

Special Feature Labor Looks at Strikes

THE UNION LABOR MOVEMENT, in the authoritative opinion of George Meany, president of AFL-CIO, is from left to right and with such force and effect that its leaders and members are not what they used to be, economically, ideologically, or politically.

Organized labor, he told a news conference last week, is now a middle-class entity, no longer dedicated to the Democratic party, concerned with law and order, disturbed by violence and "more conservatively oriented than it used to be." What is more, its leaders "at the highest level" are becoming disenchanted with its favorable weapon, the strike, and are casting about for better ways to fight its battles.

ALL OF THIS, THE leader of the two great labor federations explains, is due to greatly increased prosperity of the union worker. "You can be radical in labor disputes when you are getting 30 cents an hour," he observed. "But when you have people who are making \$8000 or \$9000 a year, paying off mortgages, with kids going to college, you have a different situation when you are thinking about calling a strike."

In what would have been close to treason a few years back, Meany went farther and said that "strikes don't settle a thing" and, in cases "where you have a well established industry with a well established union, more and more strikes don't make any sense."

In place of strikes, Meany disclosed, labor leaders "at the highest level" are considering such alternatives as voluntary arbitration, and national product boycotts, as exemplified in the recent table-grape and General Electric disputes.

The general public would certainly welcome a relief from strikes, though it might not like these alternatives. How local unions will respond to the strikeless philosophy remains to be seen. But if Mean's remarks accomplish nothing more, they have at least explained in part the march of the New York hard-hats and the setbacks of the Democratic party in recent elections.