed in suburban and smaller school districts.

These smaller locals can best be serviced through their state organizations, who are familiar with the laws of the state and local conditions. Furthermore, to provide service directly from AFT central headquarters would require a tremendous increase in national staff, which in turn would create dangerous problems of centralization.

To coordinate the activities of state federations we plan to establish a Department of State Federations and Smaller Locals during the coming year. In addition, state federations will be encouraged to meet together and to exchange

information on retirement, tenure, collective bargaining and other legislation of benefit to teachers.

Forward Into 1966

In retrospect, the 1964-65 year was filled with new, militant, and dynamic AFT action. 1965-66 offers the promise of even greater advances.

Not everything the AFT tried to do during the past months was a success. We took our lumps - but our successes far outnumbered our losses. This is the way it always is in a mass movement such as ours, and it is the fact of our solidarity and spirit which gives us courage to keep pressing forward.

One hundred thousand\$ union teachers cannot be wrong.

Our strength is in our membership, and together we will surmount each new obstacle as it occurs.

NOTE: Names of AFT members who helped make 1964-65 another AFT success story have been purposely omitted from this review of the year. Dozens and hundreds of teacher unionists, rank-and-filers, officers, staff members, and committee members gave of themselves that our movement might succeed. To single out so many for special mention would have required more space than we had available. We have chosen, therefore, to concentrate on the events and issues of nationwide significance which have bound us even more closely together.