

Salt Lake City, Utah
December 8, 1951

*Copy for
Secretary - Treasurer
Kubenzli*

American Federation of Teachers
Ed M. Ross, Vice President
1882 Melvin Road
Oakland 2, California

Jan 12-17-51

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Dear Ed:

We felt very sure of an AFT local in Ogden, Utah until Friday afternoon. The school administration called a surprise teachers' meeting Friday at the close of school, and urged the teachers not to join with labor in the teacher union movement. The general theme at the meeting was that "It is O. K. to join with the Chamber of Commerce, because it is a Civic Organization; it is also O. K. to associate with labor people. But to join with labor is a different thing." It was pictured as beneath the dignity of teachers to be a part of organized labor. The administration strongly urged the teachers to stay instead with their own "professional" organization, the UEA.

Mr. A. J. Kirkham, a teacher in the Washington Terrace School, (mailing address: Farmington, Utah) and H. N. Rumsey, 286 - 39th Street, Ogden, Utah, a teacher in the Junior High School, were among the group designated to me by labor leaders as good trade union-minded teachers when I first began working in the area. I mention these two in particular because their courage and understanding of the problems proved meritorious. They both did, and are still doing, a fine work for the cause. They are both members of the Mormon Church. About 75% of the teachers in this area are Mormons.

Mr. Kirkham especially, has the full confidence and respect of the organized labor groups. He is from an old and well-rooted pioneer family among the Mormon population, and has worked with labor in a satisfactory manner on several occasions before. I mentioned the addresses of these two men so that you may write them a note of appreciation and encouragement if and when you can find time to do so. Mr. Kirkham and I worked every afternoon and evening in sub-zero weather and snowstorms this week, in an effort to get an Application for Charter worked up ahead of any administration action.

We concentrated our efforts on Ogden this week as the best place to get started. It is the strongest organized labor center in Utah. All other centers (both among teachers and labor leaders) seem to point to Ogden as the center to lead the way.

The Central Labor Body and many individuals in the labor movement gave us excellent support in Ogden. Secretary Hart of the CLC and Ray Hansen of the Teamsters' Union have given freely of their time and counsel. Now that we have been temporarily slowed down by the action of the school administration, the Central Labor Council is sending out by mail an appeal to all classroom teachers in Ogden and in all of Weaver County, to read and think of the benefits to be gained by joining labor's own union for teachers. Some AFT literature is being enclosed for each teacher. Labor will make a stronger effort than ever in Ogden now to bring the teachers into the union.

Another factor not mentioned last week in my report of the hindrances to organizing speedily in Utah, is the so-called "Write-off law" which was sponsored by labor. School administrators have used this law to their advantage, and teacher contracts are written in such a way that if teachers do not notify the superintendent in writing that dues are not to be deducted, annual dues are deducted by the school boards and are paid directly to the UEA. Through this scheme, all teachers in Utah are practically forced to join the UEA. Too, all contracts say that the teacher can be dismissed by the board on a 15 to 30 day notice, for incompetency, insubordination, or neglect of duty. The teacher does have the right within five days, to file a written notice for a public hearing, but are naturally told that if they do appeal, no further recommendation will be forthcoming from the administration. It is a veritable "straight-jacket" of a contract, of course, for the terminology is so loose that the administration can keep the teachers under a whip-lash, since almost anything could be classed as "insubordination" or "neglect of duty."

Teachers in Utah are, as a group, dissatisfied about many things. However, they have had precious little information about the program of the AFT in the past. They have been fed a diet of anti-unionism most of their lives. Your plan of mailing out 20,000 or more folders about the AFT to the California teachers two years ago was a sound one, and should have been continued. The Salt Lake City teachers should all have such pieces of literature as Questions and Answers About the AFT, the John Dewey folder, What Teachers Are Worth (Kuenzli), etc. The John Dewey philosophy is particularly popular in Utah. What is a Teacher Worth, by Kuenzli, has proved to be popular here, also. I think teachers in all areas where we are attempting to organize, should have more information in advance about the AFT.

I am enclosing a copy of my letter to Secretary-Treasurer James G. Ryan, of the NSFL, Las Vegas, Nevada. It is my plan at this time to arrive in Las Vegas by noon Tuesday. This will depend, however, on the completion of my work in Ogden and Salt Lake City, and also on the clearing of the hazard of icy roads south of here. The AAA informs me that the roads are dangerously slick in the Cedar City area, and there is no way around. We have had a very bad snowy, icy, cold spell here in Utah, as no doubt you have learned from the radio and the newspapers.

I will stay at the Hub Courts in Las Vegas, near the downtown area, but will get mail at the General Delivery, Las Vegas, while there. The postoffice handles my mail much more satisfactorily than hotels and motels. Yesterday I received a letter from Vice President Oliver in Portland, written in September, and which had been forwarded six different times, with a few days' delay each time it stopped.

Fraternally

F. C. Snow, Organizer
American Federation of Teachers