

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations



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STATEMENT BY AFL-CIO PRESIDENT JOHN SWEENEY ON THE DEATH OF R.I. KILROY February 13, 2007

All of us in the AFL-CIO mourn the death on Saturday of Dick Kilroy, who was the former president of the Transportation Communications International Union and the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department, former vice-president of the AFL-CIO, and beyond question one of the most dedicated, effective union leaders of his generation.

What a remarkable life he led. From the time he was hired by the Pennsylvania Railroad as a block operator back in 1951 and became a proud member of the old Order of Railroad Telegraphers, the union movement was Dick's life. Over the years, his union brothers and sisters chose him as a local chair, general chair, then vice-president of the ORT. The ORT merged with the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks and later became the Transportation Communications International Union. Dick served as its international president for ten eventful years from 1981 until his retirement, and he was the guiding spirit and founding president in 1991 of the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department.

I got to know Dick when we served together on the AFL-CIO Executive Council. I saw that even though his early life was difficult — his father died when he was young and Dick only had the chance for a ninth-grade education — he rose to become the highly respected voice of millions of proud working women and men in the transportation industry. He was always a great champion of a stronger and more secure railroad retirement system, adequate funding for our national rail passenger system, and collective bargaining rights for rail workers.

In all of this, there is a wonderful monument to Dick Kilroy. It is the better life he helped win for the workers he served so many years. We send our condolences to his wife Elvira; his children Earl, Margaret, Cassie, Richard, Jr., Anne, and Mary Patricia; and his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We will miss him.

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